

Martyrs of Economic Warfare: The Gendered Impact of Sanctions in Iran

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Background

Although international relations literature has been effective in assessing factors contributing to the success of particular sanctions, little emphasis has been placed on the internal dynamics of the states upon which these sanctions are enacted., especially on marginalized populations, like women. This thesis seeks to contribute to the rising wave of feminist-sanctions literature by studying factors including women's agency and participation in the workforce under a sanctions regime.



Young women walking past a mural depicting Iran's flag in Tehran on April 23, 2019, a day after the White House announced it was ending waivers exempting several countries from US sanctions on Iranian oil exports.

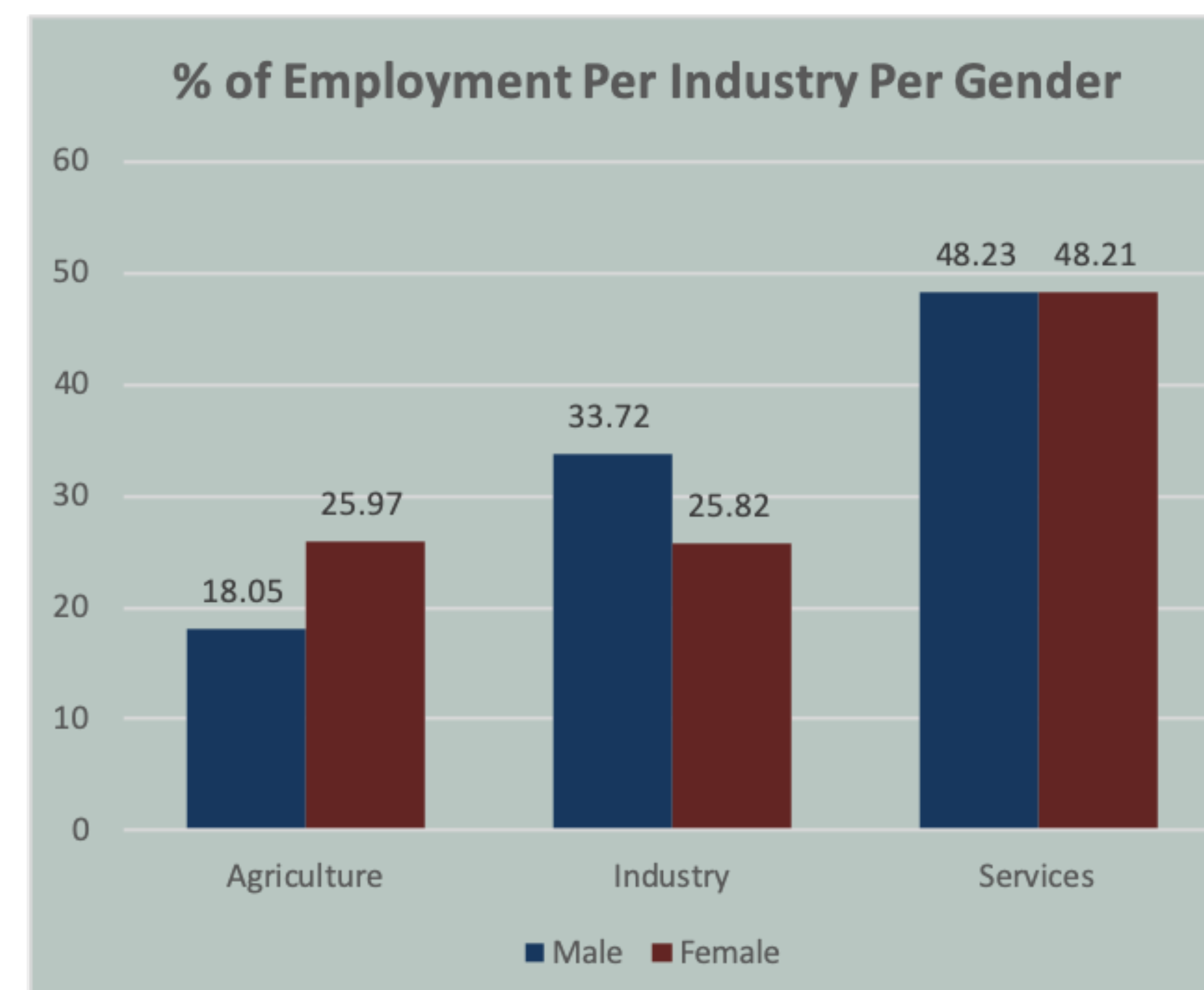
Research Questions

- How and why do economic sanctions disproportionately effect women's economic rights compared men's in Iran?
- How have US-backed economic sanctions impacted the feminist movement in Iran?

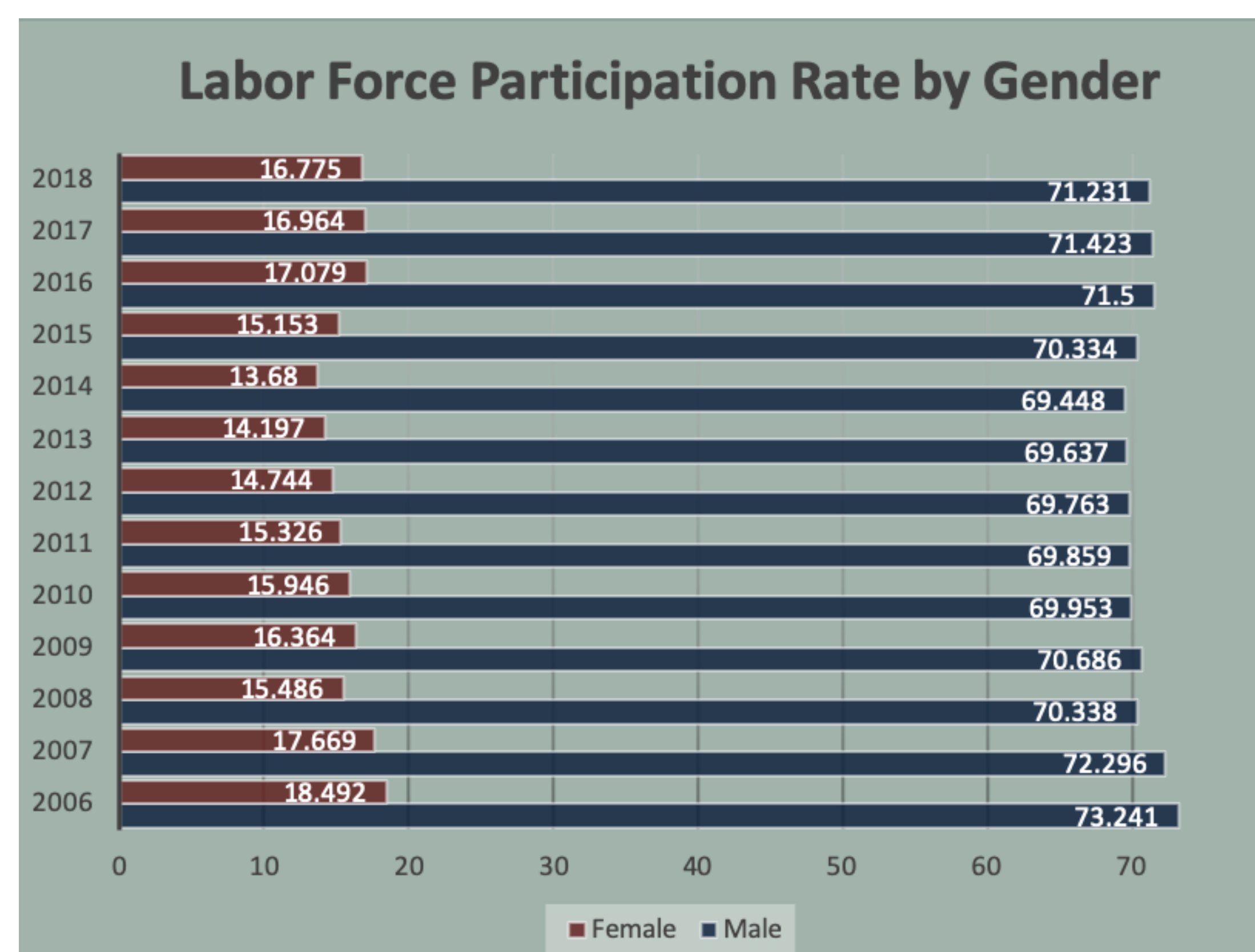
Methods and Materials

Positioned through a acritical feminist lens, this research incorporated mixed-methods, including:

- A discourse analysis of the disparities between sanctions and feminist movements literature
- A statistical analysis of time-series data gathered from the World Bank database to measure fluctuations in Iran's Female Labor Force Participation (FLPR) from 2006-2018
- A modern-historical analysis of US-backed sanctions on Iran



Data taken from the World Bank to show the gender make-up of different employment sectors in Iran.



Data taken from the World Bank to show the disparity between female and male labor force participation in Iran.



Iranian women protesting the 2009 fraudulent election and participating in the Green Movement in Tehran.

Results

Sanction do decrease the economic rights of women as the data showed FLPR in Iran decreases by 2.69% when the sanction is severe compared to a moderate one. While male labor force participation rates are also affected, they decrease significantly less than women's at only 1.45%.

Economic sanctions prove to be especially detrimental to women as they can set off a domino effect on women's rights. First, women are laid off from their jobs due to cultural norms demeaning their importance in the workplace. Once unemployed, women can no longer benefit from state welfare because it no longer exists. Then the government becomes more repressive in an attempt to recover from sanctions, minimizing women's mobility, agency and, in turn, feminist movements..

Conclusion

While world powers, like the United States claim that purpose of imposing sanctions on target regimes is to apply political stability and push them to respect human rights, political and economic pressures actually allow for greater damage to the livelihoods of the very people sanctions are meant to protect, like women in the case of Iran, and virtually erase the strides forward these groups, like feminist movements, have made.

Future Directions:

- While this research overtly shows that economic inequality for women is significantly aggravated by sanctions, future research could analyze policies that alleviate this disproportionate burden.

Acknowledgments

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References

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