

summary of the study:
**Analysis of the Reality of Violence Against
Women in the Workplace and Work
Environment from a Legislative
Perspective: Dr. Saddam Abu Azzam**



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Executive Summary

Introduction to the Study:

This study aims to shed light on the forms of violence faced by working women in various environments, through a critical reading and review of the most prominent laws directly related to women's work. It seeks to analyze these laws and compare them with several international conventions and references that address the issue of women's work and their direct relationship with empowerment on various levels—not only through enabling them to obtain independent sources of income.

It is important to note that many studies, research, and specialized working papers have confirmed, without any doubt, that economic dependency often places women in a "real dilemma," where they find themselves in a sea of life problems and challenges, the least of which is falling into the cycle of violence in all its forms, without having any means or tools to help them break free from this cycle.

Economic empowerment for women, creating a work environment free from violence, and independent sources of income that protect them from poverty and need while breaking the barrier of economic dependence, may enable them to escape from many forms of violence they may face—ranging from domestic and societal violence to violence in the workplace, among other forms of violence.

And since the framework of protection, which forms the cornerstone in this field, is "a fair and equitable legislative process for all," this study focused on some legislations **directly related to women and work, namely:**

- **Labor Law**
- **Social Security Law**
- **Flexible Work System**
- **Agricultural Workers System**
- **Instructions, Programs, and Related Services****

Additionally:

It is well-known that working women may face various forms of violence, fraud, exploitation, and coercion in the labor market, whether in the public or private sector, depending on the surrounding circumstances. Therefore, this study focused on analyzing these legal frameworks "to highlight gaps and forms of legislative or applied defects wherever they exist," with the goal of reaching the most important conclusions and, subsequently, making key recommendations. These recommendations could help address these gaps, whether through "amendments, cancellations, or the creation of new legislation," which can be presented to decision-makers and influencers for necessary interventions and remedial actions. This will work toward overcoming challenges and barriers, empowering women, and facilitating their access to resources and employment opportunities fairly within a work environment that is just, equal, and free from all forms of violence.

Therefore, this study has highlighted a fundamental and vital aspect of the lives of working women, based on human and legal principles, including:

- **Women are human beings with inherent dignity and human rights, recognized under international law/international conventions and references. For example, the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," the "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against**



Women," and the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women." These rights are also acknowledged under national laws, religious constants, and general ethical standards.

- The primary objective of this study is to highlight selected provisions from various laws related to "women's access to justice in a fair, equal, and equitable work environment within the applicable legislative framework." It aims to identify the flaws and challenges that require objective and fair legislative review, and subsequently, provide recommendations and proposals resulting from this study. These recommendations could serve as a "lifeline for women, families, and society."

Problem of the Study:

The problem of this study and the essence of its work lies in its attempt to answer a number of questions derived from universally agreed-upon legal principles, both in the international and national frameworks. It is noteworthy that the current reality indicates fundamental flaws in the legal protection system, particularly in the following areas:

- Labor Law
- Social Security Law
- Flexible Work System No. 44 of 2024
- Agricultural Workers System No. 19 of 2021
- The Basic System of the General Federation and the Unified Labor Unions System of 2020
- The System for Organizing the Affairs of the General Federation of Labor Unions and Professional Federations No. 9 of 2006

The Jordanian Constitution, Article 23 of Chapter Two, guarantees that work is a right for all citizens of the state and that the state must provide employment for all citizens, in order to promote the national economy and achieve self-sufficiency and an optimal life. The state protects labor and workers and establishes regulations based on the following human rights principles:

- Providing appropriate wages for workers in line with the nature of their work, its requirements, and the level of risk involved.
- Setting weekly working hours and ensuring both parties adhere to them. Any additional hours are considered overtime, and the worker is entitled to extra pay. Workers must also be granted their annual leave.
- Special compensation for workers who are the breadwinners for their families, in cases of dismissal from work, illness, or disability resulting from working conditions.
- Guaranteeing the rights of female workers in various establishments, and subjecting factories that employ women and minors to special monitoring.
- Ensuring all establishments and factories adhere to health regulations, and obliging workers to comply with them.

In this context, we also want to point out that, regardless of the challenges posed by the legal system, which women must navigate in their pursuit of justice within the workplace and the positions they occupy, there are "other challenges related to procedural, executive, social, and cultural structures, including infrastructure on the other hand."



Furthermore, the limited and modest access to optimal legal assistance for working women, when they need legal services, is extremely limited. This includes the financial costs associated with hiring a lawyer to secure their rights, **such as representation in court and litigation expenses in general**. The financial burden of hiring a lawyer or paying court fees or even the ability to follow up and travel for consultation is highly restricted. Additionally, the slow pace of litigation—“delayed justice is incomplete justice”—further exacerbates the situation.

As a result, their losses become compounded: economically, socially, and in terms of their rights, and they fail to benefit from the existing legal systems in the necessary manner.

Importance of the Study:

- The importance of this study lies in its exploration of one of the key factors that fundamentally affect the process of empowering women economically. This is achieved by focusing on several selected articles and provisions directly related to the economic empowerment of women within the framework of national legislation, as previously mentioned.
- The review of several laws, regulations, instructions, and programs related to the economic empowerment of women and comparing them with the standards and principles found in international norms and references on the matter.
- Highlighting the gaps in the system of economic empowerment for Jordanian women, including women from refugee communities.
- The study is supported by a number of practical experiences from women as they enter the labor market, examining the nature of the challenges and obstacles they face in the workplace.
- Shedding light on the procedural aspects and their gaps, which affect the process of economic empowerment for women, and highlighting their negative impacts and consequences on women, families, society, and national income.

Research Questions:

- Understanding the current reality of Jordanian women in the field of economic empowerment, and its impact and connection to the women’s protection system from violence.
- Reviewing the role of the legislative system and its tools in supporting and protecting women from violence by enhancing and developing their resources and skills to enter the labor market and achieve economic empowerment.
- To what extent is the economic protection system and its various tools aligned with international standards in the field of empowerment and economic protection, including protection from violence?
- Identifying gaps in the protection and economic empowerment system.
- Identifying the gaps between the theoretical and legislative aspects of economic protection and the practical reality, by observing a number of real-life experiences and applications.



Objectives of the Study:

- Reviewing the documents, literature, and studies related to women and economic empowerment in Jordan, and forming a comprehensive understanding of the social and legislative system and its impact on women's economic participation.
- Identifying the factors directly linked to violence from a gender perspective, and understanding the nature of this connection and its relationship to the economic status of women, in terms of independence or economic dependence.
- Highlighting the causal relationship between gender-based violence and the economic empowerment of women.
- Identifying legislative gaps that limit or affect women's participation in the economic sphere and their connection to the cycle of violence against women from a gender perspective.
- Developing a number of recommendations and proposals directly related to improving, developing, and enhancing women's economic participation and its impact on improving the quality of life for women, families, and society, as well as highlighting its effect on boosting national income.
- Highlighting the public interest in women's economic participation and promoting the development of frameworks that empower women to participate in an active, influential, and productive economic role.

The study also covered several topics and issues within its scope, including the concepts and terms related to the study's themes.

Additionally, the theoretical framework included a number of international, regional, and national studies and research, reviewing their key findings and recommendations in the field. It also included a legal review of several international documents, with a focus on the most important outcomes issued by the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the rights of working women, focusing on four key conventions:

1. **Convention No. 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (1958).**
2. **Convention No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981)**, which "applies to workers of both sexes who have responsibilities towards their children when these responsibilities limit their ability to engage in or advance in economic activities."
3. **Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection (2000).**
4. **Convention No. 100 on Equal Pay (1951)**, which is considered one of the most important conventions addressing the situation of working women and the protections they should receive in the workplace.

In addition to:

- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):**
The CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and is also known as the international bill of rights for women.

At the national level, the Jordanian Constitution, Article 23, includes a set of principles on which labor law should be based, namely:



- A. Providing workers with wages commensurate with the quantity and quality of their work.
- B. Determining weekly working hours and granting workers weekly and annual rest days with pay.
- C. Providing special compensation for dependent workers in cases of dismissal, illness, disability, or emergencies arising from work.
- D. Establishing specific conditions for the employment of women and minors.
- E. Ensuring that factories adhere to health regulations.
- F. Organizing a free trade union within the bounds of the law.

Additionally, a review was conducted of some laws, regulations, and instructions from various national legislations, highlighting the weaknesses or gaps in them that may affect the process of economic empowerment for Jordanian women, including, for example:

Required Amendments to the Labor Law:

Despite the numerous amendments made to the Labor Law, a review of the provisions of the law and its related regulations indicates the need for further amendments to empower women and achieve the equality of opportunities as stated in Article 6 of the Constitution. These amendments include, for example:

- Expanding the concept of discrimination mentioned in Article (2) of the Labor Law so that its effect is not limited to wages only, but also includes other forms of discrimination, such as discrimination in promotion, appointment in some cases, or participation in training.
- Adding a provision to Article (53) of the law to include issuing regulations that define the standards and mechanisms for calculating equal pay for work of equal value to ensure the implementation of this provision.
- Granting the children of Jordanian women the right to work in jobs that are restricted to Jordanians, and in any sector, without restrictions.
- Prohibiting employers from terminating the employment of pregnant women as stipulated in Article (27) of the law, starting from the confirmation of pregnancy, or during maternity leave.
- Expanding the concept of harassment in the workplace mentioned in Article (29), so that it is not limited to sexual harassment only, but also includes other forms of harassment, and recognizing the worker's right to return to work if harassment or violence is proven and if they wish to do so.
- Including the provision for bank or electronic payment of wages for all sectors, as many women workers in certain sectors, such as the textile industry, kindergarten teachers, and daycare workers, receive wages lower than the minimum wage, without a legal mechanism to ensure they receive this minimum or to monitor it. This should be similar to what is outlined in the regulations for establishing and licensing private educational institutions.
- Introducing the concept of short-term emergency leave for urgent family reasons, allowing workers to use up to five days of their sick leave in the event that one of their children or parents is hospitalized or requires isolation due to a medical condition, in accordance with regulations that define the conditions for benefiting from this leave.
- Increasing the duration of paternity leave to at least ten days with pay, instead of the current three days.



- **Introducing parental leave and long-term caregiving leave as well as other specific caregiving leaves.**
- **Increasing the duration of maternity leave to fourteen weeks (i.e., ninety-eight days) instead of seventy days.**
- **Also, in the context of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the study:**
- The study included an overview of the research methodology, the study population, contextual analysis, and an analysis of several national laws that were previously mentioned, analyzed scientifically from human rights perspectives and gender-sensitive frameworks.
- Additionally, the study reviewed several laws from other Arab countries with similar social contexts, including Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, to provide a regional comparison.
- Following that, the study also included an analysis of the situation of working women in Jordan through statistical analysis, numerical indicators, and their implications. A significant part of the study focused on highlighting a range of challenges and barriers faced by working women, which were real issues documented through the guidance department of the association. These cases were documented as local examples, illustrating sensitive gaps that require careful scrutiny and analysis. It is then necessary to work on suitable intervention plans in all contexts, including social, economic, and programmatic contexts, with examples of such issues being addressed.
- **Asma's Story: "Wage Gap and Bargaining"**
- She says:
- "My story is quite old, in fact. I have a diploma in Library Studies, and I am the second daughter in a very humble family, with the simplest of needs. We grew up on a set of sayings and proverbs that we took as truths, such as 'those who are content live happily,' 'covering one's situation is more important than money and children,' 'the world is with the standing (people who are firm),' and so on. These teachings made our life expectations very modest, and we learned to accept the little we had without complaint, believing that 'what is destined will happen, and there's no escape from it.'
- In light of these living, social, and geographic conditions, I sought change by improving the economic situation of my family. However, since we had no power, no money, no connections, and no influence, and my physical beauty was quite modest, my attempts to find a suitable job were unsuccessful. But I didn't let despair creep in. There was a great inner strength and incredible determination within me to find a job. Perhaps my determination stemmed from my desire to contribute and prove to myself and my family that my education was not wasted but beneficial to all.
- Anyway, I finally found a job opportunity in one of the offices in northern Amman, in one of the complexes. It was by chance, through one of my friends who directed me to this office as they were in need of an executive secretary. I remember that I didn't get the job there because I was late, and they had already filled the vacancy. I was left stunned, almost in tears, because I had really hoped for this opportunity. The office owner apologized to me, and as I was about to leave, I heard a voice calling out to me, saying:
- 'Miss... Miss, I have an office next door, in the same building, and I need a secretary and fieldwork follow-up person. If you're interested, you can start working tomorrow.'
- Of course, I can't describe the joy I felt at that offer. I felt as though I had found a treasure. I didn't think much about the salary, the benefits, or the terms—I just joined immediately the next day. I remember that on my first day, I was the first one to enter the complex, waiting outside for over an hour until they opened the main door.



- I settled into the job and strived to master it with competence and high efficiency. The manager (the office owner) praised my dedication and enthusiasm for work. I often stayed late after hours to finish what was required and prepare for the next day without thinking about overtime. The first and second years passed with a very low salary, hoping that it would improve, as it meant a lot to me and my family.
- The nature of the relationship between us was very professional, with the distance that separates a manager from an employee. The situation continued in this way, and I didn't complain or ask for a raise. It wasn't because I didn't deserve it, but because he was very stingy, and I feared that if I asked for a raise, he might let me go, which I didn't want. So, I accepted the little salary, grateful for the job.
- After a while, I finally gathered the courage to ask for a raise due to the many tasks and responsibilities I was handling. And here, for some reason I didn't understand at the time..."
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- This story highlights the struggles that many women face in the workplace, particularly regarding wage disparities, job insecurity, and the challenges of asserting their rights.
- The manager started to transform from a stingy person who would turn off the heating in the middle of winter to a generous one who would consider providing me with lunch and juice. Over time, I grew more trusting and became more enthusiastic and motivated at work. It became a daily habit for me to stay late after official working hours, which ended at 6 p.m. in the summer and 5 p.m. in the winter. Previously, the manager would leave the office at the end of the day, or sometimes even before that, leaving me alone to complete the office work. However, lately, he started staying late with me, helping me with some tasks and teaching me new responsibilities in exchange for a salary increase.
- This continued until that fateful day. It was winter, in January, and the weather was extremely cold. I had just returned that afternoon from fieldwork, collecting payments and following up on some transactions. I was shivering from the cold, and my clothes were nearly wet, as I didn't have a car and had to rely on public transportation between offices.
- I entered the office and sat behind my desk in the back room to continue my work. When he noticed I had entered, he asked me to come into his office to check some transactions for the next day. While reviewing the papers with him, he suggested we take a short break for lunch. After lunch, he asked me to bring juice from the fridge, which I did, and we drank together. Then, he began to touch my shoulder in an inappropriate manner. I immediately screamed at him to stop and to back off, threatening to yell louder if needed. Strangely, he didn't react or get upset. Instead, with shameless boldness, he calmly said to me:
- "If you want a salary increase, to stay in this job, and to keep progressing, you will have to make some compromises. I will make sure not to hurt you, but if you don't want that, another employee is waiting for your position, and you know where the exit is if you prefer."
- Honestly, after going through this experience, many thoughts and questions crossed my mind, including:
- Was I supposed to remain a prisoner of poverty and dependence on the charity of relatives, and never seek to work?
- Was my desire and sense of economic responsibility toward myself and my family wrong, or misplaced?



- Should I have succumbed to that manager's desires and abuses in exchange for economic security for myself and my family, considering that it might grant me some power in front of my family as a significant contributor to their livelihood?
- Did I make the wrong choice in selecting this job? Should I have looked for a job in a female-only environment, like a daycare center? Or perhaps I should have waited for a government job, even though that might take a long time?
- Why didn't I accept the first random man who crossed my path, someone who would take care of me financially without the headache?
- Why are women workers misunderstood when they agree or are forced to work in almost closed spaces or in jobs with a male-dominated workforce, even by some employers?
- Why are female workers exploited when employers realize or sense that they are in need of work or are financially struggling, starting with low wages, multiple tasks, harassment, or even dismissal when the institution wants to reduce its workload, as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic...?

In reality, I left the job that day and chose to stay away, silent, and at home to avoid problems and challenges. Perhaps it was also out of fear of repeating the experience of looking for work. This is the first time I have dared to speak to anyone about my problem. If you want to know the reason for this disclosure: first, because you don't know my family, and second, because I was told that you might help me find a safe job, a place that respects my dignity, and that would not exploit or blackmail me in any way.

Recommendations:

1. **Reevaluate Economic Policies:** Reassess the economic policies implemented over the past decades and reduce tax burdens to reignite growth, leading to the creation of sufficient and decent job opportunities.
2. **Enhance Domestic Consumption Demand:** Revise economic policies to promote local consumer demand by increasing wage levels, contributing to more effective economic growth.
3. **Review Strategies to Empower Women in the Economy:** Reexamine various strategies and programs aimed at enhancing women's roles in the economy and labor market, whether initiated by government institutions or civil society organizations, not only for the legalization and protection of women's rights but to ensure their effective implementation.
4. **Improve Working Conditions in Jordan:** Improve overall working conditions in Jordan, particularly for women, making them more suitable and attractive. This involves policies and practices that allow all workers to enjoy basic labor rights and fair working standards in all aspects.
5. **Support Home-Based Women's Businesses:** Organize and support women's home-based businesses by creating an umbrella organization that manages, guides, and supports their projects while enhancing their skills to help develop their home businesses and stimulate their economic participation.
6. **Review Proposed Amendments to Labor and Social Security Laws:** Reevaluate the proposed amendments to labor and social security laws to improve working conditions and extend social protections to cover all workers in Jordan, as more than half of the workforce remains unprotected by any form of social safety net.



- 7. Strengthen Labor Inspection:** Activate the role of labor inspectors and adopt more effective inspection policies based on gender equality principles.
- 8. Ensure Adequate Protection for Women Workers:** Provide adequate protections for female workers under Article (29) of the Labor Law to prevent all forms of violence and harassment in the workplace, not only by employers or their representatives but also by colleagues and clients. Amend Article (70) to increase maternity leave in the private sector to 90 days, aligning it with the public sector.
- 9. Ratify ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment:** Continue to advance the ratification process of ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work, without delay or hindrance.
- 10. Activate the System for Agricultural Workers:** Urgently implement the system for agricultural workers and its accompanying regulations, applying them without delay.
- 11. Enhance Public Transportation System:** Improve the public transportation system, especially in provinces and rural areas, to meet women's needs for safe and convenient travel to work. Additionally, reconsider public transport funding to align with the wage levels of workers, many of whom earn below the government's minimum wage of 290 dinars.
- 12. Develop a Code of Conduct on Workplace Violence:** Establish a general code of conduct that clearly defines workplace violence against women, its forms, and penalties, especially concerning issues like online violence and sexual harassment.
- 13. Increase Media Focus on Women's Work Issues:** Enhance media coverage of women's work-related issues, providing deeper analysis, exploring all aspects of these issues, and offering solutions.
- 14. Create Partnerships to Improve Access to Workplaces:** Establish partnerships between civil society organizations, women's rights activists, and relevant government bodies to facilitate women's access to difficult-to-reach workplaces, especially in the informal sector, to identify and monitor violations and abuses.
- 15. Provide Financial Support for Women Entrepreneurs:** Offer banking and credit facilities for women who wish to manage their own businesses, without high costs or impossible guarantees, which often prevent women from meeting such requirements due to their limited financial resources and assets.



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