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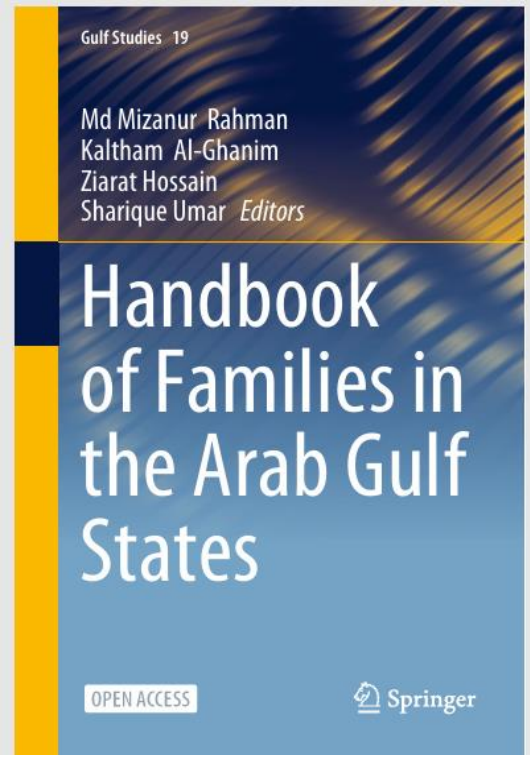
Handbook of Families in the Arab Gulf States: Book Review

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Handbook of Families in the Arab Gulf States, By Md Mizanur Rahman, Kaltham Al-Ghanim Ziarat Hossain and Sharique Umar, Gulf Studies Volume 19, 2025, 777, ISBN. 978-981-96-3411-8, e-ISBN. 978-981-96-3412-5 book link: https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-96-3412-5

INTRODUCTION



The book entitled "Handbook of Families in the Arab Gulf States" written by Md Mizanur Rahman et al. (2025) is an academic literature that presents a comprehensive discussion on family law studies to understand the dynamics of social life in the Arab Gulf region (GCC) namely Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain which are undergoing massive social, economic, and cultural transformations due to the currents of globalization and the demands of modernization. The author thoroughly examines changes in family structures, communication patterns, educational frameworks, and marital trends resulting from modern demands. Furthermore, the author highlights the role of women within the family (gender dynamics), patriarchal

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culture, and divorce. The author posits that state legal policies and technological advancements significantly contribute to shaping family life in the region. Concurrently, migrant families also influence parenting practices and cross-cultural relations within a nation.This book utilizes a scientific approach drawing upon auxiliary disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, politics, and law. The objective of this book is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how family life in the Gulf states is undergoing massive shifts driven by globalization and modernization. Additionally, it aims to offer deep insights into the role of the family in society, serving as both an object and a subject of change. Within the context of family law, this book examines family law studies from sociological and anthropological perspectives.

The first part serves as the primary foundation for the discussion in this book. This section addresses the topics of family formation, marriage, divorce, and female fertility in the Arab Gulf region. The population in this area still maintains the practice of consanguineous marriage (intermarriage among relatives). However, the currents of globalization and the demands of modernization have caused significant shifts in partner selection, transitioning from traditional methods toward more modern approaches. This modern approach often results in less selectivity in choosing a prospective spouse, which can lead to marital instability and ultimately culminate in divorce. The author explains that this region experiences a considerably high surge in marriage rates. These marriage rates contribute to population growth in each country, indicating that women in this region possess high fertility rates. In addition to these topics, the author discusses gender roles and inequalities. Women are beginning to hold larger roles in education and the workforce, even though patriarchal culture persists. Conceptually, this section provides a comprehensive and systematic framework of understanding, allowing readers to grasp the material globally and coherently. However, because the discussion does not focus on a single subject, readers may ultimately lack a deep understanding, potentially creating a knowledge gap. This section would be more beneficial if it included an in-depth explanation of the essence of family formation, a critique of gender inequality, the psychological implications experienced by these nations, and a policy analysis for each country.

The second part presents the factors influencing family formation, marriage, divorce, fertility, and the roles of men and women, as explained in the first section of this book. This second section discusses how technology and social media influence family life in the Arabian Gulf region. This section explains how developments in communication technologies such as mobile phones and social media influence family interaction patterns. Digital drugs, such as content broadcast on TikTok, are changing communication patterns and the psychological state of families. These technological developments are likely to have a significant impact on family relationships. Technological developments facilitate communication between families, maintain harmonious and close family relationships, open wider access to information, serve as

educational tools, and expand networks. However, on the other hand, technological developments actually have negative impacts on family life, especially for those who are not wise in using them. Technology makes people dependent, can reduce face-to-face time together, fosters individualism, triggers family conflict due to misuse of social media, such as contacting members of the opposite sex (infidelity), and most frighteningly, it can provide opportunities for data theft and the proliferation of negative content such as pornography and so on. Simultaneously, technological developments also threaten the younger generation. Technology and social media can influence young people's search for identity, their perspectives, and their ways of thinking. Looking at the current situation, young people are vulnerable to external cultural influences. Their views on social and political life have also been influenced by rapid technological developments. In this section, the author successfully outlines the positive and negative impacts of technological and social media developments and how to balance the two with concrete arguments. However, the author does not yet present solutions to these negative impacts. Strengthening this section with in-depth arguments that present inclusive solutions would be the best step to improve this book.

The third part discusses family policies, the economic impacts on families, and research regarding family dynamics in the Arab Gulf region. This section outlines the critical roles of state policies, economic conditions, and the evolution of research in shaping families within the region. The state plays a pivotal role in determining family policies, such as formulating family law regulations and providing protection for individuals vulnerable to discrimination and violence particularly women and children in order to enhance their well-being. In this context, the implemented policies can be either supportive or restrictive to prevent social disparities. Regarding economic conditions, the author explains that shifting economic circumstances can influence lifestyles and family structures. Furthermore, the author notes that research in this field continues to develop in tandem with changing times. However, it is also mentioned that current research remains limited and has not yet been firmly established upon definitive supporting theories. Consequently, there is a need for a more comprehensive and in-depth approach within a modern, scientific framework. Lastly, this section highlights the impacts of modernization such as migration, urbanization, and globalization which alter family relationship patterns and their underlying value systems. Overall, this section emphasizes that the dynamics of life in the Arab Gulf states result from the interconnected processes between the population, state policies, and scientific advancements. Supplementing this section with supporting arguments that emphasize the need for special attention toward women and children through a non-discriminatory approach would strengthen the book while preventing reader misconceptions regarding gender bias concepts.

The fourth part addresses the topic of family support systems. This section examines the role of these systems in maintaining family well-being in the Arab Gulf states. It begins by briefly explaining the nature of the family and reinforcing it with the concept of family support. The author explains that families are not merely a matter of internal relationships between members but are also supported by external parties such as communities, familial social institutions, and state policies. This support system can take the form of economic, social, educational, and health care assistance, in addition to emotional support from family or close relatives. The targets of this support system are women, children, and the elderly. This support system is provided by the government and institutions active in these fields. Family members, who previously supported each other and provided emotional support to each other due to the demands of modernization, have experienced a shift in their roles. In this modern context, family support systems are dominated by formal institutions and state institutions. Thus, the balance of this system lies between the extended family and the state and social institutions. Conceptually, this section is strong in presenting relevant topics by balancing traditional and modern family support systems in a non-discriminatory manner. However, targeting family support systems solely at women, children, and the elderly risks bias and discrimination against men. The discussion presented in this section lacks a critical perspective, making the analysis seem universal and lacking in depth. This section would be enhanced by a more comprehensive analysis of the psychological impact on children and the elderly with disabilities.

The final part examines various aspects of migrant families across the Arabian Gulf region. It explains the importance of migration in social structures and its implications for the populations of these countries. The author explains that migration brings both challenges and opportunities in changing the structure of family life. Migration brings emotional challenges due to separation between family members. Migration brings significant opportunities by providing labor and increasing incomes for residents of the Arabian Gulf countries. Both of these factors lead to a shift in the structure of local communities toward modern ones. The author presents the results of his analysis by explaining that there has been a change in the concept of family relationships as a direct implication of the migration process. The analysis explains that family relationships are not always bound together in one space but can occur anywhere and at any time, even though they are physically separated. In the modern context, this is referred to as family relationships across space or countries. The analysis also finds that the consequences of this migration result in residents having limited access to legal protection and social services. Furthermore, the author explains that residents who migrate are faced with a cultural shift from a familiar culture to a new, more challenging one. The discussion of migration and its implications is certainly very relevant in the current era because migration is a social process that will always exist. The author successfully offers a new perspective on the concept of migration amidst the currents of globalization. However, this section lacks in presenting real-life data or

cases related to migrant families, and its discussion is too broad. This section would be stronger and more complete if it included factual data on migrant families within the Arab Gulf states and focused on the impact of migration on family life.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the book, entitled Handbook of Families in the Arab Gulf States, presents a systematic and comprehensive discussion with a coherent conceptual framework. The author begins his discussion by examining the basic concept of family and crucial general issues, starting from the importance of family, how the process of family formation, the nature of marriage, divorce, and the concept of female fertility that impacts population size. Furthermore, the author also highlights gender issues in the Arab Gulf region, which are the most crucial issues. After discussing this topic, the author in the following sections discusses various ongoing and continuous aspects to support the discussion in the first section, such as factors that influence family life, the relationship between state policies and economic conditions on family life, family support systems, and finally, a discussion of migrant families in the Arab Gulf region. The strength of this book lies in its comprehensive discussion. Overall, this book can comprehensively describe the dynamics of family life in the Arab Gulf region, which is experiencing significant changes due to the flow of globalization and the demands of modernization. The socio-anthropological approach in this book successfully analyzes the social turmoil faced by the population of countries in the region. Lastly, this book generally lacks a critical approach and is lacking in examining regulatory issues concerning family law, so that studies on families in this area need to be developed.

REFERENCE

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