

# OSTROM WORKSHOP RESEARCH SERIES

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“Attitudes on Family Law as an Electoral Cleavage: Survey Evidence from Tunisia”



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12:00–1:00 PM • Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park

Most Muslim-majority societies are subject to strict family laws with respect to inheritance and divorce. These laws are reflective of, and carry implications for, the standing of women in these societies. But do these laws matter for how voters decide? In this article, I argue that mass attitudes on family law constitute an issue-based social cleavage in Muslim-majority societies. To test my claims, I examine the influence of family law on voting for Ennahda, the largest conservative party in Tunisia. Findings from analyses of Afrobarometer data on women’s inheritance and women’s divorce rights indicate that individuals who hold more egalitarian views on women’s inheritance rights are less likely to vote for Ennahda, whereas there is no statistically significant relationship between egalitarian views on women’s divorce rights and the vote. The literature suggests that issue-based cleavages tend to be non-existent or non-persistent outside of the Western industrialized democracies. Hence, study findings suggest the attitudes on provisions of family law as an alternative source of issue-based cleavages in emerging democracies and regimes with different institutional settings in Muslim-majority societies.



[Salih Yasun](#) is a PhD student at the Department of Political Science with a focus on Comparative Politics and Methods, and a Master’s Student at the Department of Statistics within the Applied Statistics Program. Salih’s research focuses on democratization and women’s property rights within the Middle East and North Africa, and his work appeared in *Women’s Studies International Forum* journal. Salih’s dissertation will be based on examining the interrelationships between culture, institutional arrangements and the environmental factors in order to understand the process of democratization and the state of democracy in Tunisia.

Presentations are open to the public (see our website for papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon ([sturgeon@iu.edu](mailto:sturgeon@iu.edu); 812/855–3151).