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Normative Anchor or an Operational System: Where Does Palestine Stand in CEDAW Ratification with Regard to Employment?

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Abstract

Although Palestine ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2014 without reservations, women's labour-force participation has remained largely stagnant over the past fifteen years, fluctuating between 16% and 20%, raising critical questions about the operational effectiveness of international gender-equality commitments. Focusing on Article 11 of CEDAW, this study adopts a mixed-methods design that integrates administrative labour-force statistics, a survey of 529 economically active women, and qualitative evidence from key-informant interviews, legal texts, and policy documents. Quantitative findings reveal a systematic divergence between symbolic awareness of CEDAW and actionable knowledge of Article 11, with substantially higher levels of informed awareness among respondents engaged through authoritative institutional or civil-society channels. Qualitative evidence further demonstrates that labour-market reforms associated with Article 11 have been uneven and selective, constrained by weak enforcement capacity, fragmented institutional coordination, and employer cost-avoidance practices, particularly in the private sector. Taken together, the findings indicate that CEDAW ratification in Palestine has functioned primarily as a normative anchor rather than as an operational driver of labour-market transformation. By situating these findings within the Sustainable Development Goals framework, the study contributes to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work) by demonstrating how rights awareness and enforcement credibility condition women's employment outcomes, while highlighting the central role of institutional coordination and civil-society mediation in line with SDG 17. The study advances debates on treaty implementation by showing that, in fragile governance contexts, progress toward gender-equality targets depends less on formal legal adoption and more on the institutional pathways through which rights are translated into practice.



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1. Introduction

The right to work without discrimination is firmly anchored in international human rights law; however, its realization remains uneven and highly contingent on national institutional capacity, governance quality, and enforcement mechanisms. In response to persistent gender inequality, 189 State Parties, including Palestine in 2014, have ratified the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Article 11 of the Convention obliges States to ensure equality in employment, remuneration, maternity protection, and safe working conditions [1]. Within the broader international policy architecture, these obligations are closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and SDG 8 on decent work, both of which emphasise not only legal guarantees but their effective institutional implementation [2,3].

A growing body of scholarship on international treaty compliance and SDG implementation distinguishes between normative commitment and operational delivery, highlighting that ratification alone rarely produces sustained socio-economic change in the absence of enforcement capacity and institutional coordination [4–6]. In the SDG literature, this gap is frequently conceptualised as an “implementation deficit,” whereby formal alignment with global norms coexists with weak translation into policy practice and labour-market outcomes [7–9]. In this study, operational compliance is defined explicitly as the extent to which CEDAW Article 11 is translated into observable labour-market practices through three empirically measurable mechanisms: women’s actionable awareness of employment rights, the effective capacity of domestic institutions to enforce labour regulations, and the presence of civil-society actors that mediate between legal norms and workplace realities.

Despite Palestine’s formal commitment to CEDAW, women’s labour-market participation remains persistently low, reaching only 17.4% in the third quarter of 2023 [3]. This outcome mirrors patterns documented across fragile, conflict-affected, and high-informality economies, where progress toward SDG 5 and SDG 8 has proven especially sensitive to enforcement deficits and fragmented governance [10–12]. Cross-national evidence suggests that, while CEDAW ratification has been associated with improvements in women’s political representation and selected health indicators, gains in employment access, job security, and labour-market integration remain uneven and highly context-dependent [13–15]. SDG-oriented labour-market studies similarly attribute this variation to post-ratification legal harmonization, inspection capacity, and the size of the informal economy, rather than to treaty adoption per se [16–18].

Research on conflict-affected and institutionally constrained contexts further demonstrates that international labour norms often encounter implementation bottlenecks rooted in legal pluralism, limited regulatory reach, and weak inter-institutional coordination—factors repeatedly identified as barriers to SDG progress [19,20]. In such environments, the effectiveness of employment protections is mediated through three interrelated mechanisms emphasised in both the CEDAW and SDG literatures: (i) rights awareness as a precondition for claims-making; (ii) institutional enforcement capacity as a determinant of credibility; and (iii) civil-society mediation as a bridge between formal law and lived labour-market realities [21–23]. However, these mechanisms are rarely examined jointly within a single analytical framework, particularly in relation to women’s employment outcomes under CEDAW Article 11.

Against this backdrop, this study examines whether CEDAW ratification in Palestine functions primarily as a normative anchor aligned with global SDG commitments or as an operational system capable of advancing SDG-consistent labour-market outcomes for women. By integrating legal analysis, survey-based evidence on women’s rights awareness, and qualitative insights into institutional enforcement and civil-society engagement, the study responds directly to calls in the SDG implementation literature for mechanism-based explanations of why formal commitments often fail to translate into measurable progress [24–26].

This study advances the literature in three ways. First, it reframes CEDAW implementation as a component of SDG governance rather than as an isolated legal process. Second, it provides a mechanism-integrated explanation of treaty effectiveness under conditions of

political fragility, showing why progress toward SDG 5 and SDG 8 stalls in the absence of credible enforcement and institutional coordination. Third, it offers a methodological contribution to Palestinian scholarship by combining administrative labour statistics, a large-N survey, and qualitative institutional evidence within a unified analytical framework.

Guided by this framework, the study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent has the ratification of CEDAW, particularly Article 11, translated into substantive improvements in women's labour-market participation in Palestine?
- RQ2: How do women's awareness of labour rights, institutional enforcement capacity, and civil-society mediation shape the implementation of Article 11 in practice?
- RQ3: How do these mechanisms interact to explain persistent implementation gaps between formal legal alignment, SDG commitments, and observed labour-market outcomes in a fragile governance context?

2. Literature Review

2.1. CEDAW Article 11 and Employment Equality

Upon ratification, CEDAW imposes binding obligations on States Parties to adopt legislative, institutional, and administrative measures to eliminate discrimination against women, including within employment, remuneration, maternity protection, and workplace safety [1,9]. Article 11 constitutes the Convention's core labour-market provision, translating gender-equality commitments into employment-specific obligations. Early scholarship largely framed CEDAW as a normative instrument, emphasizing its symbolic and signalling value in international human rights regimes. More recent research, however, shifts attention toward the conditions under which Article 11 is operationalised in practice, particularly with respect to women's labour-force participation and employment quality [2,4].

Cross-national analyses indicate that while CEDAW ratification is associated with improvements in women's political representation and selected health outcomes, its labour-market effects remain uneven, delayed, and highly contingent on domestic enforcement arrangements [4,5]. Reductions in informal employment and improvements in job security following ratification are observed primarily in settings where legal reforms are accompanied by effective labour inspection systems and regulatory enforcement [5,6,10]. This literature establishes that legal harmonization constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for substantive employment equality.

2.2. Operational Compliance Mechanisms in Treaty Implementation

A second stream of literature examines operational compliance, emphasizing the institutional mechanisms through which international labour norms are translated into lived employment outcomes. Comparative governance studies demonstrate that in contexts characterised by fragmented authority, legal pluralism, or weak judicial capacity, international conventions frequently remain declaratory rather than enforceable [5,10]. The resulting gap between formal legal alignment and labour-market realities reflects deficiencies in enforcement credibility, inspection capacity, and institutional coordination [2,6].

Parallel research highlights rights awareness and diffusion as a critical mechanism shaping treaty effectiveness. Women's knowledge of labour rights conditions their ability to identify violations, mobilise claims, and engage with enforcement institutions [7,11]. However, awareness alone does not generate labour-market change in the absence of institutional responsiveness and policy follow-through [11,12]. These findings underscore the interdependence of awareness and enforcement rather than their independent effects.

A third strand emphasises civil society mediation as a bridge between international norms and domestic implementation. NGOs play a central role in awareness-raising, monitoring compliance, and engaging international reporting mechanisms, thereby exerting

pressure on states to reform domestic labour regimes [7,12]. However, the literature cautions that civil-society mobilization produces limited labour-market gains where enforcement institutions lack capacity or legitimacy [12,16].

2.3. Sustainable Development Goals as an Implementation and Accountability Framework

Recent sustainable development scholarship reframes gender equality and women's employment as foundational to inclusive and resilient development, positioning SDGs not merely as policy aspirations but as accountability frameworks for implementation. Within this framework, SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work) directly align with the employment-related obligations articulated in CEDAW Article 11, including non-discrimination, safe working conditions, and access to formal employment [22–24].

Empirical SDG studies demonstrate that progress toward SDG 5 and SDG 8 depends less on formal legal commitments and more on enforcement capacity, labour-market regulation, and institutional coherence, particularly in economies with high informality [25,26]. From this perspective, treaty ratification functions as a normative anchor, while SDG progress depends on the operationalization of enforcement mechanisms.

Crucially, SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) is increasingly identified as the enabling condition for SDG implementation, emphasizing coordination among state institutions, enforcement bodies, and civil society actors [4,26–29]. SDG-oriented governance research shows that fragmented institutional responsibilities, weak monitoring systems, and limited civil-society integration undermine the translation of global commitments into measurable labour-market outcomes [30,31]. This insight directly parallels implementation challenges identified in CEDAW scholarship, yet the two literatures are rarely integrated analytically.

2.4. Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts and Labour-Market Informality

The implementation challenges identified above are magnified in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where political instability, constrained sovereignty, and limited regulatory reach weaken enforcement institutions [6,19,32,33]. Comparative studies from conflict-affected economies demonstrate that labour-market informality, employer non-compliance, and weak inspection regimes persist despite formal alignment with international labour standards [20,26]. These contexts expose the boundary conditions under which international labour norms fail to generate substantive employment change.

2.5. Research Gap and Analytical Contribution

Despite extensive scholarship on CEDAW, SDG implementation, and labour-market governance, existing studies rarely integrate rights awareness, enforcement capacity, and civil-society mediation within a single analytical framework explicitly focused on employment outcomes under Article 11. Moreover, CEDAW implementation research and SDG scholarship have largely evolved in parallel, without systematic analytical integration.

By adopting a mixed-methods design that combines administrative labour statistics, a large-scale survey of economically active women, and qualitative institutional evidence, the present study addresses this gap by offering a mechanism-integrated explanation of why international labour norms remain weakly operationalised under conditions of political fragility. Rather than treating Palestine as a case study of context alone, the study leverages it as an analytically revealing setting through which broader SDG-governance and treaty-implementation dynamics can be examined.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

The study adopts a convergent mixed-methods design to examine how Palestine's ratification of CEDAW, with a focus on Article 11, has shaped women's labour-market participation and the surrounding legal and institutional environment. Quantitative and qualitative strands were implemented in parallel, analysed independently, and integrated at the interpretation stage through joint displays, allowing statistical patterns to be examined alongside institutional narratives and lived experiences.

In this study, "operational compliance" is conceptualised as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing (i) the enforceability of Article 11 through domestic legal and institutional mechanisms, (ii) awareness-to-action pathways through which women translate formal rights into labour-market behaviour, and (iii) the capacity of state and civil-society actors to mediate, monitor, and support the practical application of treaty obligations. These dimensions guide both the quantitative measurement strategy and the qualitative analytical framework.

While quasi-causal or counterfactual approaches can offer valuable insights into post-ratification effects, their application in the Palestinian context is constrained by structural data limitations, institutional fragmentation, legal pluralism, and the absence of stable pre- and post-ratification baselines. Accordingly, the quantitative component of this study is not designed to estimate causal treatment effects, but rather to diagnose patterns and stratifications in awareness, perceived barriers, and institutional exposure that signal where operational compliance is most constrained.

This design choice aligns with the study's objective of explaining mechanisms of treaty implementation under conditions of political fragility, rather than attributing causal impact to ratification itself. Ethical approval was obtained from the GAU Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Ref. SBEK 2024-25.009, 20 January 2025). Informed electronic consent was secured from all participants, and all datasets were anonymised and encrypted prior to analysis.

3.2. Quantitative Component

The quantitative component of this study is designed to serve a diagnostic and stratifying role within the mixed-methods framework, rather than to establish causal inference. Its primary purpose is to operationalise key dimensions of compliance, particularly awareness of Article 11, perceived enforceability, and labour-market barriers associated with institutional context. These patterns are subsequently interpreted and explained through qualitative evidence, allowing the study to empirically locate implementation gaps, which are subsequently interpreted through qualitative evidence to explain their persistence.

A structured online questionnaire was administered to economically active women aged 15 years and above in the West Bank. The survey served as an exploratory instrument designed to contextualise the qualitative strand rather than to produce population-level causal inference. Following expert review and a pilot test ($n = 15$), the instrument was finalised using forced-response logic.

The survey captured general awareness of CEDAW, knowledge of Article 11, perceived labour-market barriers, and familiarity with labour legislation, thereby translating the concept of operational compliance into observable indicators. A stratified random sampling strategy was employed to ensure representation across legal regimes: public-sector employees governed by the Civil Service Law ($n = 259$) and women employed in private, NGO, and community sectors under the Labour Law ($n = 270$).

Using Cochran's finite-population formula ($N = 7522$; $p = 0.50$; 95% confidence level; $\pm 5\%$ margin of error), a minimum sample size of 368 was calculated. A total of 529 valid

responses were collected between June and July 2025, exceeding the required threshold and allowing adequate statistical precision. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson's χ^2 tests (with trend), one-way ANOVA, and binary logistic regression models examining how age, education, work experience, and legal sector predict awareness of Article 11 and perceived labour-market barriers. Rather than serving as causal estimators, these models identify systematic associations that signal institutional and sectoral fault lines in the implementation of Article 11, which are subsequently examined through qualitative analysis. Model assumptions were assessed prior to estimation and met in all cases.

3.3. Qualitative Component

The qualitative strand drew on four complementary data sources: (i) eight semi-structured key-informant interviews with senior government officials and civil-society and trade-union leaders; (ii) open-ended survey responses provided by working women ($n = 529$); (iii) paired State and shadow reports on CEDAW implementation (2016–2024); and (iv) a legal-alignment matrix mapping Palestinian labour legislation against Article 11 obligations.

A hybrid thematic design was employed, combining deductive coding derived from the research questions and Article 11 provisions with inductive coding that emerged during iterative engagement with the data. This design was selected to ensure that the analysis remained theoretically anchored while allowing empirically grounded patterns to surface without imposing predetermined interpretations.

3.4. Analytic Workflow and Reflexivity

Initial deductive codes were developed to capture predefined analytical domains relevant to Article 11 implementation, including legislative reform, institutional roles, compliance barriers, awareness, and civil-society engagement. During coding, inductive sub-themes were generated to reflect recurring patterns identified across interviews, open-ended responses, and documentary sources. The distinction between primary and secondary themes reflects their analytic function rather than substantive ranking: primary themes structure the analysis, while secondary themes support interpretive depth during cross-source comparison.

Coding reliability was assessed through double-coding 15% of the qualitative corpus by two researchers, yielding strong intercoder agreement (Scott's $\pi = 0.86$). Reflexive analytic memos were maintained throughout the process to document coding decisions, emergent patterns, and potential interpretive bias, and triangulation across data sources was used to enhance analytic credibility.

3.5. Integration Strategy

Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through joint displays that aligned statistical results with corresponding qualitative themes. This allowed areas of convergence, complementarity, and divergence to be systematically documented and informed the interpretation of findings in Section 5.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Participant anonymity was preserved through coded identifiers, and no identifiable information was retained in transcripts or datasets. Summary findings were shared with selected stakeholders for factual verification without influencing analytic interpretation.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative Findings

All quantitative statistics reported in this section are derived from the study dataset ($n = 529$) and official administrative series compiled specifically for this paper. Regression coefficients, confidence intervals, and diagnostic tests are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request to ensure transparency and replicability.

4.1.1. Female Labour Force Participation Trends (2010–2025)

Table 1 presents official labour force participation rates for Palestinian women between 2010 and mid-2025. Across the entire period, women's participation remains confined to a narrow range, fluctuating between approximately 16% and 20%.

Table 1. Women's labour force participation in Palestine (selected years; 2010–Q2 2025).

Period	2010	2014	2015	2017	2019	2020	2022	2023	2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025
Female labour force participation (%)	17.0	19.4	18.0	19.0	18.0	16.1	20.0	19.0	17.6	17.5	17.8

Source: PCBS administrative series compiled for this study.

Despite short-term increases in selected years—most notably in 2014 and again in 2022—the overall pattern reflects cyclical variation rather than sustained structural improvement. Participation declined sharply during the COVID-19 period in 2020, partially recovered in subsequent years, and again receded in early 2025. Taken together, these trends indicate that the ratification of CEDAW has not, in itself, generated durable gains in women's labour-market participation.

Analytically, this trend-based evidence serves a diagnostic rather than causal function. It establishes a macro-level baseline demonstrating the absence of long-term structural change in women's labour-market participation following ratification, thereby motivating closer examination of the mechanisms that constrain operational compliance. In this sense, the trend analysis identifies where implementation gaps persist, while the subsequent survey-based and qualitative analyses are designed to explain why these gaps endure despite formal legal alignment.

4.1.2. Awareness and Knowledge of CEDAW Article 11

Table 2 summarises respondents' awareness and knowledge of CEDAW Article 11. While general name recognition of CEDAW is relatively widespread, substantive knowledge remains limited. Approximately two-thirds of respondents reported having heard of CEDAW; however, only around one-third had consulted an authoritative source, and fewer than one in ten demonstrated knowledge of Article 11's content or its implementation within Palestine.

Binary logistic regression results (Table 3) indicate that higher educational attainment and exposure to NGO and civil-society awareness activities significantly increase the odds of informed knowledge of Article 11, followed by professional experience. Odds ratios and confidence intervals are reported to allow assessment of effect size and statistical robustness.

Substantively, the magnitude of these effects is meaningful. Women exposed to NGO or civil-society awareness activities are more than twice as likely to possess informed knowledge of Article 11 ($OR = 2.11$), underscoring the central role of institutional and intermediary actors in translating formal legal norms into practical awareness. Similarly, the positive association between educational attainment and Article 11 knowledge ($OR = 1.68$) suggests that rights awareness is unevenly distributed and mediated through

socio-cognitive capacity rather than legal coverage alone. These effect sizes indicate that awareness does not diffuse automatically following ratification but instead depends on structured exposure and institutional mediation—supporting the study’s mechanism-based explanation of operational compliance.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics: awareness and knowledge of CEDAW and Article 11 ($n = 529$).

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Heard of CEDAW	Yes	348	65.8
Heard of CEDAW	No	181	34.2
Consulted a reliable source	Yes	176	33.3
Consulted a reliable source	No	353	66.7
Knowledge of Article 11	Yes	149	28.2
Knowledge of Article 11	No	380	71.8
Knowledge of Article 11 implementation in Palestine	Yes	46	8.7
Knowledge of Article 11 implementation in Palestine	No	483	91.3
Contact with NGOs/CSOs	Yes	92	17.4

Notes: *n* and % are reported for each binary item.

Table 3. Binary logistic regression predicting informed awareness of CEDAW Article 11 ($n = 529$).

Predictor	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI	<i>p</i> -Value
Educational attainment	1.68	[1.24–2.28]	<0.001
Exposure to NGO/CSO activities	2.11	[1.39–3.21]	<0.001
Professional experience (years)	1.04	[1.01–1.08]	0.018
Age	0.97	[0.94–1.01]	0.142
Employment law (Labour vs. Civil Service)	1.09	[0.74–1.60]	0.652
Constant	—	—	<0.001

Dependent variable: Knowledge of Article 11 (0 = No, 1 = Yes).

4.1.3. Perceived Labour Market Barriers

Respondents were asked to identify the primary barriers limiting women’s participation in the labour market. As summarised in Table 4, four obstacles dominate: wage inequality, insufficient childcare and family-friendly policies, gender discrimination in hiring and promotion, and unsafe or hostile workplaces.

Table 4. Perceived labour market barriers limiting women’s participation ($n = 529$).

Barrier Identified	<i>n</i>	%
Wage inequality	254	48.0
Insufficient childcare and family-friendly policies	217	41.0
Gender discrimination in hiring and promotion	201	38.0
Unsafe or hostile work environments (including harassment)	48	9.1
Other barriers (transport constraints, family pressure, social norms, etc.)	42	7.9

Notes: Respondents were allowed to select more than one barrier; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%.

The distribution of responses points to persistent structural barriers that closely mirror the core protections articulated in Article 11, particularly equal pay, non-discrimination,

maternity protection, and safe working conditions. This alignment indicates that the constraints identified by respondents are not peripheral or context specific, but rather central to the Convention’s employment-related obligations.

Analytically, these descriptive results serve a diagnostic and stratifying function within the mixed-methods design. Rather than estimating causal effects, this subsection identifies the domains in which women perceive the most acute implementation gaps, thereby delineating “where” barriers are concentrated. These patterns directly inform the qualitative analysis that follows, which examines “why” these Article 11-aligned constraints persist despite formal legal ratification, focusing on enforcement failures, institutional fragmentation, and workplace-level practices.

4.1.4. Age, Experience, and Education Gradients in Awareness

Age-related differences in awareness and knowledge were examined using chi-square tests for linear trend (Table 5). The likelihood of having heard of CEDAW increases with age; however, the probability of having consulted authoritative sources and possessing actionable knowledge of Article 11 declines among older cohorts.

Table 5. Age gradients in awareness and knowledge of CEDAW Article 11 ($n = 529$).

Awareness/Knowledge Indicator	χ^2 (Linear-by-Linear)	df	p -Value	Direction of Association
Heard of CEDAW	8.19	1	0.004	Increases with age
Consulted an authoritative source	11.01	1	0.001	Decreases with age
Knowledge of Article 11	8.08	1	0.004	Decreases with age
Knowledge of Article 11 implementation in Palestine	4.36	1	0.037	Decreases with age
Perceived effectiveness of Article 11	—	—	0.448	No significant trend
Belief that government laws align with CEDAW	—	—	0.925	No significant trend
Contact with NGOs/CSOs	—	—	0.060	Marginal, non-significant

Notes: Linear-by-linear chi-square tests were used to assess monotonic age trends. Only statistically significant trends are reported with χ^2 statistics.

Younger women are significantly more likely to report consulting reliable sources and to demonstrate knowledge of Article 11 and its implementation. By contrast, perceived effectiveness of Article 11 and beliefs regarding government alignment show no statistically significant age gradient. Collectively, these findings suggest that younger cohorts exhibit higher functional awareness, despite greater name recognition among older groups.

The effects of education and experience are reported in Table 6. Higher educational attainment is associated with a greater likelihood of consulting authoritative sources and engaging in self-initiated information-seeking. Professional experience, by contrast, shows a modest negative linear association with knowledge of Article 11, suggesting that longer tenure in the labour market does not necessarily translate into greater rights awareness.

Substantively, the observed effect sizes indicate modest but meaningful stratification in functional awareness. The association between education and overall awareness (Cramér’s $V = 0.17$) reflects a small-to-moderate gradient consistent with differential access to information resources, while the negative correlation between professional experience and knowledge of Article 11 ($r = -0.09$) suggests gradual detachment from rights-oriented information over time rather than cumulative learning. Analytically, these quantitative patterns identify which groups exhibit lower functional awareness, while the qualitative findings explain why such awareness erodes or fails to translate into effective rights-claiming under fragmented institutional conditions.

Table 6. Education and experience gradients in awareness and knowledge of Article 11 (*n* = 529).

Indicator	χ^2	df	<i>p</i> -Value	Effect Size
Panel A. Educational attainment				
Heard of CEDAW	—	—	n.s.	—
Consulted an authoritative source	12.20	1	<0.001	—
Knowledge of Article 11	9.50	1	0.002	—
Overall awareness by education level	15.13	6	0.019	Cramér's <i>V</i> = 0.17
Panel B. Professional experience				
Indicator	Test	Statistic	<i>p</i> -Value	Direction
Knowledge of Article 11	Linear trend	<i>r</i> = −0.09	≈0.04	Negative
Overall differences across experience groups	χ^2	—	0.39	Not significant

Notes: χ^2 = Chi-square test; df = degrees of freedom; n.s. = not statistically significant. Higher educational attainment is associated with greater engagement in self-initiated information-seeking. Longer professional experience shows a modest but statistically significant negative association with knowledge of Article 11.

4.1.5. Legal Coverage, Employer Responses, and Perceived Effectiveness

Differences by legal regime—Civil Service Law versus Labour Law—are presented in Table 7. Knowledge of Article 11 does not differ significantly by legal coverage. This absence of differentiation suggests that formal legal regime alone does not constitute a primary channel through which women acquire knowledge of employment-related rights under CEDAW. In the Palestinian context, awareness of Article 11 appears to be shaped more strongly by extra-legal pathways—such as civil-society engagement, informal information networks, and individual information-seeking—than by statutory coverage per se.

However, women governed by the Labour Law are significantly more likely to identify childcare and family-policy deficits as a key barrier to labour market participation, reflecting sectoral differences in employment conditions and institutional support. This divergence indicates that, while awareness of rights remains uniform across legal regimes, the lived experience of employment constraints varies by sector. In particular, the Labour Law sector exposes women more directly to deficits in family-related protections, making such barriers more salient even in the absence of higher legal awareness.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the study's broader argument that legal classification without credible enforcement and systematic rights communication does not generate differentiated awareness outcomes. Where enforcement institutions are weak and rights dissemination is fragmented, legal regimes shape material conditions but do not necessarily translate into differentiated legal consciousness.

Perceptions of employer behaviour and implementation challenges were also examined. A slight majority of respondents believe that stronger Article 11 protections could make some employers more hesitant to hire women; this perception does not vary by legal regime. Similarly, anticipated implementation challenges are reported across both sectors, indicating that concerns regarding enforcement are systemic rather than sector specific.

Finally, the perceived effectiveness of Article 11 was assessed using one-way ANOVA (Table 8). Respondents who possess knowledge of Article 11 rate it as more effective in improving workplace equity than those who do not. Although the effect size is small, the difference is statistically significant, reinforcing the link between informed awareness and perceived policy relevance.

Table 7. Legal coverage differences in awareness, perceived barriers, and employer responses (N = 529).

Indicator	Civil Service Law (%)	Labour Law (%)	Test Statistic	p-Value	Effect Size
Knowledge of Article 11	—	—	$\chi^2 \approx 0.31$	≈ 0.58	n.s.
Identifies childcare/family-policy deficits as a key barrier	18.0	28.0	$\chi^2 (1) = 6.35$	0.012	$\Phi = 0.11$
Perceives that stronger Article 11 protections may discourage employers from hiring women	—	—	$\chi^2 (1) = 0.25$	0.620	n.s.
Anticipates implementation challenges in Palestine	—	—	$\chi^2 (1) = 2.66$	0.103	n.s.

Notes: χ^2 = Chi-square test; n.s. = not statistically significant.

Table 8. Perceived effectiveness of CEDAW Article 11 by level of knowledge (one-way ANOVA).

Group	n	Mean Perceived Effectiveness	SD
Knows Article 11	149	1.74	0.82
Does not know Article 11	380	1.47	0.89
ANOVA results	Value		
F (1, 527)	4.42		
p-value	0.036		
Effect size (η^2)	0.008		

Notes: Perceived effectiveness was measured on a Likert-type scale. Higher values indicate a stronger perceived contribution of Article 11 to improving workplace equity. η^2 indicates a small but statistically significant effect.

4.2. Qualitative Findings

4.2.1. Translating Ratification into Law: Partial and Uneven Alignment

Qualitative evidence indicates that the ratification of CEDAW has prompted selective legal adjustments rather than comprehensive alignment with Article 11 obligations. Interviews with senior government officials, supported by the legal-alignment matrix, reveal incremental amendments addressing maternity leave and general workplace protections, while core issues—such as enforceable equal-pay mechanisms, explicit anti-discrimination definitions, and binding sanctions—remain weakly codified. This pattern reflects a form of formal compliance that prioritises politically feasible provisions while deferring reforms perceived as fiscally costly or socially sensitive. As a result, legal change remains uneven across sectors and insufficient to generate systemic or sustained labour-market effects for women.

4.2.2. Institutional Fragmentation and Enforcement Gaps

Across all qualitative sources, respondents consistently emphasised that institutional fragmentation undermines effective implementation of CEDAW commitments. Responsibilities for labour inspection, grievance handling, and judicial follow-up are distributed across multiple ministries and agencies with limited coordination. Government informants acknowledged constraints in inspection capacity and enforcement authority, while civil-society actors described complaint mechanisms as procedurally complex, slow, and weakly trusted by workers. These enforcement gaps help explain why formal legal provisions have not translated into observable improvements in participation rates or workplace conditions, reinforcing the disjuncture between law and practice.

4.2.3. Awareness Pathways: Symbolic Recognition Versus Actionable Knowledge

Narratives from working women and civil-society representatives reveal a clear distinction between symbolic recognition of CEDAW and actionable knowledge of Article 11. Although the Convention is widely recognised as a general rights framework, understanding of specific employment protections and enforcement channels remains limited. Women who reported engagement with NGOs, training sessions, or awareness campaigns demonstrated clearer knowledge of rights and available remedies. By contrast, respondents relying on informal networks or media exposure tended to exhibit superficial awareness without the capacity to translate that knowledge into claims or action. This qualitative pattern clarifies why awareness remains shallow unless mediated through structured institutional or civil-society pathways.

4.2.4. Private-Sector Resistance and Cost-Shifting Dynamics

Employer-related barriers emerged prominently across interviews and open-ended survey responses. Private-sector representatives and labour advocates described defensive hiring practices linked to the perceived costs of maternity protection, childcare accommodations, and compliance with inspection requirements. In the absence of compensatory public policies—such as maternity replacement subsidies or affordable childcare systems—these costs are effectively shifted onto employers, incentivizing avoidance strategies. This dynamic illustrates how market responses can dilute the intended effects of Article 11, particularly in the private sector where regulatory oversight is weaker.

4.2.5. Civil Society as an Intermediary Actor, Potential and Constraints

Civil-society organizations play a critical intermediary role in translating international commitments into locally intelligible claims through awareness campaigns, legal aid, and shadow reporting. However, their impact is constrained by limited financial resources, episodic donor funding, and political sensitivities surrounding CEDAW. While NGOs succeed in mobilizing awareness and documenting violations, sustained influence on enforcement outcomes depends on institutional receptiveness and formal coordination mechanisms. Consequently, civil society mitigates—but cannot substitute for—state enforcement capacity or regulatory authority.

4.3. Integrated Mixed-Methods Findings

This section integrates the quantitative results (Section 3.1) with the qualitative evidence (Section 3.2) to explain how CEDAW ratification, particularly Article 11, operates in practice within the Palestinian labour market. Rather than presenting the two strands as parallel or independent outputs, the integration clarifies the mechanisms through which legal awareness, institutional capacity, and socio-economic structures jointly shape women's employment outcomes. Across both datasets, a consistent pattern emerges: CEDAW ratification functions primarily as a normative and symbolic commitment, while its labour-market impact is contingent upon enforcement capacity, institutional coordination, and women's access to actionable legal knowledge. Quantitative findings show that formal indicators—such as women's labour force participation rates and basic awareness of CEDAW—have remained largely stagnant in the post-ratification period. Qualitative evidence explains this stagnation by revealing that legal commitments are only weakly translated into enforceable workplace practices, particularly within the private sector.

4.3.1. Awareness: Symbolic Recognition Versus Actionable Knowledge

Quantitative results demonstrate a clear gap between name recognition of CEDAW and substantive knowledge of Article 11. While a majority of respondents reported having

heard of CEDAW, only a small minority demonstrated familiarity with the content of Article 11 or its implementation mechanisms in Palestine. The qualitative findings contextualize this gap by showing that awareness is often mediated through fragmented, project-based NGO campaigns or sporadic training initiatives, rather than institutionalised, state-led dissemination strategies. Interviews with government officials and civil society actors confirm that Article 11 is rarely embedded within routine labour inspections, workplace induction processes, or employer compliance frameworks. As a result, awareness remains largely symbolic unless reinforced through sustained engagement with unions, NGOs, or legal aid providers, limiting women's capacity to translate formal rights into claims or remedies.

4.3.2. Barriers to Employment: Convergence Between Perceived Obstacles and Legal Gaps

The convergence between quantitative and qualitative findings is particularly pronounced in relation to perceived labour-market barriers. Survey respondents identified wage inequality, insufficient childcare and family-friendly policies, discrimination in hiring and promotion, and unsafe or hostile workplaces as the dominant constraints on women's participation. Qualitative narratives provide explanatory depth by linking these barriers to weak inspection regimes, limited sanctions for non-compliance, and employers' cost-avoidance strategies. Stakeholders consistently emphasised that Article 11 protections exist largely at the level of legal text, but lack operational force, particularly in sectors governed by the Labour Law. This convergence underscores that women's reported barriers are not incidental or context specific but closely aligned with persistent enforcement and accountability deficits in the labour governance system.

4.3.3. Cohort Effects and Uneven Institutional Reach

Age and education gradients identified in the quantitative analysis further align with qualitative insights. Younger women demonstrated higher levels of actionable knowledge and engagement, which interviews attribute to recent exposure to NGO-led awareness campaigns and digital information channels. In contrast, older cohorts frequently reported familiarity with CEDAW as a general concept, but limited understanding of enforceable rights or complaint pathways. This pattern suggests that awareness efforts have been episodic, uneven, and weakly institutionalised, disproportionately benefiting recent labour-market entrants while failing to reach women with longer employment histories. The absence of systematic, workplace-based awareness mechanisms reinforces these cohort effects.

4.3.4. From Ratification to Implementation

Taken together, the integrated findings indicate that CEDAW ratification alone has not generated structural transformation in women's labour-market participation in Palestine. Instead, its effects are filtered through institutional capacity, the quality of coordination between state and civil-society actors, and the availability of accessible enforcement mechanisms. Where legal norms are not embedded in inspection practices, employer regulation, and effective complaint systems, treaty commitments remain aspirational rather than transformative. This mixed-methods integration provides a grounded explanation for the persistence of low female labour force participation despite international legal alignment and establishes a clear analytical bridge to the policy-oriented discussion in the following section.

5. Discussion

This section interprets the findings rather than restating empirical results, focusing on the mechanisms that explain why Palestine's ratification of CEDAW, particularly Article 11, has not translated into sustained improvements in women's labour market

participation. The discussion, therefore, moves beyond descriptive outcomes to examine how legal commitments interact with institutional capacity, awareness pathways, and enforcement credibility.

5.1. From Ratification to Practice: Explaining the Persistent Implementation Gap

Despite more than a decade having passed since Palestine's ratification of CEDAW, women's labour force participation has remained largely stagnant, fluctuating within a narrow band rather than exhibiting sustained growth. This pattern indicates that ratification constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for labour-market transformation, particularly in contexts characterised by political instability, fragmented governance, and weak enforcement capacity. The findings reinforce the well-established distinction between normative compliance and operational compliance. While international treaties establish formal obligations and symbolic commitments, their domestic impact depends on effective institutional translation, regulatory enforcement, and administrative follow-through. In the Palestinian context, limited inspection capacity, fragmented legal application, and constrained state authority appear to have diluted the transformative potential of Article 11. The cyclical rather than cumulative nature of women's participation trends further suggests that employment outcomes remain highly sensitive to external shocks rather than anchored in durable institutional reform. This supports prior scholarship, which argues that, in fragile governance settings, treaty commitments risk remaining aspirational unless embedded within enforceable labour-market institutions. These findings are consistent with prior research arguing that international human rights treaties often generate symbolic or normative compliance without guaranteeing effective domestic implementation, particularly in contexts marked by political instability and weak regulatory capacity [3,6,7].

Importantly, the mechanisms identified in the Palestinian case—women's awareness of rights, institutional enforcement capacity, and civil-society mediation—are not unique to Palestine, but reflect broader dynamics observed across conflict-affected states, fragile administrations, and economies characterised by high labour informality. In such contexts, weak regulatory reach and fragmented authority often limit the capacity of formal legal reforms to translate into behavioural or market-level change. Where enforcement institutions lack credibility, awareness of rights remains largely symbolic, and civil society actors assume a compensatory but uneven role in rights dissemination and monitoring. Viewed in this way, Palestine functions as an analytically extreme but theoretically informative case, illustrating how international labour norms are filtered through institutional fragility rather than mechanically implemented. The findings therefore offer insights that are relevant beyond the Palestinian context, particularly for understanding treaty implementation in settings where sovereignty is constrained, governance is fragmented, and labour markets operate largely outside formal regulatory frameworks.

5.2. Awareness Without Empowerment: The Limits of Symbolic Knowledge

One of the most salient findings of this study is the divergence between general awareness of CEDAW and substantive knowledge of Article 11. While name recognition of the Convention is relatively widespread, actionable understanding of its employment-related provisions remains limited. This divergence points to a form of symbolic awareness that lacks empowering capacity. Knowledge that is not reinforced through authoritative information sources, institutional channels, or civil-society engagement does not readily translate into rights claiming or labour-market agency. In the context of Article 11, this gap limits women's ability to identify violations related to equal pay, maternity protection, non-discrimination, and safe working conditions.

The findings demonstrate that engagement with NGOs and authoritative sources plays a decisive role in transforming awareness into actionable knowledge. This underscores the mediating function of civil society in translating international legal norms into locally intelligible and practically usable rights frameworks. Without such mediation, awareness remains abstract and disconnected from enforcement mechanisms. This pattern reinforces earlier findings that distinguish between symbolic awareness of international conventions and substantive legal empowerment, where knowledge becomes effective only when mediated through institutions or civil society actors [6,7]. Consistent with studies on rights diffusion, awareness detached from enforcement pathways rarely translates into labour-market agency or rights claiming.

Beyond the Palestinian context, this pattern has clear relevance for other fragile states, conflict-affected territories, and economies characterised by high labour informality. In such settings, international labour norms are often introduced through top-down legal or diplomatic channels, while rights dissemination remains fragmented, under-resourced, or politically constrained. As a result, awareness tends to circulate as symbolic knowledge rather than as an instrument of empowerment. Where enforcement institutions lack credibility and access to justice is limited, awareness alone may heighten expectations without enabling effective rights claiming. The Palestinian case thus illustrates a broader mechanism through which awareness, in the absence of institutional reinforcement and credible mediation, remains decoupled from labour-market empowerment—an insight that is applicable to a wide range of contexts where formal legal alignment outpaces institutional capacity.

5.3. Generational and Educational Paradoxes in Rights Awareness

The analysis reveals a notable generational paradox: older women are more likely to have heard of CEDAW, yet younger women demonstrate higher levels of actionable knowledge regarding Article 11. This pattern suggests that recent awareness initiatives, educational exposure, and advocacy efforts may be reaching younger cohorts more effectively, even as older cohorts retain greater symbolic familiarity with the Convention. Higher educational attainment increases the likelihood of consulting authoritative sources and engaging in self-initiated information seeking. However, professional experience does not consistently enhance knowledge of employment rights. This finding challenges assumptions that prolonged labour-market participation naturally leads to greater legal literacy. Instead, it suggests that rights awareness depends more on targeted informational pathways than on tenure alone. Taken together, these patterns highlight a decoupling of experience and empowerment, reinforcing the importance of continuous rights education rather than passive exposure through employment. These generational dynamics echo findings in the broader literature suggesting that rights awareness is shaped less by labour-market tenure and more by exposure to contemporary advocacy, education systems, and civil-society mobilisation [7,13].

The Palestinian case thus supports arguments that legal literacy is socially produced rather than accumulated through experience alone. Beyond the Palestinian context, these generational and educational patterns are likely to be relevant in other fragile states and conflict-affected economies where labour markets are segmented, informal employment is widespread, and institutional access to rights education is uneven. In such settings, younger cohorts often benefit disproportionately from donor-supported programmes, digital information channels, and civil-society outreach, while older workers—despite longer labour-market exposure—may remain disconnected from evolving rights frameworks. This suggests that generational disparities in actionable legal awareness are not context-specific anomalies, but structural features of environments where formal employment protections

coexist with weak institutional dissemination. The Palestinian case therefore offers analytically transferable insight into how rights awareness is unevenly produced across cohorts in settings where governance capacity and labour-market regulation are constrained.

5.4. Legal Coverage, Enforcement, and Institutional Trust

Contrary to expectations, the study finds no significant difference in knowledge about Article 11 between women covered by the Civil Service Law and those governed by the Labour Law. This result indicates that formal legal coverage alone does not guarantee effective transmission or enforcement of rights. The absence of sectoral differences suggests that enforcement credibility, rather than legal classification, constitutes the primary bottleneck. In Palestine's fragmented governance context, this finding implies that institutional trust and inspection capacity matter more than the formal scope of labour legislation. Perceptions regarding employer behaviour further reinforce this interpretation. Concerns that stronger protections may deter hiring are shared across legal regimes, reflecting broader anxieties about uneven enforcement and employer compliance. These perceptions underscore the central role of credible enforcement institutions in translating legal protections into labour-market confidence. This finding aligns with comparative research demonstrating that formal legal coverage does not automatically translate into differentiated outcomes when enforcement institutions lack credibility or capacity [3,10]. In line with earlier regional studies, the effectiveness of labour rights appears contingent on inspection regimes and institutional trust rather than statutory scope alone.

Beyond the Palestinian case, this enforcement–trust dynamic is likely to be salient in other fragile and conflict-affected contexts characterised by fragmented authority, limited inspection capacity, and high levels of labour informality. In such settings, formal distinctions between public and private employment regimes often coexist with weak enforcement infrastructures, resulting in uniform awareness levels but uneven lived protection. Evidence from post-conflict economies and low-capacity states similarly suggests that workers' confidence in labour rights depends less on statutory coverage than on the perceived credibility of enforcement institutions. The Palestinian case therefore offers analytically transferable insight into how enforcement capacity and institutional trust condition the practical relevance of labour legislation in environments where legal pluralism and governance constraints dilute the impact of formal protections.

5.5. Contribution to the Literature

This study contributes to the literature by advancing a mechanism-integrated model of treaty implementation under conditions of institutional fragility, rather than treating CEDAW ratification as a purely normative or legal event. By empirically linking awareness pathways, enforcement credibility, and labour-market outcomes, this study contributes to treaty-implementation research in three ways. First, it demonstrates that normative ratification operates as a symbolic anchor unless supported by credible enforcement institutions. Second, it shows that awareness becomes operational only when mediated through authoritative or civil-society channels. Third, by integrating these mechanisms within a single mixed-methods design, the study advances existing compliance theories by illustrating how international norms are filtered through institutional fragility and fragmented governance, rather than being mechanically translated into outcomes [3,6,7,12]. This contribution aligns with emerging scholarship that conceptualises CEDAW implementation as a locally mediated institutional practice, rather than a uniform legal process, highlighting how subnational and institutional arrangements condition the realization of women's rights in practice [34].

Methodologically, the study extends existing Palestinian research by combining administrative labour statistics, a large-N survey of economically active women, and qualitative institutional evidence within a unified analytical framework. This integration enables a more systematic examination of how awareness, enforcement capacity, and civil-society mediation jointly shape employment outcomes following CEDAW ratification, moving beyond analyses focused solely on legal alignment or socio-cultural barriers.

6. Conclusions

This study examined whether the ratification of CEDAW, specifically Article 11, has translated into substantive improvements in women's labour-market participation in Palestine. The findings indicate that, while ratification represents a formal treaty commitment, it has not been sufficient to generate sustained structural change in women's employment outcomes. Labour force participation has remained largely stagnant over time, suggesting that legal adoption alone does not overcome entrenched institutional and socio-economic constraints. By integrating administrative labour data with survey-based and qualitative evidence, the study demonstrates that implementation gaps are driven less by the presence of legal provisions and more by enforcement capacity, awareness pathways, and institutional credibility. General awareness of CEDAW does not consistently translate into actionable knowledge of Article 11, highlighting the distinction between symbolic recognition of rights and effective legal empowerment. The study contributes to the literature by moving beyond ratification-centred analyses to emphasize the mechanisms that condition treaty effectiveness within fragile governance contexts.

From a sustainable development perspective, the findings provide empirically grounded insight into why progress toward SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) remains uneven in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Consistent with SDG scholarship, the evidence shows that equality in employment requires more than formal legal commitments; it depends on enforceable labour regulation, credible inspection regimes, and institutionalised pathways through which rights awareness can translate into action [22–26,34]. The persistence of informality, weak enforcement, and fragmented labour governance undermines the realization of decent work, even where international norms are formally adopted [4,25,27,35–37]. In this regard, the study also speaks directly to SDG 17 by demonstrating that effective implementation hinges on sustained coordination and partnerships among state institutions, civil society organisations, trade unions, and international monitoring mechanisms [38]. By empirically linking CEDAW Article 11 to labour-market outcomes through these mechanisms, the study clarifies how enforcement capacity, institutional coordination, and awareness-to-action pathways jointly mediate the relationship between treaty ratification and substantive progress toward the SDGs [39,40].

6.1. Policy Recommendations: From Evidence to Action

Building directly on the mixed-methods findings, the following policy recommendations are derived from the most robust and recurrent empirical patterns identified in the study. Rather than presenting normative aspirations, the recommendations are prioritised according to the strength of the evidence and the mechanisms shown to constrain the operationalisation of CEDAW Article 11 in the Palestinian labour market.

6.1.1. Priority 1: Strengthen Enforcement and Labour Inspection Capacity

The most consistent empirical finding across quantitative trends, survey responses, and qualitative narratives is the weakness of enforcement capacity. Women's labour force participation has remained stagnant despite ratification, and respondents across

sectors report limited confidence in inspection and complaint mechanisms. This indicates that enforcement deficits, rather than legal absence, constitute the primary bottleneck to implementation.

Policy action should therefore prioritise the expansion and professionalisation of labour inspection units, including specialised training on gender-responsive enforcement, clearer sanctioning authority, and transparent follow-up procedures. Without visible and credible enforcement, Article 11 protections remain symbolic, and awareness alone does not translate into behavioural change among employers or rights-claiming among workers.

6.1.2. Priority 2: Institutionalise Awareness of Article 11 Beyond Symbolic Recognition

Survey results demonstrate a sharp gap between general awareness of CEDAW and actionable knowledge of Article 11, with fewer than one in ten respondents able to identify how Article 11 is implemented in practice. Qualitative findings further reveal that awareness is episodic, urban-centred, and often detached from enforcement pathways.

Policy interventions should therefore institutionalise awareness through workplace-based mechanisms rather than ad hoc campaigns. Embedding Article 11 content into induction programmes, trade-union training, and routine professional development—particularly for newly employed women—would directly address the observed generational and educational disparities in rights knowledge. This approach aligns with the empirical finding that engagement with authoritative sources and NGOs significantly increases informed awareness.

6.1.3. Priority 3: Formalise Civil Society–State Collaboration Mechanisms

The qualitative evidence consistently identifies civil society organisations as key intermediaries in translating CEDAW norms into locally intelligible claims, yet their impact is constrained by fragmentation and weak institutional integration. While NGO contact correlates with deeper rights knowledge, it does not systematically translate into enforcement outcomes.

Formalising collaboration through consultative committees, joint monitoring frameworks, and structured referral mechanisms between NGOs, inspectorates, and labour courts would directly address this gap. Such institutionalisation responds to the empirical finding that civil society mitigates—but cannot substitute for—state enforcement capacity in Palestine’s fragmented governance context.

6.1.4. Secondary Priority: Address Structural Barriers Directly Linked to Article 11

Quantitative and qualitative findings converge on four dominant structural barriers: wage inequality, childcare deficits, discriminatory promotion practices, and unsafe workplaces. These barriers mirror the core protections articulated in Article 11, indicating that implementation failures are concentrated in specific policy domains rather than diffuse social factors.

Targeted policy measures should therefore focus on enforceable pay-equity mechanisms, childcare provision obligations (particularly in the private sector), and mandatory anti-harassment frameworks. These interventions respond directly to the barriers most frequently identified by working women and labour stakeholders, rather than broad or symbolic equality initiatives.

6.1.5. Enabling Measure: Integrate CEDAW Article 11 into National Labour and Development Planning

To avoid fragmented and project-based implementation, Article 11 obligations should be embedded within national labour and employment strategies and linked to existing SDG monitoring frameworks. Aligning enforcement indicators, awareness metrics, and

labour-market outcomes would enhance institutional coherence and allow progress to be tracked beyond treaty ratification itself.

Such integration reflects the study's broader conclusion that sustainable implementation depends on embedding international commitments within domestic planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems rather than treating CEDAW as a stand-alone legal instrument.

6.2. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that also point to promising avenues for future research. Access to certain governmental documents and officials was constrained by the prevailing political context, which limited the depth of institutional evidence available for analysis; future studies could address this by incorporating administrative labour records and court-level data as they become accessible. Cultural norms and sensitivities may have influenced the candour of some interview responses, particularly on gender and labour-rights issues, suggesting the value of longitudinal qualitative designs that build sustained trust with participants over time. In addition, the reliance on self-reported measures of awareness and perceptions introduces the possibility of social-desirability bias. While triangulation across quantitative, qualitative, and documentary sources mitigates this concern, future research would benefit from linking survey data with objective indicators such as inspection frequency, case resolution times, and enforcement outcomes.

Building directly on the mixed-methods framework and instruments developed in this study, future research could implement a longitudinal enforcement-tracking design to examine how changes in institutional capacity affect the translation of Article 11 into labour-market outcomes over time. Specifically, a panel study could follow a cohort of economically active women across multiple years, linking repeated survey measures of rights awareness and perceived effectiveness with administrative data on labour inspections, sanctions, and dispute-resolution outcomes at the sectoral level. Such a design would allow researchers to assess whether improvements in enforcement intensity or civil-society mediation precede measurable changes in women's labour-market participation and perceived legal effectiveness, thereby strengthening causal inference without relying on artificial counterfactuals. Applying this design across different sectors or regions, including Gaza where data permit, would further enable comparative analysis of treaty implementation under varying degrees of institutional fragility and conflict exposure.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organisation(s)
DWRC	Democracy & Workers' Rights Center
HJC	High Judicial Council
HR	Human Resources
ILO	International Labour Organization
KPI(s)	Key Performance Indicator(s)
MoF	Ministry of Finance (State of Palestine)
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoNE	Ministry of National Economy
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs (now MoSD in some documents)
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PGFTU	General Federation of Palestinian Trade Unions
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
RWDS	Rural Women Development Society
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SHAMS	Human Rights and Democracy Media Center SHAMS
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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