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**The Hidden Victims of Economic Sanctions**

**Examine Sanction Impacts on Women**

**Introduction**

The use of economic sanctions as a tool for international coercion has become increasingly popular, with states (e.g., the US) and international organizations (e.g., the UN) employing them as an alternative to military confrontation. Sanctions are designed to put pressure on governments or leaders, but the unintended consequences of these policies can fall heavily on marginalized civilians, particularly women. Despite this, research on the effects of sanctions has largely ignored their gendered impacts on women. To address this gap, this paper takes a gender-sensitive approach and employs a systematic regression analysis to investigate the effects of economic sanctions on women's economic, social, and political rights in targeted states.

Using the ordered logit model, this study examines whether economic sanctions have negative impacts on women's rights in 146 targeted countries from 1970 to 2004, based on existing research on sanctions and gender. The statistical results reveal that while economic sanctions do not negatively affect women's economic, political, and social life, sanction duration does generate negative consequences for these three rights. Surprisingly, humanitarian sanctions are found to significantly improve women's economic and social status. Control variables, including interstate and civil wars, GDP per capita, and trade, also have statistically significant effects. For example, war is shown to worsen women's situations, while higher levels of economic development and openness can mitigate the negative consequences of sanctions.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the literature on sanctions and gendered institutions is reviewed. Next, the hypotheses are formulated, and the variables' measurement and construction processes are explained. Third, the data distribution is presented, and the statistical results and implications are discussed. Finally, the findings are summarized, and the research limitations are briefly discussed. Overall, this study sheds light on the gendered impacts of economic sanctions and highlights the need for further research to fully understand the complex dynamics at play.

**Literature Review**

For centuries, economic sanctions have been used as a tool of foreign policy and have recently become more popular than military operations for states and international institutions to achieve their strategic objectives, such as controlling civil conflicts, restraining terrorism, and improving human rights (Gutmann, Neuenkirch, and Neumeier 2021a; Drury and Li 2006; Peksen 2011; Escribà-Folch 2010). The existing literature on international relations primarily focuses on the conditions and effectiveness of sanctions, with scholars conducting numerous studies to analyze under what circumstances states will use sanctions and to evaluate their outcomes and consequences (Baldwin and Pape 1998; Drury 1998; Peksen 2019a; Pape 1997; Chan and Drury 2000; Brooks 2002b; Baldwin 1985; Peksen 2019b; Allen 2006; Hufbauer et al. 2007). However, these studies have largely overlooked the gendered consequences of economic sanctions on women due to three problematic assumptions: (1) policy tools are gender-neutral; (2) the target is a unified state rather than non-state actors, particularly individuals; and (3) sanction impacts are aggregate rather than uneven and gendered.

Definitions of Economic Sanctions

Economic sanction scholars often define economic sanction in terms of states' political purposes. As Pape (1997) noted, a state employing economic sanctions undermines the aggregate economic might of a target state through trade and financial restrictions to coerce the targeted government to alter its political behaviors (93). Sanctions are expected to either directly force the target government to make concessions on certain issues or indirectly trigger public pressure or revolts against the targeted government (94). However, economic coercion can also be used for other purposes, such as weakening a rival's military capacity and demonstrating resolve. Additionally, sanction behaviors can extend beyond actions to include beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and predispositions to act (Baldwin and Pape 1998, 190). Specific sanction measures involve tariff increases, import duties, asset freezes, expropriation, license denial, trade blacklist, boycott, aid suspension, and so on (Baldwin 1985, 41). And broadly speaking, arms embargoes, high-technology restrictions, and travel bans could also be counted as sanction tools.

One assumption most sanction scholars make is that the targets of sanctions are states (governments). However, this is not always the case. Targets can also include groups, such as terrorist organizations like ISIS, or individuals, such as autocrats and high-level officials (Cronin 2003; Allen 2008; Escribà-Folch and Wright 2010; Choi and Luo 2013; McLean et al. 2018). It is worth noting, however, that disadvantaged groups other than the targeted groups or individuals may bear the brunt of the side effects of sanctions. In reality, the targeted elites are not directly threatened by the aggregate impacts of sanctions, but instead, the vulnerable segments of populations, particularly women, often suffer the most (Drury and Peksen 2014). This scenario not only renders sanctions ineffective but also inhumane, particularly if a sender country aims to improve human rights in the target country. Unfortunately, most policymakers and intellectuals fail to recognize this issue. To address this blind spot, I focus on women's suffering under economic sanctions.

Gendered outcomes of sanctions

Regarding the limited theoretical discussions on gendered sanctions, I draw on gendered institution research to explore underlying gendered dynamics involved in "seemingly gender-neutral" sanctions. In my view, sanctions are policies created involving both the sender and the receiver countries. Policymakers in initiating states consider whether or how to impose sanctions, while policymakers in targeted states decide how to distribute the negative consequences of sanctions. Gender institution scholars inspire me to examine processes and practices in institutions. As noted by (Kenny 2007), “seemingly neutral institutional processes and practices are embedded in hidden norms and values, privileging certain groups over others” (95). Burton (1991) explicitly points out that state institutions are historically the products of the "mobilization of masculine bias." The sanction decision-makers are likely ignorant of the disproportionate impacts on women.

In the same vein, Acker (1992) reveals that institutions of politics, law, religion, academy, and other fields have been historically developed and dominated by men as well as interpreted from "the standpoint of men in leading positions (567). Lowndes (2020) examines how political institutions are systematically gendered with four key variables: rules about gender, rules with gendered effects, gendered actors working with rules, and gendered outcomes of action shaped by rules (545-47). In terms of this gendered institution research, sanctions as a foreign policy tool are fundamentally gendered. They are interpreted and decided by men in power. The gendered actors, gendered rules, and gendered practices within institutions will produce and reproduce gendered outcomes together. For example, sanctions affect women’s life expectancy more than men’s and lead to government spending cuts on public education and health that women rely on and worsen female poverty (Perry 2022; Gutmann, Neuenkirch, and Neumeier 2021b; 2016). It is no wonder that policymakers with a male bias have consistently ignored the disproportionate impacts on marginalized women. Indeed, women (of color) are not absent in elite institutions (e.g., Condoleezza Rice and Carolyn Maloney in the US), and they are also likely to employ sanctions as male politicians. But noteworthily, institutions are gendered nominally and substantively (Acker 1992; Lovenduski 2005; Chappell and Waylen 2013; Waylen 2014). Male politicians generally outnumber female politicians in high-ranking positions. And women are pressured to assimilate the dominant norms of elite institutions controlled by dominant members. Unsurprisingly female politicians can be blind to women’s status in other countries.

In addition to policymaking, most economic sanction studies are gender-blind to women's suffering primarily due to the assumption of gender-neutral sanctions. And because of state-centered assumptions, they often look at aggregated impacts but neglect disproportionately negative consequences on individuals within a state. Lori Buck, Nicole Gallant, and Richard Nossal (1998) point out that existing sanction scholarship focuses on the aggregate impacts of these measures on the target but ignores the possibility that while sanctions are targeted at an entire country, the effects of sanctions will not be evenly distributed among all those who reside in that country. The differential impacts on society depend on factors such as age, occupation, class, and gender. A gender lens reveals that disadvantaged groups, such as women, would bear the brunt of sanctions. Long-term and severe sanctions are no different from wars and conflicts in terms of the enormous costs imposed on the people in the targeted countries. And often, sanctions are heavily used during wars and conflicts (D. J. Lektzian and Sprecher 2007; Charron 2012; Gershenson 2002; Sen, Al-Faisal, and AlSaleh 2013a; D. Lektzian and Regan 2016; Rogers 1996). These shocks can cause deterioration of political stability, violations of human rights, and massive layoffs. In an unstable and disrupted political and economic environment, women are very likely to bear the brunt of the shocks.

Empirical research

Due to prevalent gender blindness in policymaking and academics, very little literature touches on gendered sanctions. Most are qualitative case studies examining women's life in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Haiti, Cuba, Myanmar, North Korea, and other developing countries, which are also conflicted areas (Taheri and Guven Lisaniler 2018; Askari et al. 2003; Gibbons and Garfield 1999a; Sen, Al-Faisal, and AlSaleh 2013b; Al-Jawaheri 2008; Vuorijärvi and Ratti 2009; Seyfi, Hall, and Vo-Thanh 2022; Saliba 2020; Cainkar 1993; Vilardo and Bittar 2018; Al-Ali 2005). They focus on different gendered aspects of sanctions' negative impacts, such as women's empowerment, working rights, employment in tourism, education, public health, gender-based violence, etc.

There are also several quantitative analyses about sanctions' impacts on women. Taheri and Guven Lisaniler (2018) conducted a time series analysis of economic sanctions that undermined women's economic rights in Iran from 1990 to 2015. And lucky enough, three articles did a global quantitative analysis. Drury & Peksen (2014) conclude that sanctions would likely worsen women's well-being, and the targeted country's wealth can mitigate the adverse effects by analyzing 146 countries from 1971 to 2005. And they use ordered logit regression, and their dependent variable data are primarily from ﻿Cingranelli–Richards (CIRI) women rights dataset and their sanction data are from ﻿Hufbauer et al. (2007). Perry (2021) discovers that sanctions could cause government spending cuts on public education on which women heavily rely from his ﻿time-series, panel regression analysis of 150 countries from 1990 to 2014. And these cuts even negatively impact women in the post-sanctions period. But Perry (2021) does not ﻿find a negative impact of sanctions on women's human rights, contrary to policy expectations. And Gutmann, Neuenkirch, and Neumeier (2021b) concluded that sanctions are not "gender-blind" because they found that the UN and the US sanctions reduced women’s life expectancy more than men’s in their analysis of 98 countries from 1977 to 2012.

**Theory & Hypotheses**

My research focuses on the targeted countries, so I would not discuss the initiating countries' dynamics in this theory-building part. In most countries, institutions are not neutral or objective. Instead, they are shaped by power relations and social norms that reflect and reinforce existing gender inequalities (Krook and Mackay 2015). Gender hierarchy perpetuates all kinds of institutions, especially political institutions (Lowndes 2020). The gendered institutions can produce and reproduce gendered outcomes through their policies, rules, and practices in multiple domains, including politics, laws, economy, education, health, etc. Since men in leading positions often dominate institutions, it is reasonable to speculate that male elites in the target states will either ignore disadvantaged groups or attempt to deflect the worst consequences to them. In short, sanctions' consequences would be unevenly distributed between different groups. But most sanction literature ignores gender dimensions of sanctions within a state, instead only looking at the influence of regime type and state wealth (Wallace 2013; Weeks 2008; Brooks 2002a; Peksen and Drury 2010; Drury and Peksen 2014).

Under the gendered institution context, I consider the influence of sanction shocks on individuals' economic, social, and political status. Economic sanctions directly destabilize the target state's economy first and then spread to other aspects of life. In many countries, women tend to concentrate on part-time and precarious work with the lowest pay and little job security. Especially, ﻿women constitute a large percentage of the workforce in service and export-oriented industries (﻿electronic assemblies, ﻿textiles, apparel, etc.) (Neumayer and De Soysa 2007; Ozler 2000; Ghosh 2004; Bhattacharya and Rahman 1999; Sundaram 2009). These sectors can be severely affected regarding sanctions can limit trade and disrupt financial markets. Considering the long-existing gender discrimination against women in the workplace, I assume that women are more likely than men to lose jobs or face discrimination in hiring and promotion practices. For example, Devin and Dashti-Gibson (1997) found that in the former Yugoslavia, women were more likely to be unemployed than men under the international ban on economic and financial exchanges. In short, during the sanction period, women's economic rights would be violated.

Hypothesis 1: economic sanctions will undermine women's economic rights.

Moreover, economic disruptions can worsen the social environment. Economic sanctions burden the target state financially, leading to government cuts in social spending, specifically in public education (Perry 2022). Also, the operation of health facilities would be affected (Sen, Al-Faisal, and AlSaleh 2013b). Some sanctions include import restrictions on essential commodities, especially food and medications (Pintor, Suhrcke, and Hamelmann 2023). This can lead to shortages of food, medicine, and other essential resources, which can have a significant impact on people's daily lives. For example, in the case of the sanctions imposed on Iran, there were reports of medicine shortages, which significantly impacted people's health (Gorji 2014). Sanctions can also lead to inflation and currency devaluation as the target country's economy struggles to adjust to the reduced access to international markets. This can result in rising prices and reduced purchasing power, making it difficult for people to afford basic necessities. For example, in the case of Zimbabwe, the economic sanctions led to hyperinflation, which significantly impacted people's ability to afford food and other basic goods (Garfield, Devin, and Fausey 1995).

In addition to the difficulty in accessing public services, food, medications, etc., social disorder is another concern. Under economic sanctions, the target states tend to have increased crime rates as a result of widespread unemployment and high inflation (Al-Ali 2005). Women in such a deteriorating environment are likely to experience gender-based and domestic violence. Although humanitarian sanctions are about preventing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Eckert 2017; Bott, Morrison, and Ellsberg 2005; Huvé 2018), they may exacerbate such violence. In this scenario, women's social rights will be worsened.

Hypothesis 2: economic sanctions will reduce women's social rights.

Last, not only limited to violence toward women, people living miserable and frustrating life might also be violent against the government, causing political instability. Imagine that political leaders or elites controlling the distribution mechanism of public resources can divert the sanction costs unevenly to different segments of the population (Drury and Peksen 2014). The unfair redistribution of resources and costs can incite grievance and anti-government violence. In particular, poor and disadvantaged people likely turn to domestic terrorists out of relative economic deprivation, anger, and frustration (Choi 2014; Peksen 2009; Wood 2008). According to Allen's (2008) research, when the poor attribute their economic difficulties to a government's institutions, sanctions can result in an escalation of violence against that government. Similarly, Marinov (2005) also finds that sanctions can destabilize a country's leadership due to increased anti-government violence and pressure on the regime. In response to anti-government violence, the targeted government will restrict the democratic freedoms of citizens and any challenge to its authority to ensure its political survival (Peksen 2009). In this sense, economic sanctions increase government repression and worsen government respect for human rights. And during periods of political instabilities and violence, women in targeted countries are less likely to participate freely in political affairs (Buck, Gallant, and Nossal 1998; Gibbons and Garfield 1999a; Devin and Dashti-Gibson 1997). Governments preoccupied with ongoing domestic turmoil are also unlikely to ensure women's political rights.

Hypothesis 3: economic sanctions will reduce women's political rights.

**Research Design**

To test the above three hypotheses, I’ve collected sanction data from the research of Drury and Peksen﻿ (2014) and ﻿Hufbauer et al. (2007), women’s rights data from Cingranelli–Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Database (Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay K. Chad 2021), war and conflict data from the PRIO Armed Conflict Database (Strand H 2005), and other socioeconomic data from the World Bank database. There are 3300 observations encompassing 146 countries from 1970 to 2004. The unit is “country-year.” Regarding that the dependent variables are ordinal, I use ordered logistic models. I also consider the possible lagging effects of economic sanctions and other variables on women’s rights because some variables’ impacts are not instantons in the year of sanction. I also expect to see variations in women’s status across different regions. Therefore, I created dummy variables for Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, and North Africa and Europe (reference level), as Drury and Peksen﻿ (2014) did in their research.

Dependent variables (DVs)

My outcome variable is women's well-being, measured by three indicators: CIRI women's economic, political, and social rights. Each is an ordinal variable scaling 0, 1, 2, and 3. CIRI women's political rights include the right to vote, run for political office, hold elected and appointed government positions, join political parties, and in government officials. 0 means “none of women’s political rights are guaranteed by law”; 1 means political equality is guaranteed by law but limited in practice—women only hold less than five percent of seats in the national legislature and other high-ranking government positions. 2 means women hold five to thirty percent of seats. 3 indicates women hold more than thirty percent of seats (CIRI Master Coding Guide, 71-72). It is worth noting that political equality in this measurement does not mean that women share equal percent of seats as men.

In addition to political rights, CIRI economic rights is measured by equal pay for equal work, equality in hiring and promotion practices, free choice of profession or employment without the need to obtain a husband or male relative's consent, the right to be free from sexual harassment in the workplace, job security (maternity leave, unemployment benefits, no arbitrary firing or layoffs, etc...), non-discrimination by employers, the right to work in the military and the police force, and so on. 0 means no economic rights for women under law. 1 means law stipulates some economic rights for women, but law enforcement is weak. 2 means the government does enforce these laws effectively but still tolerates a low level of discrimination against women. 3 implies that the law protects all or nearly all women's economic rights, and the government also fully enforces these laws.

Last, CIRI women’s social rights is defined as the right to equal inheritance, to enter into marriage based on equality with men, to travel abroad, to obtain a passport, to initiate a divorce, to participate in social, cultural, and community activities, to education, and freedom from female genital mutilation of children and of adults without their consent. The interpretation is similar to CIRI economic rights (CIRI Master Coding Guide, 93-94).

Independent variables (IVs)

In this paper, due to data limitations, I only consider government-led ﻿economic sanctions, including restrictions of trade and financial activities, as well as suspension of aids. I draw economic sanction data from the research of Drury and Peksen﻿ (2014) and ﻿Hufbauer et al. (2007). The first variable is economic sanction (dummy variable). It takes 1 if a country is under economic sanction(s) in a given year and 0 for no sanction in a year. I also consider three sanction-related variables: sanction duration, sanction costs, and humanitarian sanction (dummy variable). The duration means how long a country receives sanction in a given year. ﻿It implies the cumulative negative impact of sanctions over time. Drury and Peksen (2014) reminded that this variable should be logged because the negative impact has a diminishing rate of the effect. Although the duration of sanctions may increasingly harm women, the rate at which the harm intensifies will gradually slow down over time (473). ﻿

﻿Including the variable of sanction costs is also important as it can evaluate the average cost of sanctions on the target economy as a percentage of its gross national product during the sanction period (Hufbauer et al., 2007: 101–102). This variable considers both the direct and indirect impacts of sanctions on the target country's markets and finances, and also takes into account any potential counterbalancing effects of economic assistance from third-party countries (Hufbauer et al., 2007: 101–102). Through this variable, I aim to capture the severity of economic coercion and its potential to disrupt the economy, politics, and society, which in turn can adversely affect women's livelihoods (Drury and Peksen, 2014: 473).

Last, the humanitarian sanction (dummy variable) is also included in my analysis. Some sanctions may intend to prevent humanitarian crises such as genocides, civil wars,

extra-judicial killings, sexual violence, and gender-based violence(Moser, Moser, and Clark 2001a; Spangaro et al. 2013; Hilhorst, Porter, and Gordon 2018; Müller and Tranchant 2019). But it can bring out mixed effects. The sanctions might improve women’s well-being but are also likely to worsen women’s status (Brahimi et al. 1997; Gibbons and Garfield 1999b; Engle 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to include it in the models to see the real effects.

Control variables

I include five control variables: civil war and interstate war, peace years, natural log of GDP per capita, trade, and democracy. Civil war and interstate war is a dummy variable, taking ﻿1 if a country experiences either a civil or interstate war in a particular year, and 0 otherwise. Militarization can increase discrimination and violence against women (Müller and Tranchant 2019). ﻿ In wartime, hegemonic masculinity and militarized masculinity are often prioritized (Enloe 2000; Alison 2007; Baaz and Stern 2009; Kirby and Henry 2012; Moser, Moser, and Clark 2001b). This prevalence of such types of masculinity can result in the violation of women's rights, especially in an unstable society. In addition, peace years variable is also included. It measures the number of years that have passed since the end of the latest internal or interstate militarized conflict in a country. It is important because countries with a longer period of peace would have greater stability, which can reduce discrimination against women in socioeconomic and political crises (Melander 2005). I’ve collected the civil and interstate war data from the Armed Conflict Database, created by the PRIO (Strand H 2005) to measure these variables.

Moreover, I consider economic factors: the wealth and trade openness of the target courtiers. The wealth is measured by GDP per capita, which is found can mitigate the adverse impacts of sanctions (Drury and Peksen 2014). And trade openness (import and export), although it is not equally beneficial to every country and individual can still improve people’s well-being (Frankel and Romer 1999; Bhagwati 2004). In particular, trade can generate spillover effects on women and then increase their socioeconomic status (Richards and Gelleny 2007; Neumayer and De Soysa 2011; Duflo 2012; Saqfalhait et al. 2023). Besides, I include democracy, measured by ﻿Polity 5 dataset’s Polity2 10-point autocracy index (Marshall and Gurr 2020)﻿. Studies have shown that democratic countries tend to have lower levels of human rights abuses, attributed to the fact that democratic governments are subject to greater institutional constraints, such as the potential for removal through popular vote and the presence of an effective system of checks and balances (Mitchell and McCormick 1988; Henderson 1991; Poe and Tate 1994; Davenport and Armstrong 2004). It is reasonable to infer that women in democratic countries are less likely to be affected by sanctions. The effect of democracy has to be controlled. Lastly, I include five dummy region variables to control the region variations of women’s existing status including ﻿Asia and Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, North

America and Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. I set ﻿North America and Europe as the reference level.

**Explore Variables**

I first take a look at the distribution of three DVs in Figure 1. In most countries, women’s economic rights and social rights are at level 1, which means that there are some rights for women under law, but in practice, the government does not enforce these laws effectively and put differently the government tolerates a moderate level of discrimination against women.[[1]](#footnote-1) Better than the other two rights, most women’s political rights concentrate at 2, which means that women’s political rights were guaranteed in law but were still moderately prohibited in practice. [[2]](#footnote-2) I also check the distribution of main IVs. As Figure 2 shows, most countries in most years did not experience economic sanctions, and among sanctions, most are not humanitarian sanctions.

Figure 1

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Figure 2

Chart, histogram

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**Results**

My models generate mixed results. On the one hand, the insignificant results cannot support three hypotheses. As Table 1 shows, my primary IV, economic sanction, has a statistically significant positive impact on women’s political rights but not a statistically significant negative impact on economic and social rights. On the other hand, the sanction-relevant variables can support the hypotheses. For example, sanction duration shows significantly negative effects on women’s three rights, which means the longer the sanction persists, the worse the women’s economic, political, and social life. Sanction cost is also associated with economic rights but not the other two rights. And surprisingly, humanitarian sanctions can significantly improve women’s economic and social status, but it can worse women’s political rights. Although it is hard to explain why the respect for political rights gets worse, the supporting positive evidence on women’s economic and social status can be used to argue that humanitarian sanctions can help to prevent violence against vulnerable civilians in targeted countries.

The control variables also yielded interesting results. In particular, the presence of war and civil war can worsen women’s situations regarding these two variables’ negative statistical significance on women’s rights. In particular, interstate war has more negative impact than civil war on women. Additionally, it is interesting to see that democracy is negatively correlated with women’s political rights, contrary to the common assumption that women in democratic countries should have better respect for political rights than in non-democratic countries (Tremblay 2007; Paxton, Hughes, and Painter 2010) And it is surprising to see that the peace years has a negative impact on women’s economic and social rights. It was also surprising to find that peace years had a negative impact on women's economic and social rights, which goes against the expectation that women face less discrimination in more peaceful environments.(Drury and Peksen 2014). Further research is needed to determine the underlying mechanism.

And economic factors generally have positive impacts on women’s rights. GDP Per Capita shows very significant positive coefficients on three rights. And trade can improve women’s economic and social rights. These findings align with some literature’s argument that globalization can improve women’s status (Gray, Kittilson, and Sandholtz 2006). In this respect, in more economically advanced and open countries, women have more rights, particularly economic and social rights, and the impact of sanctions can be mitigated by these favorable factors.

Last, it is important to note that there are regional variations in the respect for women's rights. Compared to women in Europe and North America, women in Sub-Saharan Africa have more respect for women’s economic and political rights. And women in the Middle East and North Africa generally have worse political and social rights. But it is also hard to explain why these regions have such variations.

Table

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**Conclusion**

This study examined the impacts of economic sanctions on women's economic, political, and social rights across 146 targeted countries from 1970 to 2004. Although the findings do not fully support the hypotheses that economic sanctions undermine women's rights, they do indicate that the duration of sanctions can have negative effects on women's status. Future research should delve deeper into the underlying and interacting mechanisms at play in these dynamics.

This study has two notable limitations that should be addressed in future research. Firstly, an intersectionality perspective should be adopted to analyze women's status, as there are hierarchies among women that must be taken into account. Unfortunately, the lack of disaggregated data precluded such an analysis in this study. Secondly, the gendered effects of sanctions could not be fully captured due to data limitations, as the CIRI human rights dataset only provides data on women's rights. To address this limitation, alternative proxy variables could be utilized, such as female and male labor force participation rates, unemployment rates, and education enrollment rates, which are available from the International Labor Organization and the World Bank databases.

In sum, while this study's results only partially support the hypotheses, they underscore the need for further research to explore the complex and nuanced relationships between economic sanctions and women's rights. Such research should strive to employ an intersectionality perspective and consider multiple proxies measuring the outcome of interest.

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