



# FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT AS ONE OF THE BIGGEST REASONS OF OVERALL HIGH RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN ARAB REGION

Rakhimova F.F

2<sup>st</sup> year student of Bachelor, TSUOS

## ABSTRACT

*As some sources declare, global female unemployment rate is 6 percent, exceeding the male unemployment rate by 0.8 percent. This persisting low rate of women's unemployment worldwide became one of the most discussable subjects nowadays and this problem touches Arab countries more than any other region in the world. Article given below reveals women's unemployment as one of the reasons of high rate of overall unemployment in Near East and considers its causes.*

**KEY WORDS:** *unemployment, Near East, Arab region, gender-blind economic policy, policy and regulatory issues, social and cultural constraints, market demands.*

## DISCUSSION

Unemployment is considered one of the most intractable problems humanity has ever faced. For last three decades this problem became inevitable not only for developing countries but also for developed ones. When it comes to some country, consequences like massive poverty, salary's reduction and threat for social and political lives are unavoidable. Latter day this stubborn challenge addresses the whole world, especially Near East. Arab world, regardless of its wealth and development, suffers from problem of unemployment and non-full employment much more than any other part of the world. As World Bank and International Organization of Labor narrate in their last ranking of employment in all countries worldwide in 2018, Arab countries took pretty low places by high indications of unemployment like Tunisia by 15.5 percent, Libya by 17 percent, Jordan by 15.0 percent, Yemen and Sudan by percent, Egypt by 11 percent and others(not taking into consideration that some developing and non-developed countries did not indicate the level of employment in their countries to the full, because people who do not actually work are not officially entered into account). This problem was caused by several factors like active migration and immigration, climate change and others. Let's now turn to some inner statistics of Arab countries.

Regardless of fact that amount of people younger than 14 is the highest in Arab countries – 38 percent among all considering countries in the world. 12 000 000 people or 15 percent of Arab world are employable but unemployed. Coming to 2010

without taking any necessary actions, this indication of number of people without jobs grew to 25 000 000. In some Arab economists' forecast that there is a possibility of increase of this indication to 514 000 000 in future ten years, in spite of 75 percent of Arab countries' population will be able-bodied by then.

These predictions which are worth to be seriously worried about make us deeply think about factors that caused this problem and now, when we have common idea about the whole picture of this, let's turn to the one of its biggest reasons. Women's unemployment in Arab world happened to be one them.

Nowadays, women's unemployment in Arabic countries is the lowest in the world – 32 percent. Even in UAE where this indication is much higher – 77 percent, proportion of employed women is roughly 66 percent. In a way of women's participation in social production, there are still different boundaries related to religious traditions, low level of production force's development, discrimination in salary delivery, disability of women to own definite kinds of jobs and others. All these factors happened to be the reason why in 2005 only around 27 percent of women in Arab countries were considered to be in economically active women's category.

There are many causes behind the high unemployment of young Arab women, which differ from one country to another. However, four major factors were identified, namely: gender-blind economic policy, mismatch between



educational outcomes and labour market demands, social and cultural constraints, and regulatory and policy issues.

While economic policies adopted by many Arab countries aim to achieve a certain degree of inclusive economic growth benefitting young men and women equally, the real situation is not frequently same. Economic and employment policies habitually perpetuate the gender divide between Arab women and men benefiting men more than women, particularly in terms of access to economic opportunities, incentives and stimuli, and in terms of job creation and economic growth policies.

The second cause of low amount of women in employment is inconsistency between education and labour market. In principle, new entrants into the labour force are more likely to be better educated than already active workers, have a higher productivity potential and are thus more employable. Yet, the reality is that Arab youth, particularly young women, are more likely to be unemployed or in vulnerable employment the higher they advance in their education. For instance, unemployment among working age women with tertiary education in Algeria and Bahrain stands at 51.9 percent and 25.5 percent, respectively, while for women with primary education, it stands at 24.4 percent and 8 percent, respectively. These figures reflect a detrimental mismatch between role and impact of education and the skill needs of the labour market.

The third reason of the problem we have under consideration is social and cultural constraints. Women in many levels of society in the Arab region today have three roles to play, namely, the productive, reproductive and community roles, while men only take on the productive and community roles. The productive role refers to value-added activities that result in economic benefits; the reproductive role refers to childbearing and childcare activities; and the community role includes household work, education, recreation, and engagement in politics, among others. So, the final cause of women's unemployment in Arab region, as I consider is policy and regulatory issues. All Arab countries have adapted their legislations with a view to address gender inequality, and have included laws on labour, personal status, and civil rights and liberties. In fact, some Arab countries adopted measures to promote political participation and representation of women in making decision, provide incentives for civil society organizations to strengthen the voice and bargaining power of women and induce policy reforms to promote the employment of young women. However, significant gaps remain unaddressed, particularly with regard to promoting the right of young women to decent work opportunities on equal footing with young men, equal

pay, a harassment-free work environment, and employment opportunities that they deserve.

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