

Effect of Education in Employment Opportunities for in Iranian Woman

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Abstract: Education plays an important role in a person's life because it allows for personal growth, enrichment, awareness of environment and opportunities for social-economic improvement. It is because of education, research and application that society has progressed the way it has and it is the lack of education that perhaps can be blamed for many dark spots of human history, particularly for women. Therefore, it is only logical to think that education would be available throughout the world, to all people, of all colors, economic backgrounds, gender and ethnicity in order to safeguard the future's wellbeing. Many researchers have discovered that the road to education holds many traps and barriers. It depends much on the economy of a nation and its religious and racial beliefs. In Iran for example, the role of education on women's life has affected their relationship with the other gender and their role in society. Most significantly, education after the Islamic revolution has been used to promote the ideals of Islam and to construct the ideals of motherhood and wifehood.

Key words: Employment, active population, women participation, education, wifehood, Islam

INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Education in 1995 noted in their report that: over the past two decades (Iranian) women have made substantial educational progress. The large gaps between the education levels of women and men that were evident in the early 1970s have essentially disappeared for the younger generation. Although, they still lag behind males in mathematics and science achievement, high school females on average outperform males in reading and writing and take more credits in academic subjects. In addition, females are more likely than males to attend college after high school and are as likely to graduate with a postsecondary degree.

Not only in the secondary education level, since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran but also the number of Iranian female students entering colleges and universities has rapidly increased. Additionally, the number of Iranian women professionally involved in higher education, either in administrative or faculty positions has escalated noticeably.

The National Report on Women in Iran in 1995 cited that Iranian female secondary school graduates now have the opportunity to further pursue their education at the

university level in the fields benefiting their talents and abilities because many educational obstacles facing women have been removed. The increased opportunity for female students and faculty is related to different issues. According to the National Report on Women in Iran in 1995, important factors such as establishing suitable facilities (such as educational environment segregated by gender) have promoted women's education in many fields. This combination has merged to produce desirable effects on the educational status of women in Iran. The impact of these factors has also been seen on religious beliefs, a noticeable point. Consequently, recent studies indicate a decline in statistical differences between the number of male and female students. The National Report on Women in Iran in 1995 revealed that nationally, academic female students' performance now stands 5% above that of male students.

Achievements of women in higher educational levels and the number of female students in different fields have increased noticeably in recent years. The National Report on women in Iran in 1995 indicated a comparison between academic years 1987-1988 and 1992-1993. The comparison shows the following achievements in women's graduation from universities in the span of those 5 years: an increase

of 119% in the number of graduates in social sciences and humanities; a two-fold increase in graduates in basic sciences; an increase of 230% in the number of graduates in agricultural and veterinary sciences; an increase of 70% in technical and engineering fields and medical sciences and an increase of 246% in different fields of arts.

The number of women graduating from universities and higher education institutions increased almost two-fold between 1987-1988 and 1992-1993. The number of women staff members at universities almost doubled during this same period. Among the 30,262 academics serving in the field in 1992-1993, about 18% were women. At present, 5.7% of professors, 16.5% of associate professors, 21.9% of assistant professors and 36.9% of university instructors are women. A total of 2,220 women are staff members of faculties of medical sciences which represents 18% of the total.

The influence of modern education on muslim women:

The gap between female and male literacy rates in several places is increasing and the overall level of illiteracy is extremely high. The Islamic world, especially the Arab world is amongst the areas in the world which has the highest rate of illiteracy amongst women, the lowest level of schooling for girls and the smallest number of women in paid employment. In 1991, the illiteracy rate among females in Afghanistan was 86% in Pakistan 78% in Egypt 66% and in Iran 56%. Although, women's literacy varies enormously from country to country and also from area to area in any particular country, women in the Arab world are still a small minority among the student population. In every country, the rate of male literacy is much higher than female literacy. Even in those countries which have initiated some reforms, there are still considerable disparities between male and female literacy as well as major discrepancies between the type of female education offered and the socio-economic needs of the various Arab countries. This has been caused by many factors such as: family attitudes toward female education which still prevail, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the Muslim population lives and the high female drop-out rate due to the inequality between urban and rural education.

But the most important factor so far has been the historical interpretation of the jurists. This has taken the shape of a clear deviation from genuine Islamic principles by its strong opposition to female education. This factor is still very strong in Muslim society, particularly in Arab society and it influences government policy on education options and opportunities for women. Saudi Arabia presents a clear example where Islam has been used first to deny and then to discourage women's education.

This trend continued while Mohammad Reza was in power and many schools were founded in order to accommodate the massive amount of female students that poured in from every part of Iran in order to receive an education. Studies reveal that the literacy level among females age seven and older rose from 8% in 1959 to 18% in 1966 and to >26% in 1971. But the literacy level between rural and urban areas was very different and as a result of that in the early 1970s, close to half of the urban women were literate as opposed to only 10% of the rural women. The number of women that rose to higher education was even more dramatic with only a few women receiving a high school education. Furthermore, the degrees that women received at the time were strictly controlled by the traditional patriarchic roles of society. There were a few lawyers, only a few doctors and engineers while most of them held a degree in human sciences, natural sciences and mathematics. In an interview given by Mohammed Shah to Oriana Fallacy in October of 1973, she concluded that the Shah is a person who considers women as simply graceful ornaments incapable of thinking like a man and then strives to give them complete equality of rights and duties. To her question about women and how he saw them he said that: many scholars believed one of the positive outcomes of the revolution was the founding of all-girl schools and therefore the continuation of female education.

Schools were valued because the girls received natural role models as they saw other women applying their education towards their economic improvement. Also, parents were not worried about sending their daughters to the universities because they believed that the Islamic education posed no harm. Besides, the fact that there were no male students and male teachers also brought peace of mind. Also, schools were built after the revolution to accommodate the baby boom in Iran. In conjuncture with the strict application of the veil, parents agreed to send their girls to school because their veils protected them in the streets. It is noteworthy as well that since, the separation of the sexes in education the number of female students at the universities has increased. This may be because of the lack of job opportunities elsewhere. Education became an outlet for their dreams for improvement.

However, one has to consider that Iran has accepted education for girls only on an experimental level. The number of drop-out students during the second-level of education has been the highest. This could be explained by the fact that girls reach the age of puberty during the second level of education. Also, due to economic barriers and prejudiced beliefs about the woman's role within the family when the girls reach that age sometimes are prompted by their fathers to leave school in order to

assist their family with housework, child care and to take part in the family's business. Traditional views have also allowed families to believe that the honorable thing to do after the age of nine when girls by law are supposed to be veiled is to remain at home and prevent exposure as much as possible. Early marriage has remained a common phenomenon in rural areas where girls have agreed upon marriage in order to escape poverty and geographical isolation. As Jane Howard argued in her book if education did not directly apply to the girl's lifestyle, it was most likely that she would abandon it as soon as she could find something else to do.

The kind of education that girls have received since, the revolution has been purely superficial. Even though the quality of the buildings has improved, it still lacks many components that would allow the students to perform experiments and to apply their knowledge. Simply put: the system is weak at providing vocational training to supply skilled workers for technical jobs. Most of their education has been based on religion and the instruction in Arabic with the sole intention of using it for religious purposes. The applicability of Arabic for everyday use as well as that of other texts for other classes has remained under question. Even though the Islamic authorities had re-assured the educational community that the images would be substituted with others to clearly and effectively portray the changing role of women in Iran, it failed to do so. The Republic's priority has been to revise the text in favor of religion and has not included the status of women. Furthermore, the images have portrayed men more than women and in situations that may not fully describe the new identity of women. The human body and specifically, the reproductive organs have been left out of biology texts and so has nudity in any religious reference such as in the Garden of Eden. Another consideration for the textbooks and their applicability has been the cultural and geographical diversity of Iran. There have been so many ethnically and linguistically different groups in Iran that there have often been complaints about the context of the textbooks. The citizens of rural, remote areas of Iran have found it difficult to associate with the text because of its dominance of urban images and examples. Moreover, the topics that the female students were allowed to study changed after the revolution. Women were banned from studying things like agriculture, geology and accounting while the study of gynecology and midwifery became solely their responsibility. Jobs that required temporary relocation or extensive travel were guided away from women because that would remove them from their natural habitat.

As of 1985 however, many restrictions were lifted and all study areas became available for both sexes. The formal order was given in 1988 when President Rafsanjani stated that there are no barriers to education for women in

any field and as president in 1989 emphasized the need to create greater higher education opportunities for Iran's youth as well as equal pay for equal work by women. Many researchers did mention however that one can never be sure about which subjects are open and which ones are not. Overall, the subject of female education in Iran has remained very controversial but it appears that women are now more than ever demanding roles in society, other than that of a mother and a wife. They are demanding employment and fair opportunities. They demand to be doctors, engineers and teachers and to contribute to their family's income. Girls are absorbing what they are taught and are ready to apply it when they graduate. However, the problem remains that the high rate of poverty in conjuncture with stereotypical patriarchic ideas, does not make it easy for them to prove their value and utilize their educational training.

The studies on the skill, development and education and an evaluation of men and women's activities by test in Brazil show that male employees goals are to achieve higher occupational hierarchy and advancing from one situation to a better one. But women, steadily, remain in the low levels of occupational hierarchy. Because man as opposed to women, gain experience and learn. By skill, education and development, men have a great future ahead of them.

The issue: The physical differences between men and women and the different roles that is applied in socialization methods of two genders have prepared the ground to occurring a kind of work distribution according to the gender. How much this kind of work distribution is rational? What are its cultural grounds and social consequences? Does this kind of distribution lead one of the genders to deprivation?

The data gathered about the country in 1991 show that malnutrition in girls is nearly twice as much as boys whether in urban or rural societies (Table 1).

In the poor provinces, the level of malnutrition is generally high. Thus, bringing up a sound and safe mothers who can motivate their children to develop is unlikely.

Another social factor that is very important is education. The first school that was special for girls was built around 86 years ago and the data gathered in 1922 show that the number of girls and boys who registered at schools had been 7239 and 35000, respectively (Bina, 2002).

This numbers clearly show the girls retardation that year. In 1965, the percentage of educated men and women had been 22 and 7/3, respectively. In 1991 this number for men and women reached to 81 and 67, respectively. (Minoo, 2000).

Table 1: Results showing that malnutrition in girls is nearly twice as much as boys whether in urban or rural societies (Bina, 2002)

Malnutrition	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
Girls	5/13	11
Boys	7	6

Table 2: Results of women education during 1976-77 and 1991-92 (Amini, 2001)

Women education	1976-1977 (%)	1991-1992 (%)
Primary	38	47
Secondary school	36	42
High school	40	44
Technical and professional	20	7/19

Although, the level of women education has had a significant increase, daringly, we can say that its increase in recent 10 years is not comparable with 63 years ago. But the number of educated women has been always less than educated men. In 1956, 1% of rural population had been educated that reached to 54% in 1991 (Bina, 2002).

It is a development but we must remember that 64% of rural women are still uneducated. But the number of educated men has been always more than women. In 1991, just 50% of rural women have been educated (Minoo, 2000).

Now-a-days, around 15% of rural girls do not go to school when they are 6-9 years old (Bina, 2002). Although, this number in comparison with previous years is very small but warns us about another generation of uneducated mothers. Women need have an education higher than a primary level to have an active social participation in society (Table 2).

Many girls, unlike boys still do not register at school (15% of rural and 7% of urban girls). Only 9% of all the girls who have registered at high school and 23% of the girls who have registered at secondary school are rural. In 1976 and 1992, respectively, just 30 and 28% of all the university students were girls. So, it can be said that nearly no change has been taken place in the number of girls. That gathered data show that the number students in agricultural and veterinary fields at ingenious level is <1% and at BA is around 5/5% and at MA and Ph.D is 4%. The number of girls graduated from technical school and university in the technical and industrial fields that are essential for industrial society are about 23 and 3/7%, respectively (Bina, 2002).

In the second development program, the Plan Organization had suggested that some especial policy should be adopted in order to decrease rural women deprivation.

Another social factor is marriage. The statistic show that in 1991, 2/2% of 10-14 year old has married (Minoo, 2000). After 1976 and notably in recent years the number of girls who marry in their 10-14 years old has had a significant increase. Before these girls can finish their education must take the role of a mother. An issue that is

worth noting is that from 25 marriages that take place in these ages, one has been led to divorce. According to statistic, around 50% of girls get marry before 19 (Bina, 2002).

Certainly, these women by marrying at an early age not only increase the vulnerability of family but also cannot be mothers who can motivate their children to develop. According to UNESCO statistics, adult literacy rates in Iran (age 15 and over) have increased from 63.2% (72.2 male and 54 female) in 1990 to 76% (83 male and 68.9 female) in 2000, pointing to significant progress in female literacy over the last decade.

One witness's further gender equality when literacy rates for Iranian youth are taken into consideration. The youth literacy rates (age 15-24) have increased from 86.3% (91.7 male and 80.8 female) to 93.8% (96.2 male and 91.3 female) during the 1990-2000 period (The Statistics Centre of Iran, 2002).

Looking at gross enrollment ratio in early childhood care and education for children age 3 and above, one witness a shift from a GPI of 0.95 in 1990-1991 showing a disparity in favor of boys, to a GPI of 1.06 in 1999-2000 indicating a disparity in favor of girls. The same trend is expected at the higher education level. According to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, there was an increase in the percentage of women enrolled in public universities from 27.3% in 1990 to 44.1% in 1999 (Minoo, 2000).

The study of various educational indicators including access to early childhood care and education, participation in primary, secondary and higher education and adult literacy rates, points to considerable progress made towards gender equality in Iran over the last decade. The most significant progress has been made at the primary education level where the Gender Parity Index (GPI: ratio between girls' and boys' rates) in the gross enrollment ratio went from 0.90 in 1990-1991 to 0.96 in 1999-2000 and the secondary education level where the GPI went from 0.73-0.92 during the same period (The Statistics Centre of Iran, 2002).

The ideal female citizen in the Islamic Republic of Iran the new Muslim woman is the product of the coexistence of tradition and modernity. She is thus faced with a paradox (Mehran and Golnar, 2003).

An analysis of the trend in education from 1990-2000 points to increased gender equality at the primary and secondary school level. The trend in access to primary education in terms of Gross Intake Rate (GIR) shows a gender parity index of 0.98 in 1990-19991 and 1 in 1999-2000 indicating parity between sexes in that year. The Net Intake Rate (NIR) in primary education in 1999-2000 was a total of 38.4 with a male rate of 38.7 and female rate of 38, pointing to a GPI of 0.98 (The Statistics Centre of Iran, 2002).

Table 3: The ratio of economically active and inactive women in nationwide Enumeration (1956-1996)

Years	Number	The percentage of economically active population			The percentage of economically inactive population				
		Total	Employed	Unemployed	Total	Learning	House keeper	Gaining income without having work	Other
1956	6242	2/9	2/9	0	8/90	0/3	5/79	0	8/3
1966	8206	6/12	5/11	1/1	4/78	4/7	3/73	0	6/6
1976	11206	9/12	8/10	1/2	1/87	8/14	8/68	1/2	3/1
1986	16033	2/8	1/6	1/2	1/91	6/16	7/68	8/0	0/5
1996	22379	1/9	9/7	2/1	9/89	6/26	4/58	6/1	3/3

The Statistics Centre of Iran (2002). The Statistical Yearbook of Iran (1956-1996)

Table 4: The percentage of employed women in Iran in comparison with other countries

Developing countries			Developed countries		
Countries	Years	Percentage	Countries	Years	Percentage
Egypt	1984	7/18	Austria	1987	1/40
India	1981	9/25	Canada	1986	9/42
Indonesia	1985	9/35	France	1987	3/43
South Korea	1987	9/39	W. Germany	1987	5/39
Pakistan	1980	7/3	Italy	1987	4/36
Tunis	1984	3/21	Japan	1985	6/38
Turkey	1980	0/30	Sweden	1987	7/48
Iran	1988	0/9	US	1987	5/45

ILO, yearbook of labor statistics 1988 (Geneva: ILO), p169

We are not the guardians of women to give them something by force or take it away from them. We are only preparing the ground for women to recognize their rights and capabilities and acknowledge their own merits. Once they have done that they will reach their rightful position in society and the first prerequisite is to increase women's knowledge and education.

Yet another indicator of the internal efficiency of the education system is the percentage of repeaters. The repetition rate in primary education in Iran is lower for girls in Grades 1 through 5. In 1999-2000, the male repetition rate in Grade 1 was 10.2 compared to 7.9 female; 7.6 male and 4.7 female in Grade 2; 5.4 male and 2.9 female in Grade 3; 6.1 male and 3.1 female in Grade 4 and 4.1 male and 2 female in Grade 5 (The Statistics Centre of Iran, 2002).

The dual role and responsibility of the post-revolutionary woman is clearly reflected in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The latter considers women's employment and their social and economic activities to be very meaningful and conducive to social well-being while at the same time, emphasizing the role of the woman as a mother and her significance in maintaining strong family bonds and affectionate relationships (Women's Bureau of the Presidential Office, 1997a, b).

Table 3 and 4 shows that at least for women, the conditions necessary to use this investment in human resources is not ideal and we cannot expect that increasing sum of money invested in, can lead to increasing women's participation in economic activities. Another issue on constant development that we must pay attention to that is the people's cultural attitude toward women's occupation. The mass media, unfortunately,

especially movies and textbooks do not set a suitable cultural pattern about women's occupation. Rectification of cultural attitude of society to women's occupation in producing or doing social services can improve the position of women in their participation.

After the Islamic revolution, the officials have paid must attention to women's education, especially higher education. The statistics show that 60% of those who passed the entrance examination of universities in 1380 were women that indicated their social and mental development. Regarding the increasing number of women who pass the entrance examination of universities, it is inevitable that we must make a good plan to enjoy their enormous capacity.

It seems that regarding the increasing number of women who pass the entrance examination of universities in recent years, on one part, it gives to the society a window of opportunity to discover and use these faculties and on the other part, it may lead us to another imminent job crisis if we do not appropriately prepare the situations. Ignoring the occupations and economic activities of women is to keep half of economically active population away from economic activities and without paying attention to this issue, it is not possible to achieve economic growth and development.

This issue needs a lot of studies and researches because of its importance that can be used by economists, programmers and development managers. Without an essential research, we cannot achieve a appropriate programming.

Study of women education according to the enumeration in 1976 and 1986:

According to the enumeration in 1986, the proportion of men to women is 105%. Regarding the equal number of men and women, it is expected that both men and women enjoy the same social services and have the same opportunities for economical participation. But the statistics show that men activity is much more than women economical activity. This difference, regarding the kind of their job is clearly shown in their employment statistics. For example, among 1054000 people who have scientific and specialized jobs, just 243000 of them are women while the number of men reaches to 719000. Also, at the high ranking official and administrative level while the number of women is 2000, the number of men at these

levels is 43000. With a brief glance at conditions of women education, you can clearly understand this issue (Mohammadi, 2002) (Table 5).

Although, in years between 1976 and 1986, the number of educated women increased and from 35/5% educated women in 1976 reached to 52/1% in 1986 but on the one hand, the level of educated men is still in a lower position and on the other hand in 1986, the number of the rustic women who were educated was at the lowest level (36%). Despite of an increase in the level of education in the mentioned period, the number of educated women in urban areas has been more than rural areas in 1976 that was because of the emigration of villagers to the cities and not because of the lack of equipment for education in villages.

On the other part, the increase in the number of educated people has been more in those <15 years old ones and the rate of education in adulthood has had a little increase. Considering the effect of higher education for women on decreasing the births, we must prepare the situations for them to continue their learning and be efficient in country's economic expansion (Table 6).

The relationship between education and employment: The women's tendency to educate and work out of house is directly based on the educational properties and professional training that they receive. Although, duplicity in terms of economic activity, determines the

correlation between women education and their economic participation but we must be careful and do a lot of subtle study to be sure of it. Moreover, by preparing educational properties and professional training, we can expect women participation in economical activities will increase and a positive correlation between education level and women participation will be established.

The occupation of educated women, often is not congruent with the reputation and the income that they deserve and the education that they completed. In more cases, the women are forced to get jobs that are simpler than the jobs that men with the same level of education can get. Disregarding the reason, women are startled when they face such situations and sometimes it makes them to leave the labor market and stay at home.

The relation between level of education and occupation:

Women education and their tendency to work is directly related and based on the educational properties and professional training that men and women receive. Although, duplicity in terms of economical activities can determine the relationship between women's education and their economic participation but we must be careful and do a lot of subtle study to be sure of it. Moreover, by preparing educational properties and professional training, we can expect women participation in economical activities will increase and a positive relation between education level and women participation will be established.

The more we prepare the education and professional training for women, the more easily they can get jobs with better salary and fringe benefits. Women education, however have some indirect but positive effects on their economic affairs and employment. It also increases the expectations and decreases the influences of old customs. It also, prevents women from having many children and encourages them to marry late and postpone their pregnancy. All these transformations facilitate women entrance to labor market. The main issue is that the girls are encouraged to get a job after graduating. The researches in developed countries show that if girls do not enter to labor market after graduating, it is very hard to encourage them to enter to the labor market later.

Table 5: The rate of women's participation in the world in 1988

Description	Number	Rate of participation
Developing countries	-	1/32
Poor countries	-	2/28
South African countries	-	8/37
Developed countries	-	1/41
World	130	2/34
Low human development	44	5/26
Low human development except for India	43	6/27
Median human development	40	8/36
Median human development except for China	39	2/29
High human development	46	8/38
Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates, Libya, Algeria and Honduras	10	10 and less
Syria, Iran, Pakistan, Dominican and Ecuador	10	10-20
Bolivia, Ireland, Somalia, Mexico and Argentina	30	20-30
Britain, Belgium, Turkey, Korea and Japan	44	30-40
Finland, Niger, Sweden and Jamaica	36	>40

ILO, yearbook of labor statistics 1988 (Geneva: ILO), p172

Table 6: The number and proportion of the educated people who are 6 and more year old between 1976 and 1986

Proportion	1976				1986			
	Men and women		Woman		Men and women		Woman	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	12877075	9/47	4679088	5/35	23913195	8/61	9835299	1/52
Urban	8628239	5/65	3482846	6/55	15506666	1/73	6741941	4/65
Rural	4248836	5/30	1196242	3/17	8406529	0/48	3093358	0/36

The Statistics Centre of Iran (2002). The Statistical Yearbook of Iran (1956-1996)

CONCLUSION

One of the most important motivations that make women to work out of house is making money to support their family and if the men's income was enough to support their family, women have not a strong tendency to work. First, women mention many factors as the blocks to progress in their employment that contrary to public opinion is not richness or lack of interest or little education but the main reason is the children existence in family because women are forced to sacrifice and stay at home and take care of their children. Second, for some women, not a single factor but a combination of some factors prevents them from working out of house. We hope that by adopting suitable strategies, women can progress and develop their opportunities to have economic activity.

In order to establish equality of opportunities between men and women, they must give equal salary and fringe benefits. The above social phenomena have a close relationship with each other. We must study them to change women circumstances in labor market. But it will not be an easy work because regarding the predominant social and cultural values most people think that men are superior to women in political, social and economic issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings suggest the following tips: The Ministry of Labor in collaboration with other ministries should impose a ban on any sexual discrimination and give women an equal opportunity to get jobs congruent with their education.

The women must determine the kind and direction of development programs by accessing to better health, gaining more income, learning new skills and technologies and having equal rights with men and having control over their own body.

The employed women with higher education, the employed women with more experience and married women believe that discrimination, education factors and

economic issues are very influential in occurring occupational problems and the administrators must pay attention to these issues. The governments must pay more attention to the women activities in their home and provide them social insurance and encourage them to have a job of their own and see their homework as a job. The Ministries and Social Security Organization should decrease the time that women work, so that women deal with other works related to their family. Establishment of consulting centers for women and training them in dealing with their social and familial problems.

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