

Feminization of Unemployment in Iraq

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Abstract: - This study aims to analyze and discuss the problem of female unemployment in Iraq and find out the reasons behind its aggravation and discuss the reasons for the low participation of women in economic activity and try to find possible remedies and solutions by reviewing the development of unemployment rates among females and the situation of women in the labour market and borrowed the expression feminization of unemployment in Iraq to express the magnitude of the problem suffered by females. According to the research, women in Iraq have higher unemployment rates than men, and the proportion is higher among rural women and inadequate economic contributions. As for the factors affecting the high volume of unemployment, it is the distinction between them and men in employment and the desire for specific types of professions, especially in the public sector. We have not developed successive government's effective solutions to this problem. The government must achieve equality and justice in job creation, strike a balance in employment in the private-public sector, develop employment policies from a gender perspective, and require more legal reforms supporting women. Some social and cultural beliefs prevailing in Iraqi society that reflect clear discrimination against women must be addressed, especially in rural society.

Keywords: - Female unemployment, Iraqi economy.

Introduction:

The Iraqi economy has suffered from the problem of unemployment since 2003, which has been characterized by high rates, especially among women, despite the fact that Iraqi women have made significant progress in many areas such as education, social work, political representation, etc., but their participation rate in economic activity remains low. It reached 31% in 2018 compared to 10.9% for males (2), and the term feminization of unemployment in Iraq was borrowed because female unemployment reached an unacceptable level of rising in Iraq, so we find that this percentage among rural women and unpaid domestic work is higher and varies between provinces.

Despite efforts by governments and stakeholders to economically empower women, there are many challenges affecting women's access to women's employment, namely, prevailing societal culture, laws, legislation, discrimination in employment for males and declining working conditions in the private sector.

Research Methodology:

The problem of research:

Despite all the gains made by Iraqi women in education, health and political representation, the most crucial gain, which is to get work, remains below the required level, the share of female unemployment from the unemployment rate in Iraq was very high and striking, so this required analyzing this problem and knowing its causes and treatments.

Research hypothesis: The research hypothesis is that the higher the unemployment rates in Iraq, the higher the share of females.

The aim of the research: The research aims to study the problem of female unemployment in Iraq and find out the reasons behind its aggravation and try to find possible solutions and solutions.

The importance of the research:

Highlighting a big and dangerous problem which is the high rates of female unemployment in Iraq, which reached an unacceptable level economically and socially and became a threat to the process of

sustainable human development, which requires the development of remedies to solve it.

Research methodology:

This research is based on the use of the descriptive analytical approach to describe the phenomenon of female unemployment and its causes and analyze its trends and development in the Iraqi economy.

The concept of unemployment and its effects:

Unemployment is defined as "disrupting part of the economically productive workforce despite the ability and desire to work and production" (3). It defines "the lack of work for a person who is willing to do so with his or her ability in a profession consistent with his preparations and abilities, and that is considering the state of the labour market" (4). This means that there is a significant proportion of young people for a country outside the workforce, we would like to point out that there is only unemployment in a society that is a problem for all countries of the world where there is a category of unemployed people, but they are unemployed. They do not represent a problem because their percentage is optimal for the clean-up, which is the level of full recovery and does not exceed (+ or - 5% surplus or deficit) of the total amount of opportunities offered in the labour market relative to the total volume of jobs (5) but the problem of unemployment arises in its continuation and aggravation, which has made it a global problem, according to the ILO estimate, global unemployment remains high at more than 190 million unemployed at a rate of 5.5%(6), and female unemployment rates are more than twice that of men in some regions such as Arab countries and North Africa (7)

Although women make up more than half of the world's total population, their economic contribution is still below the required level. Africa and the Arab countries 51.2% and 55.2% (8) and women's unemployment leads to significant economic losses in the economies of the countries that suffer from it.

Table (1) Women's participation rate (15 years and older) in Iraq's labour market for the period (2004-2020)

Year	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Percentage	11,14	11,93	12,23	12,1	11,78	13,26	14,58	11,41	11,83

Failure to involve women in the labour force leads the economy to misallocate its resources, as women's unemployment makes them perform low-productivity tasks in their home rather than taking advantage of their full market potential. Economies also lose the opportunity to take advantage of the integration relationship between men and women in the workplace, resulting in low productivity and an economic growth rate. Therefore, governments must ensure that women have access to quality education and integrated health care, and without proper human capital, women's chances of obtaining employment will be limited. (9)

Female economic participation:

Iraq encouraged women's contribution to economic activity, and legislation and labour law played a role in allowing women to enter the economic sector, the measure being the participation rate of women in the labour force, with the proportion of women of working age (15-64) in 1997 (50.2%) However, this percentage declined significantly in subsequent years, influenced by the economic and political conditions experienced by Iraq during the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium and reached 22.65% in 2003, (10) and a World Bank report on gender equality for 2012 indicated that Iraq is among the countries with lower economic participation rates for females, with an annual average of 0.17 percentage points over three decades. (11) In its latest report (World Bank) putting Iraq at the lowest levels in the world, he pointed to the participation rate of women in the labour market in Iraq as less than 15%, which is 25 to 35 points lower than the global average (12) and this can be seen through Table 1, the rate of women's participation in the labour market in Iraq did not exceed at its best 15% in 2016 and then began to decline for the following years. This reflects the lack of a clear policy to address the problem of low female contribution to the total labour force in Iraq.

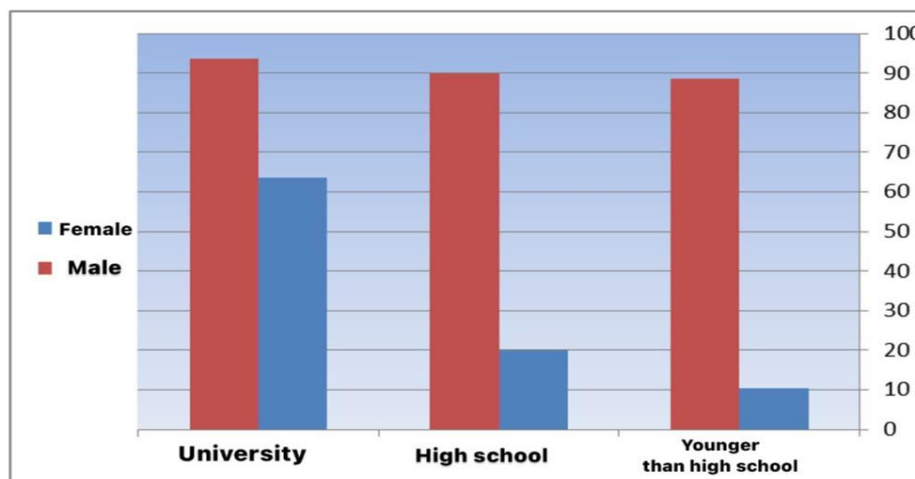
Source:

<https://data.albankaldawli.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?end=2020&locations=IQ&start=2004>

The analysis of women's contribution to the labour market reveals their concentration in the public sector and 53% of the women's workforce, followed by unpaid employment in the agricultural sector at 31%, unpaid work in other non-agricultural sectors, while only 3% of paid women work in the private sector, 78% of poor women work in the agricultural sector without pay, about 11% in the public sector, 8% unpaid in other sectors, 3% in the private sector and harmful discrimination for females. The private sector and the unregulated sector, (13) Women's preference for employment in the government sector is due to working conditions that are suitable for the Iraqi mirror in terms of working hours, vacations, job security and social security, not to mention the lack of preference for women's work for the private sector and the tendency for males because of the additional

cost of employment of women because they do not work for a long time unlike men (14) and suffer discrimination in wages granted in the private sector, and the gender pay gap between women and men in similar occupations and similar educational attainment and similar experience has reached about 22%. For all the workers in Iraq. (15) Despite its progress in educational achievement, the economic participation rate of women in the labour market in Iraq is lower than that of men below all levels of education, table 2 shows the size of the gender gap for females with less than secondary education, with only 10.5% of their contribution, while the male contribution rate is 88.5%, and the gender gap remains deep in females with secondary education. Females with a university education have a 63.6% contribution compared to 93.6% for males.

Shape (1) Participation of the workforce in Iraq by educational level



Source: World Bank, Women's Economic Participation in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon/Executive Summary, Washington, 2020, p8

Trends and developments in female unemployment:

The low participation rate of women in economic activity, which did not exceed 12% in 2020, indicates a high unemployment rate among working-age women, as shown in Table 2.

Table (2) Total unemployment rates (age 15 and older) and gender disparities

Year	Total	Male	Female
2007	11.7	11.7	11.7
2012	11.9	9.9	22.7
2014	10.6	8.4	21.9
2016	10.8	8.5	22.2
2018	13.8	10.9	31.0

2. Women's participation in the private sector is low due to prevailing social traditions and customs, poor activation of labour law, as well as limited loans to women.
3. Poor cognitive and skills construction for women and high dropout rates for girls in schools.
4. Difficulty in accessing schools and distances in rural areas.

In addition, the state of security and political instability, wars and internal unrest after 2003, which reflected the movement of women and became hindering freedom of movement and work, not to mention the rapid population growth that was unable to keep pace with the growth in employment opportunities, as the withdrawal of the state from some economic and service activities reduced employment in the public sector and finally may hinder marriage and the presence of children to get a mirror to work This explains the continued high unemployment rate among women.

Women in Iraq's National Development Plans:

National development plans and economic and social reform programmers in Iraq have taken into account women's issues and addressed issues of non-discrimination, women's empowerment, problems and obstacles they face, and adopted an approach that positively discriminates in favour of women, through a series of legislations and laws, primarily the quota system in the House of Representatives and provincial councils, which guaranteed women's representation at least 25% and granted privileges to working women, including maternity leave, marital leave and full pay. (20) Iraq has set the goal of increasing women's participation in the labour market in all development plans, which will have a significant impact on long-term economic growth. Between 2000 and 2017, Iraq's annual economic growth rate was 4.1 percent, and women's employment contributed 0.3 percentage points to the increase in value-added for that period. A series of strategies on women have also been issued, including:

1. 2012 Report on Women's Economic Empowerment in the Iraqi Economy launched

by the United Nations Development Programmer in Iraq, which addresses the gap in local and regional information on women's participation in the Iraqi economy, identifying ways to increase women's participation in peace-building activities, and giving special attention to local initiatives of economic empowerment aimed at involving and assisting vulnerable groups of women and trying to overcome the challenges faced by local organizations in reaching this population. (22)

2. The Report on the Reality of Rural Women in Iraq 2016 and 2019 by the Central Bureau of Statistics aims to develop a database on the reality of rural women to facilitate the work of decision-makers and policymakers in order to improve the social and economic reality of women and to educate rural women about their important role in the process of agricultural development and their economic and social rights, such as their right to ownership of agricultural land, the right to education and the right to health, the right to equality, and to achieve sustainable rural development that ensures access to more prosperous livelihoods. Seeking to activate the role of agricultural, civil society institutions to support rural women by granting small loans and supporting rural products and handicrafts. (23)
3. Sustainable Development Report towards better empowerment of women and girls, for 2017 and 2018 issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics scorer of the two reports to (24):
 - A. A database on the reality of Iraqi women to facilitate the work of decision-makers and policymakers to improve their social and economic life.
 - B. To draw attention to women and to make them aware of the importance of their role and empower them for the purpose of contributing to the process of sustainable development.
 - C. Focus on gender indicators that contribute to gender equality in order to achieve sustainable and balanced development.
 - D. Bringing about qualitative changes in the prevailing culture based on discrimination against women.

4. Gender reality report in the ministries and institutions of the state in Iraq, the Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018, the goal of the report to (25):

1. Preparing a database on the reality of working in state institutions from a gender perspective
2. Work to integrate gender issues into the plans and strategies of ministries and state institutions
3. Detection of gender inequality of opportunity at all stages of planning and decision-making
4. Identify the training opportunities available to both sexes in terms of quantity and type and work to develop the abilities of workers.
5. Studying the culture prevailing in the ministries and institutions of the state with regard to the concepts of justice and gender.
6. National Strategy to Combat Violence Against First Women (2013-2017) and National Strategy Against Gender-Based Violence (2030-2018) II launched by UNFPA-Iraq The first strategy is to provide a legal, legislative and executive framework for the protection of human rights (for women) in Iraq, to highlight the universal rights of women, and to spread a culture that denounces gender-based violence and discrimination against women. In addition to responding to the fifth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including human trafficking and all kinds of exploitation, this updated strategy serves as a working guide for all sectors and entities, in order to prevent violence against women and girls in Iraq. (26)

Despite all female-oriented strategies, reports and programmers, women's participation in the labour market is still at its lowest level. The No. 37 Act of 2015 has not had any significant impact on changing the role of women in economic activity, with only 12% in 2020, unemployment rates still high and reaching 31% in 2018, while rural women reached 24.5% in 2019. This is due to the lack of actual plans to revive the Iraqi economy and the lack of serious government remedies for the problem of general unemployment and women's unemployment, primarily since strategies and programs did not address ways to achieve the goal of providing jobs

for women and this problem still needs great efforts and high potential.

Conclusions:

Women in Iraq suffer from very high unemployment rates, and this percentage is more reflected in rural women, as well as discrimination between them and men in employment, and they often get lower wages compared to men.

Recommendations:

1. Microfinance is a successful solution for obtaining funding to start a female business that can help create jobs, but many women face difficulties in obtaining and obtaining facilities, so the impact of microfinance policy on women must be monitored and assessed in creating sustainable women's jobs, and this process will enable them to identify the challenges and difficulties that may arise for some females and take crisis measures. Women's business incubators should also be provided that contribute to activating women's economic role and entering the labour market as entrepreneurs and facilitating their access to funding.
2. Some of the social and cultural beliefs prevailing in Iraqi society that reflect clear discrimination against women, especially in rural society, which prevents women from going out to work or may limit them to specific jobs, must be addressed by educating women themselves about their ability to work and demanding their rights, and thereby educating the family, society and civil society organizations in spreading awareness of the need for women's work by intensifying the height of conferences and private workshops.
3. The design of programs to empower women and vocational training courses must be supported by allocating career grades to them in the annual operating plan in the budget, after passing these courses or at least directing the private sector to provide them with employment opportunities by supporting the state for those projects that provide employment opportunities for women.

4. The government should achieve equality and justice in the provision of jobs, find a balance in employment in the private-public sectors and develop employment policies from a gender perspective, and the Ministry of Planning should give women special unemployment importance and develop solutions to them in the five-year plans, and develop effective solutions to them through the planning of human resources and the workforce.
5. Increasing and diversifying vocational training programs, especially those based on digital technology, which offers new opportunities and an excellent place for women to increase the chance of getting work at home in light of the digital transformation witnessed by various economic sectors, thus overcoming many of the obstacles they may face from going out of work.
6. Although Iraq is one of the signatories of a number of international treaties that have worked to fair women and eliminate all forms of discrimination against them and support civil and political rights and economic participation, there is a conflict between Iraq's international obligations and Iraqi laws, which requires more legal reforms and reforms related to policies related to gender and economic security for women, especially with regard to the recognition of unpaid care work and domestic work.
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