

THE EFFECT OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE GULF COUNTRIES AND THE CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON ARABIA, THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND QATAR

KÜRESELLEŞMENİN KÖRFEZ ÜLKELERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ VE KADINLARIN DEĞİŞEN ROLLERİ: ARABİSTAN, BİRLEŞİK ARAP EMİRLİKLERİ VE KATAR ÜZERİNDEN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ÇALIŞMA

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ABSTRACT

The role of women in the Gulf societies has been under the influence of dramatic transformation in economy and social life in the last 30 years. The aim of the study is to examine the changing role of women in economic, political and cultural life in the Gulf societies. In the study three Gulf countries, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are taken as examples. The tiny country of the Gulf, Qatar, has conservative local tradition but at the same time has witnessed a rapid change in its economic, social and political life. The UAE has become the heart of economic activities in the region and is trying to integrate herself in to the global world. Saudi Arabia is the most traditional country in the Gulf and women's rights in Saudi Arabia have been severely restricted. So, it is worth to investigate the transformation of the women's role in these three different Gulf countries. Also in the study, the influence of royal women on the modernization of women in the Gulf is discussed. Findings of the study reveal similarities and differences for the changing roles of women in these countries.

Keywords: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Women in the Gulf.


JEL Classification Codes: J16, O10, O53.

ÖZ

Körfez ülkelerinde kadınların toplumsal rolleri son 30 yıl içinde yaşanan sosyal ve ekonomik dönüşümden etkilenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı Körfez ülkelerinde ekonomik, siyasi ve sosyal alanlarda kadınların değişen rollerini incelemektir. Bu makale Körfezin üç ülkesini, Sudi Arabistan, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri ve Katarı örnek olarak ele almaktadır. Körfezin minik ülkesi olan Katar muhafazakar bir yerel kültüre sahiptir buna karşın oldukça hızlı bir ekonomik, politik ve sosyal değişimi deneyimlemektedir. Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri ise bölgedeki ekonomik aktivitelerin merkezi konumunda küresel dünyaya entegre olmaya çalışmaktadır. Sudi Arabistan bölgedeki en muhafazakar ve kadın hakları konusunda oldukça katı kuralları olan ülkedir. Bu nedenlerle bu üç ülke bölgedeki kadınların toplumsal rollerindeki değişimi anlamak için incelemeye değer örneklerdir. Bu makalede ayrıca kraliyet ailesindeki kadınların Körfez monarşilerinde gözlenen toplumsal değişim alanındaki etkileri de tartışılmaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları bu ülkelerdeki kadınların toplumsal rollerindeki değişimlerinin ortak yönlerini ve farklılıklarını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katar, Sudi Arabistan, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Körfez Ülkelerinde Kadınlar.

JEL Sınıflandırma Kodları: J16, O10, O53.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç ve Kapsam:

Ortadoğu ülkeleri arasında Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi Ülkeleri'nin farklı bir konumu vardır zira bu ülkeler son otuz yılda ekonomik, sosyal, politik ve kültürel yapılarında oldukça dramatik değişimler yaşamışlardır. Körfez ülkelerinde kadınların toplum içindeki rolleri de bu değişimden payını almıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Körfez ülkelerinde yaşayan kadınların son otuz yıl içinde sosyal, ekonomik ve politik alanlardaki değişen rollerini incelemektir. Körfezin küçük ülkesi Katar hem son derece tutucu yerel geleneklere sahip, hem de toplumsal değişimlerin en hızlı hissedildiği bölgelerden biridir, dolayısıyla kadınların yaşamında gözlenen değişikliklerin analizi için son derece elverişli bir örnektir. BAE ise daha dışa açık, batı kültürüne daha toleranslı, daha liberal yapısıyla kadınların değişen rollerinin incelenmesi için uygun bir Körfez ülkesidir. Sudi Arabistan ise bölgenin en tutucu ve kadın haklarının en sorunlu olduğu ülkedir. Çalışmanın bulguları kadınların Katar, Sudi Arabistan ve BAE'de yaşanan büyük dönüşüm ve gelişimden nasıl etkilendiklerini göstermektedir. Kadınların eğitime, ekonomiye ve siyasete katılımındaki artışlar gösterilirken yerel kültürün kadınların yaşamları üzerindeki etkileri de ele alınmıştır. Makalede bu üç ülkede kadınların son yıllarda sosyo-ekonomik yapıda ve politik alanda değişen rollerindeki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar belirtilmiştir. Ayrıca bu ülkelerdeki kraliyet mensubu kadınların topluma rol model olmalarının etkileri de tartışılmıştır.

Yöntem:

Araştırmanın yöntemi olarak ikincil kaynaklar üzerinden yapılan bir nitel çalışma yolu seçilmiş ve konu ile ilgili makale, kitap ve medya materyalleri yapılarak sonuçlar analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmada üç Körfez ülkesi, Katar ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri (BAE) örnek ülkeler olarak ele alınarak karşılaştırılmıştır.

Bulgular:

Makalenin bulguları göstermiştir ki tüm gelişim ve değişim aşamalarında kadının şeriat hukukundaki yeri, aile içindeki görevleri aynı kalmakta, çok eşlilik, ataerkil yapı, kadınların hukuk önünde genellikle vekillerinin erkek aile üyeleri tarafından temsil edilmesi, çalışmalarının eşlerinin onayına bağlı olması gibi konularda değişiklikler olmamıştır. Kraliyet mensubu kadınlar dahi toplumda tamamen eşlerinin üstünlüğünü kabul ettiklerini göstermektedirler. Kraliyet üyesi kadınlar eşlerinin ya da babalarının kendilerine verdikleri hak ve izin çerçevesinde özgür ve aktif olabilmektedirler. Bu durumda kadın haklarının iyileştirilmesi, kadınların özgürleşmesi anlamında katkıları sınırlıdır ve bir anlamda var olan ataerkil hiyerarşinin devamını sağlanmasında da rol oynamaktadırlar. Bu açıdan Körfez'deki kraliyet üyesi kadınların durumu bir çelişkiyi yansıtmaktadır. BAE ekonomik olarak daha önce geliştiği ve bölgenin çekim merkezi olduğu için daha liberal bir toplumsal yapısı vardır bu anlamda kadınların medyada, ya da politik arenada görünmesine daha sık rastlanır. BAE'nde yabancı şirket, yabancı okul sayısı ve dolayısıyla yabancı çalışan çok daha fazladır bu da yerel ve muhafazakar kültürün yumuşaması hatta batılı öğeleri kabul etmesini kolaylaştırmıştır. Ayrıca Dubai Emiri de kadınların toplumun her alanına katılımının artması konusunda teşviki, BAE'nin Katar ve Sudi Arabistan için de bir rol model olmasını sağlamıştır. Bununla beraber Körfez ülkelerinde hala kadınların ekonomik ve politik katılımları dünyanın diğer bölgelerine göre çok düşüktür. Kraliyet üyesi kadınların rolü ne olursa olsun etkisi ve beklentiler sonuçta buldukları sisteme bağlıdır ve sınırlıdır. Son derece etkili örnekler olmasına rağmen sayıları azdır ve kraliyet mensubu kadınlar da sonuçta kendi aile yaşamlarında ataerkil kurallara bağlıdırlar.

Sonuç ve Tartışma:

Çalışmanın sonucuna göre Körfez ülkelerinin tamamında olduğu gibi Katar, Sudi Arabistan ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri'nde de İslam inancı ve tutucu yerel gelenekler kadınların yaşamında belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadır. Batı tarzı yaşam ve değerler genellikle olumlu bulunmaz, sorgulamadan Batılılaşmak eleştirilir, kendi kimliklerini toplumsal değerlerini kaybetmeden modernleşme iddiası oldukça yaygındır. Ama bunun tam olarak nasıl yapılacağı belirtilmemiştir. Ayrıca kadınların eğitim almaları ve ekonomik bağımsızlıklarını kazanmalarının dikkat çeken sonuçlarından biri de evlenmeyen kadın sayısının ve boşanmaların artması olmuştur. Zira ataerkil anlayıştaki erkekler kendilerinden daha eğitilmiş ve ekonomik bağımsızlığı olan kadınlarla evlenmekten çekinmektedirler, bu kadınlar evlilikte de aradıklarını bulamadıklarında ev içi şiddete maruz kaldıklarında daha hızlı boşanma kararı verebiliyorlar. Bu üç Körfez ülkesinde kadınların toplumdaki etkisi ve katılımı artsa da hukuksal anlamda reformların yapılmaması kadınların yerellik ve modernleşme arasında kalmasına ve ciddi çelişkilerle yüzleşmelerine neden olmaktadır. Kadınların, yani nüfusun neredeyse yarısının ekonomiye katılmasının ve üretkenliğinin artmasının doğal kaynaklara bağlı olmayan, güçlü bir ekonominin oluşturulması için önemli olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Ancak halen Katar ve BAE'nde günümüz toplum hayatında kadınların eğitim, aile hayatı ve kariyerindeki rolleri tam olarak açık değildir. Kadınların toplum içindeki statüsünün değişmesi hükümetlerin desteği ve kraliyet elitlerinin rol modelliği eşliğinde teşvik edilse de kanun ve hukuk kurallarının kadınları tam olarak koruması ve onlara vatandaşlık hakları düzeyinde erkeklerle eşit haklar vermesi de gerekmektedir. Bu konuda yapılacak ciddi yasal çalışmalara ihtiyaç vardır. Körfez ülkelerinde kadınların eğitilmiş ve iş hayatında başarılı olsalar da toplumsal yapıdaki geleneksel rollerini üstlenmeleri ve hatta kendi hayatlarıyla ilgili konularda eşlerinin ya da babalarının kararlarına uymalarının beklenmesi oldukça çelişkili bir durum yaratmaktadır.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have existed as low-income and underdeveloped countries with difficult living conditions due to their geographical characteristics throughout history, they have been experiencing an astonishing economic development with the effect of oil and gas revenues for the last thirty years. This dizzying change in the region has been the subject of many discussions, however there are few detailed and large-scale studies on the changing roles of women in economic and social life.

The total labor force participation rate of women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is lower than in other regions, however, the participation of women in the economy in the Gulf countries is also below that of other countries in the MENA region. While the workforce participation of women worldwide was around 39% in 2018, this rate decreased to 20.3% in MENA and much lower in the Gulf (Abousleiman, 2019, October 10). Nearly half of the population of the GCC countries is women, and the high participation of these women in the economy will positively affect the economic development of their countries. However, serious reforms are needed in the Gulf countries for women to be more active in the economic, social and even political arena. Actually, women's rights are a problem that has not been fully resolved in almost all parts of the world. Yet, the fact that there are serious cultural and legal barriers that prevent or restrict the Arab women living in the Gulf from showing their presence outside their homes makes the region worth examining.

Traditionally, women were virtually invisible in the political and economic system in the Gulf Arab states; They could not be judges, ministers, police, soldiers, tribal leaders or heads of state. They could neither take part in the tribal council nor participate in the government and city council (Eickelman, 1988, p. 198). It was almost impossible to see women engineers, technical staff, doctors or managers. In short, they had no effect on decision mechanisms. However, as a result of the great transformation experienced in some of the Gulf countries in the last thirty years, the visibility of women has started to increase in the social, political and economic fields as well as in every field. There have been many changes in women's lives that were hard to imagine 20 years ago, women started to participate in education and business life by using the opportunities provided by oil and gas incomes (Ramazani, 1985, p. 258). Although some conservative tribes and a part of society worry about the corruption of traditional values, the government encourages women to participate in social and economic life, to receive education and to exist in the political arena. In addition, the role modeling of women from the elite, usually members of the royal family, is important for the acceptance of this change in society. In fact, the question of whether women from the royal or elite class really serve a change through modernization or the continuation of the status quo is one of the issues to be focused on in this study. In the following sections, the story of change experienced by women in three remarkable countries of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Emirates, will be examined.

2. HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The modernization, progress and educational reform planned and implemented in the GCC countries in the last 30 years can only be understood within the framework of the social, cultural and economic changes that countries have undergone very rapidly. First of all, it would be useful to understand the historical and political structure, the leap in economy and industrialization that made modern GCC countries what they are today.

2.1. Saudi Arabia

The fact that it has a large and geographical area relative to its population, a strategically very important location and a significant part of global energy resources have been the main factors determining the domestic and foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. In addition to its central location in land and sea transportation, the presence of two holy places such as Mecca and Medina on the territory of the country has made the country important for all actors with interests in the Islamic world. In addition, the fact that the oil production and marketing in the country is carried out by western companies to a large extent, and the only customer of the oil produced is Western countries, has caused Saudi Arabia to remain in the Western alliance. After the Cold War, the USA wants to keep the control of the international energy regime, just like in the international monetary and trade regime.

Total population of Saudi Arabia is 31,742,308 (male 57.44 percent / female 42.56 percent) of which 20,064,970 (63.2 percent) is Saudi (male 50.96 percent / female 49.04 percent) (Hussein, 2018a, p. 32). With this high population, Saudi Arabia has 25% of the GNP of the Arab world with a population of 350 million. However, a large part of the GNP depends on the export of energy raw materials, which causes the country's rentier/distributor

state nature to become dominant and permanent. Saudi Arabia is a rentier/distributor state like other GCC countries. Rentier state can be defined as a state that obtains its state revenues from non-production-based taxation-based sources such as natural resources instead of mass production-based tax revenues and uses these revenues intensively to secure the loyalty of the citizen to the state. The sustainability of the rentier state has become controversial due to reasons such as the rapid increase in the population of the country, the increase in education and communication opportunities, and the effect of globalization. It is trying to diversify its economy with new business models and infrastructure investments in order to create an economy that is not dependent on oil revenues, but this diversification has not been fully achieved. Saudi Arabia has tended to use its oil revenues for capacity building in foreign policy, its organizations such as OPEC, OAPEC, IKT7, World Muslim League (Rabita, WML), Muslim Students Union, sometimes to rein in their regional rivals, sometimes through alliance/friendship relations through foreign aid or cooperation. used to develop. This situation has become one of the main features of the relations between the two countries, especially since the establishment of the OIC in 1969. (Özev, 2016, p. 13-14).

Despite the urbanized structures of the monarchy-ruled Gulf countries, tribes still constitute the key elements of society. Wahhabism, a religious movement that took place in the city of Najd in the 18th century in Saudi Arabia, has shown its influence until today as an understanding that affects the political, cultural and economic structure in the region. The first Saudi state, which ruled between 1714 and 1818, was terminated by the Ottoman governor of Egypt. It then existed as a tribal dynasty from 1824 to 1891. The third state was established by Abdulaziz Ibn Saud in 1902. In 1938, American researchers realized that there was oil in the country and showed a great interest in the Saudi Arabia. Until the death of Ibn Saud in 1953, the country was ruled only by his sons, including King Salman (Potter, 2017, p. 53). Wahabism is an understanding founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd Al Wahhab and is not actually one of the main interpretations of Sunni Islam. Most Saudi Arabians identify as Salafi Muslims. In other words, following what the Prophet Muhammad and his close friends did and said, these people are most interested in what is happening in the Islamic world and their personal piety. They think that political and economic problems arise as a result of the corruption of Islamic values. Western media describe the most radical Salafis as "Jihadi". The interpretation of Wahabbism in the Saudi state administration is the pursuit of a conservative policy in the political arena (Potter, 2017, p. 53). Wahhabism, which is the founding ideology adopted by the current Saudi administration, is defined as an anti-modernism, anti-Shi'ism and anti-Western discourse.

Because Islam is at the centre of Saudi Arabia's society, almost all political and social movements that emerged in Saudi Arabia were inspired by religion (Islam) and tried to get legitimacy and support from religion. (Fandy, 1999, p. 22). The rise of political Islam in the Middle East since the 1970s has also affected the Arabian Peninsula. As the birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia, which is governed by sharia, also claims to be the most Islamic government. However, in Muslim countries, not only governments but also opposing groups make their rhetoric and actions in the name of religion. The Muslim Brotherhood movement, which emerged in Egypt, began to be influential in Saudi Arabia after the 1950s, especially in the field of education. After 1979, terrorist acts in the name of Islam were also seen in Saudi Arabia. Especially the actions targeting Shiite mosques and public institutions started the government's war against these groups. In particular, ISIS's attack on the Prophet's mosque in Medina shocked Saudi Arabia, and its announcement in 2014 that ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) was the leader of the Sunni Muslim world was perceived as a direct threat to the country. After 1979, terrorist acts in the name of Islam were also seen in Saudi Arabia. Especially the actions targeting Shiite mosques and public institutions started the government's war against these groups. In particular, ISIS's attack on the Prophet's mosque in Medina shocked Saudi Arabia, and its announcement in 2014 that ISIS was the leader of the Sunni Muslim world was perceived as a direct threat to Saudi Arabia. From the very beginning, the Saudi Arabian administration has been able to maintain its regime until today, thanks to its Wahhabi discourse and religious perspective, and the economic-political interest it has established abroad with Western states, especially England and the USA, in oil and other strategic fields. However, this situation started to shake especially with the 1990s and 2000s. King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, who ascended the throne in 2015, is the seventh King of Saudi Arabia. The idea of democratic reform, which entered the country's agenda with international pressure, was also supported by more open-minded Saudis in the country, such as liberals and moderate Islamists. For these groups, which started to gain strength in the late 1990s, the events of September 11 and the international pressures that followed and the increasing domestic violence have been an important driving force in their development. In this period, reforms related to women's rights in the socio-economic field, as well as on issues that were criticized by moderate Islamists and liberals in the West and the country, such as the modernization of the education curriculum and the reduction of the role of the clergy in education, gained momentum in this period. As a result of increasing pressures at home and abroad,

the Islamists, who were seen as radical in the country, were eliminated. Even among the official Ulama, purges took place and those who seemed radical were pushed into the background. (Ataman & Kuscu, 2012, p. 19) developments, such as the granting of new rights to women, and even the appointment of a woman as the Deputy Minister of Education for the first time in the history of the country, emerged as indicators of the change in traditional Wahhabism (Salha, 2009). In the field of judiciary, some steps have been taken to reduce the influence of the traditional religious structure and names advocating change have been appointed to the ministries of health, education, justice and information (Lacroix, 2008). With these steps, the administration, which aims to get rid of the pressure of the people and Western powers on the one hand, also wanted to strengthen its legitimacy on the other hand. Among the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, Saudi Arabia was among the rare countries that succeeded in warding off or postponing the effects of the "Arab Spring", thanks to its oil revenues (rentier state). However, there is no assurance that the oil money will maintain the calm forever.

2.2. Qatar

Qatar, one of the smallest countries in the Gulf with an area of 1,427 square kilometres, has an important place with its oil and especially natural gas reserves. The low population of the country, which has a hot desert climate, is concentrated in the settlements located on coast. The fact that Qatar has her independency very late, so it would not be wrong to call Qatar a young country, since its transition from a tribal structure to a modern state has taken place in the last fifty years. In 1916, Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Thani, the leader of a prominent family, signed an agreement showing that they accepted British patronage, like other Gulf states at that time. Despite the military protection of the British, Qatar gave them the administration of foreign affairs. The British terminated the agreement in 1968, and Qatar, which gained its independence in September 1971, became a member of the United Nations and the Arab League shortly after it declared its independence (Fromherz, 2017, p. 77-79). Majority of the citizens constituting its population are Arabs and Muslims, and most of them belong to the Wahhabi sect, which adheres to the Sunni Islamic tradition (Harkness, 2004, p. 21;57). The official language of the country is Arabic, but English is also used frequently, especially in the private sector. At the beginning of the 20th century, Qatar was a small town, which was dependent on pearl hunting, fishing and camel breeding, and was governed by Islamic principles and traditions.

The Al-Thani family has ruled Qatar since the 1880s. In 1972, Sheikh Kalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani took control with the support of the family, Britain and Saudi Arabia, and remained in power until 1995, after which Sheikh Hamad Bin Kalifa succeeded his father (Fromherz, 2017, p. 77-81). The political and economic reforms made under Al-Thani can be seen as the country's democratization efforts. Liberation of elections and giving women the right to vote and be elected are important changes. The establishment of the Al Jazeera channel, the most important media organization in the region, can be counted as one of Qatar's liberation efforts. Qatar is governed by an absolute monarchy and in June 2013, the Emir's office was taken over by his son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

2.3. The UAE

The UAE, which is made up of seven different emirates, has made a rapid development in the last thirty years in the field of social, economic and education, has become a role model for other Gulf countries. Dubai, the first smart city in the region, was established, shopping malls, foreign schools, universities, banks, branches of international companies came to the region and the UAE became the most developed country in the Gulf. It has a special place among neighbouring countries with its stable political structure, low crime rate and success in liberalization (Davidson, 2008, p. 137-147).

The process of the UAE's transformation from a poor desert town, where pearl diving and fishing is the only economic resource, to a cosmopolitan emirate over the past 30 years is quite remarkable. It is seen that it had a very low population between 1900 and 1955, oil revenues started to show its effect only after the 1960s, and the welfare level of the emirate began to increase after these dates. British experts who came to the region guided the development of the UAE, which followed a slow development process until the 1970s, and the establishment of the first local government organizations (Al Hader ve Rodzy, 2009, p. 87-94; Davidson, 2009, p. 32-87). New roads and ports were built in the city in the 1970s, but the UAE's real growth began in the 1990s. In particular, Sheikh Al Maktoum's ambitious and visionary policy and money from oil led to the preparation of a more sophisticated city plan by the architect John Harris and laying the foundations of Dubai, the most developed of today's Emirates (Al Hader & Rodzy, 2009, p. 87 -94).

It is possible to say that the UAE, which became the centre of trade and finance in the region in the 1990s, has been successfully integrated into the globalizing world economy. In these years, the UAE, which turned into a giant trade base with its tax-free trade areas and ports, continued its development with new constructions in the real estate and tourism sector. In this context, while artificial beaches, which have not been seen before, were built in the region, the palm-shaped region emerged as an example of an artificial island. The construction of structures that will add features to the city and attract tourists, such as the Sailboat-shaped hotel Burj Al Arab and the Burj Halifa, which is still the tallest building in the world, has accelerated. While efforts were made to create an economy independent of oil, the need for foreign labour increased the city's foreign population rapidly. And the region attracted both western experts and administrators, as well as cheap labor migrants from many different countries of the world. As a result of all these developments, the UAE began to be defined as one of the most important trade, finance and tourism centres in the Middle East. (Bhatti et al., 2006). It was mentioned earlier that the United Emirates consists of seven separate emirates, and this each of the emirates is independent in administrative management and makes its own decisions. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a strict centralization in administration, but the most important services will be provided by the federal government to all emirates continues. The state administration is in the hands of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan, who is also the Emir of Abu Dhabi, and his family. Abu Dhabi, the capital of the country and the second largest emirate, is also the political, industrial and cultural centre of the country.

Indigenous Arabs make up 10% of the UAE's population of approximately 10,000,000. The remaining population consists of Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, Nepalis, other Arabs, Iranians and other foreigners, respectively. The proportion of Muslims in the total population is 76%. The rest are those of other religions, primarily Hindus and Christians. (United Arab Emirates Population, 2020). This multinational population of the UAE has also ensured that this emirate has a more liberal social environment compared to other GCC countries.

3. THE SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN

The economic and political participation of women in the Gulf countries is still very low compared to other parts of the World. According to the 2015 World Economic Forum Gender Equality report, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Oman ranked 117th, 119th, 122nd, 123rd, 134th and 135th, respectively (Aldosari, 2016, June 24). Increasing the employment rate of women, getting a larger share from the economy and improving their position in the family are indicators of development. As a result, it is an economic loss that women's labour, which is among the factors of production, is ignored or left idle. Increasing the participation of women in the economy will be an important gain for the all GCC countries, a serious factor in accelerating development and achieving a balanced structure of growth (Ozdemir, 2012, p. 115). Since Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have great cultural, political and economic similarities, the social roles of women in both countries are very close to each other. As family law and cultural and religious barriers that limit women's participation in social life are the same in these societies, the issues that because differences will be emphasized in this title.

3.1. Saudi Arabia

The vast geography in which Saudi Arabian society lives is socially diverse in many ways. Women constitute 42.3% of the country with a population of 34 million. (Afandi, 2021, June 21). Among the countries in the region, the country that seems to be the most conservative regarding women's rights can be called Saudi Arabia. Women and men have to dress in accordance with Islamic rules. Men and women cannot be found together in social life. Although 60% of university students are women, very few of the graduates can find a job and therefore do not have financial independence. Actually women face limitations in many areas in social life too, for instance, they were only allowed to drive in 2017 (Hubbard, 2017, September 26). However, the fall in gas and oil prices in the Gulf countries in 2014, it has emerged that reforms on women's rights are needed to revive the economy. Another important development in Saudi Arabia was the announcement of the 2030 vision. The 2030 Vision, far beyond the pursuit of "handover" in leadership, sets the horizon for the most serious transformation that Saudi Arabia has faced since 1932, when it emerged as an independent state in terms of the mentality revolution required by the determined goals. Also Saudi Vision 2030 is Saudi Arabia's plan to reduce its dependence on oil, diversify its economy, and develop public service sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, recreation and tourism. The Saudi vision 2030 targets are comparable to Kuwait Vision 2035, UAE Vision and Qatar National Vision

2030, which are making other development plans in the Middle East. It is built around three main themes that set specific targets to be reached in 2030 (Al-Arabiya, 2016, April 26).

1. A vibrant society: urbanism, culture and entertainment, sports, Umrah, UNESCO heritage sites, life expectancy.
2. A thriving economy: Employment, women in the workforce, international competitiveness, Public Investment Fund, Foreign direct investment, private sector, non-oil exports.
3. An ambitious nation: Non-oil revenues, government effectiveness and e-government, household savings and income, non-profit and volunteering.

Vision 2030 is a plan that can only be possible with Saudi Arabia becoming a more liberal and free society. While it was a matter of concern whether the religious and traditional structure of the country could allow these reforms, King Abdullah showed his determination to bring about change. In 2013, King Abdullah appointed 30 women to the Shura council, and in 2015, women were allowed to vote for the first time in municipal elections. (Potter, p. 57). Muhammad Bin Salman wants women to be more involved in the economy, so he accepted the softening of the social codes and even limited the practice of the moral police, which was heavily criticized and controlled the streets and moles. One of the highlights of his decisions is to underline that the *abaya* is not a religious obligation but a traditional clothing. This is a topic that the Saudi woman, who abandoned black outerwear as soon as she went abroad, had also spoken for years (Afandi, 2021, June 1). Another example of women's emancipation on the legal ground is the following: The Riyadh administration has issued a new decree to amend the article "prohibiting the non-private residence of women" in the laws of Saudi Arabia. King Salman bin Abdulaziz approved the amendment, which is among the applications in the Legal Advice System, which envisages the abolition of the phrase "delivering a woman to her private" (Afandi, 2021, June 1). With the new regulation, lawsuits filed by adult women who want to live separately from their relatives will also be concluded in their favour.

Other steps have included appointing women to leadership positions, such as Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud, appointed in 2016 to be the vice president for women's affairs of the General Sports Authority (Bager, 2016, August 1). Physical education for women in public schools did not exist until 2017 (Reuters, 2017, July 11). Granting voting rights, establishing a quota for women on the Shura Council, appointing women to leadership positions, and soon allowing women to drive are all incremental and important steps in Saudi Arabia in improving the rights of women and increasing female participation in the workforce. In the Global Gender Gap Index, Saudi Arabia achieved the most remarkable growth among the countries in the region. (World Economic Forum, 2017).

3.1.1. Women Participation in Economy

Today, the local population working in Saudi Arabia is about 3 million and 10.8 million foreigners, 22% and 9% of this number are women. (Omran, 2017). However, this rate is still quite low. The Saudi unemployment rate was around 12.3 percent in 2016, 34.5 percent of which was female (Husain & Panth, 2017, p. 58). The male supervisor rule is an obstacle that hinders women in many aspects. The inability of men and women to work in the same business environment is another reason why women's participation in the economy is low. Many government buildings were built with women's inability to work, and there were no conditions for women such as separate toilets, prayer rooms and dining halls. Therefore, adding to these buildings for female employees appears as an extra cost burden.

It is thought that being able to drive will have a very positive effect on women's participation in economic life. Since traditionally women travel in Saudi Arabia by hiring a private driver, the elimination of this expense may be effective in their participation in working life. (Fattah, 2017) In the GCC countries, the low participation rate of women in the economy draws attention and its importance in ensuring development comes to the fore. Increasing the employment rate of women, getting a larger share from the economy and improving their position in the family are indicators of development. As a result, it is an economic loss that women's labour, which is among the factors of production, is ignored or left idle. Increasing the participation of women in the economy will be an important gain for the all GCC countries, a serious factor in accelerating development and achieving a balanced structure of growth (Özdemir et al., 2012, p. 115). In addition, it plans to increase the participation rate of women in the economy through education and training. Another goal of the 2030 Vision is to increase the quality of education, regulate the labor law, and ensure participation in training programs. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Emirates have very similar goals for women's participation.

One of the consultants of the Saudi Arabian Women's Empowerment Program, Dr. Nouf bint Abdul Aziz says that women's cash bank accounts correspond to 40% of deposit accounts in the country. This rate is 185 billion dollars, and their investments abroad have reached 27 billion dollars (Afandi, 2021, June 21). In the light of these data, it can be said that Saudi women are active and productive enough to distinguish them from their fellows in other Gulf countries. However, it should be reminded that this is not just a modern day, the region was on the trade network in the past and women were also known for their wealth and trade.

Another important development was the Saudi Arabian citizen Prof. Dr. Delal Muhyiddin Nemnekati was appointed as the first female dean (Turgut, 2017, February 27). It was reported that Muhyiddin, who was appointed as the dean of Taif University Faculty of Medicine by the decision of the Ministry, was deemed worthy of this task due to his academic competence and success. It was stated that after this appointment to Taif University, similar appointments could be made in other universities soon, and that this step would pave the way for women in business life. This decision can be seen as an important step towards achieving Saudi Arabia's 2030 goals, which include employing more women in the business. Actually recent years, we also see that women want to take an active role in local governments. While the candidacy rate for municipal council membership is 14%, the rate of female members in all local councils of the country remains at 1% (Afandi, 2021, June 21).

3.1.2. Women and Education

Since formal women's education started in Saudi Arabia in 1960, it has prioritized the education of girls. Prior to this date, there was no formal education for Saudi girls, and education was limited to a few private schools as religious education and not widespread in all Saudi Arabian cities (En-Naimi, 2019, September 23; El-Baadi, 1994, p. 26-30). Actually, the Saudi government has decided to increase the number of girls' schools and universities at a time when the oil coming out of the region. The Saudi Aramco company making the city of Zahran its headquarters is reflected in the social life of the residents and the establishment of a comprehensive social culture. In recent years, there have been indications that women are empowered in the education reform, and the Ministry has begun to empower women by granting them rights. Enthusiastic teachers have had inspiring attitudes in shaping the education system. This process began when Nura al-Fayiz took office as the first Female Deputy Minister of Education in Saudi Arabian history (El-Baadi, 1994, p. 26-30).

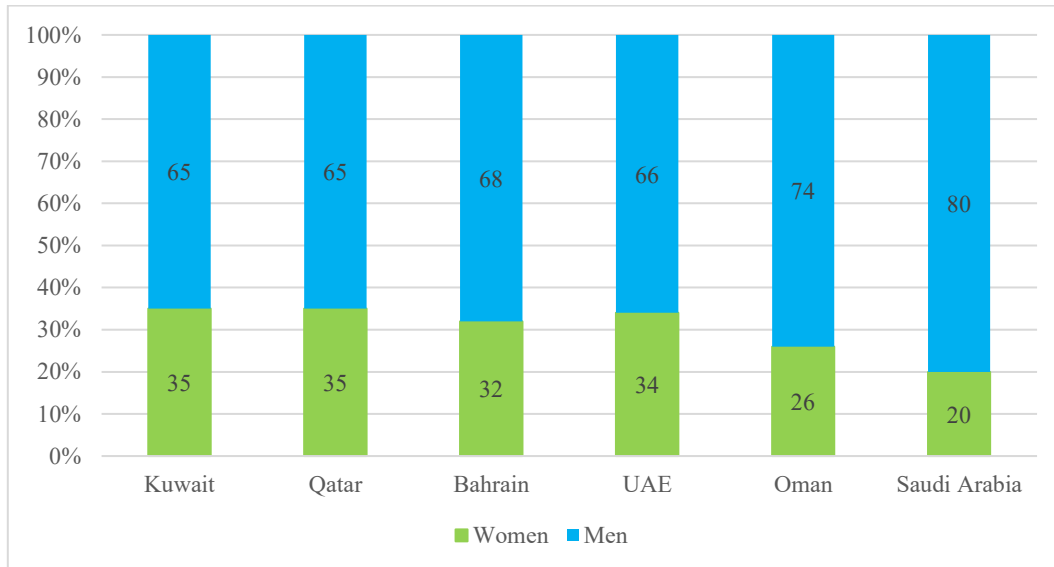
Nowadays in Saudi Arabia, women tend to be better educated than men. The net enrollment rate among females is 51.6 percent at the university level, compared with 41.6 percent among men (Demographic Research Bulletin, 2016). However, the rate of women going abroad for undergraduate or postgraduate education remains at 29.4%. The most important factor in this is the limited freedom of travel of women despite all the regulations. This reported small percentage belongs to women who get married and go abroad for education. In 2005, 39.1 percent graduated from an education program, which drastically decreased to 12.6 percent in 2014. Science programs saw an increase from 5.5 percent in 2005 to 15 percent in 2015, as did business and law programs (4.7 to 8.9 percent). The percentage of women graduating from an engineering program remained mostly unchanged at close to 12 percent. The humanities and arts were the most popular discipline for women in 2015 at 31.7 percent (Demographic Research Bulletin, 2016). While women are better educated in the country, these figures do not reflect those who were educated abroad, an opportunity that men benefit from more often than women do. Therefore, while women are higher educated in Saudi Arabia, men who studied abroad are better educated.

Obviously, the foreign languages that women learn and their education abroad have a great contribution in opening up to the world, but the social and structural problems of women in choosing a field of education and profession have not completely ended. Even if there are no prohibitive laws, women are mostly restricted to fields such as teaching and medicine. Reforms aimed at increasing the visibility of women in different professions, on the other hand, remain at a symbolic level, as in the example of the "female soldier", and encounter social resistance. Some positive discriminations about women are not holistic, on the contrary, they are shaped by traditional teachings. For example, when a single Saudi woman enters a bank, she can probably get things done without having to wait in line, but this is; should it be considered as a privilege given to women or as a manifestation of the dominant tradition of reducing the time that women spend alone outside as much as possible? Undoubtedly, it is very difficult to evaluate this as positive discrimination.

3.2. Qatar

With 96.2% of the population living in the city, Qatar is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. However, with a score of 0.629 in the world gender gap ranking, it is a country with the highest difference compared to its neighbours (Skousen, 2020, November 29).

Figure 1. Working Rate of Women in The GCC Countries in 2020



Source: (Statista, 2022).

As can be seen, women's participation rates in the economy are quite low in Gulf countries, while Qatar and UAE are relatively higher than others. However, this rate is remarkably low when compared to Europe, Asia and America. Because, according to the statistics published by the United Nations Women's Unit in 2019, the global labor force participation rate is 63% for women and 94 percent for men (Worldwide Women's Statistics, 2020). However, it would be misleading to see all regions as a whole and ignore the differences between countries. As a matter of fact, the differences in the policies implemented in the countries of the region and its reflections on working and family life, how effective the measures taken for women's employment are, cause differences between countries (Sagin, 2008, p. 58). The country with the highest female labor force participation rate is Iceland with 78.7%. This country is followed by Sweden with 70 percent, Estonia with 67.2 percent and Norway with 67.1 percent. (United Nations, 2012). As can be seen, the participation rate of women in the economy is much higher in developed countries. This fact has also been understood by the Gulf countries. For this reason, government plans called Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia, Vision 2021 in the United Arab Emirates, and Vision 2030 in Qatar have been established for economic reform in four Gulf countries. Although each plan differs in itself and in its details, it is basically aimed to create an information-based economic structure that is not dependent on natural resources such as gas and oil (Hussein, 2018). According to the Qatar development plan, it aims to attract foreign investors to the region, it is said that the state is investing in the private sector in order to decrease the state's place in the economy and increase the private sector (Skousen, 2020, November 29). The energy sector is at the centre of economic reform plans in Qatar, so the government encourages women to take part in this sector. Opportunities for women to work in government staff have also increased.

The increase in women's participation in economic life in Qatar in recent years shows the changing role of women in social and economic life. The increase in the education level of women, the increase in the literacy rate, and the change in the way of birth and marriage increased this rate. Despite all these developments, there are still many factors limiting women. In the culture of the region, the understanding that men are responsible for the livelihood of the house is dominant and this has prevented women from participating in business life. When the education levels are compared, it is seen that the education level of women is much higher than that of men in recent years. Despite this, the number of unemployed women is higher than that of men. Women in Qatar mostly take charge in managerial and senior positions or open their own businesses.

It is a fact that despite the developments in women's participation in education, economy and social life in the Gulf countries, they still face limitations and problems in many areas. The situation of educated women most strikingly reflects the difference and contradiction between traditional and modernizing society values. Only a small percentage of women join the elite of society and become a part of this radical change.

3.2.1. Education

In March 2014, the commission of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Arab World announced its support for the science, technology and innovation strategy and it was decided to increase the participation of men and women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering), Math (Science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education. (Islam, 2017). The strategy focuses on three points: science and engineering education, scientific research and regional international scientific cooperation. The cooperation is on developing and managing water resources, nuclear energy, renewable energy, oil, gas and petrochemical industries, desertification, climate change, and its effects on agriculture, communication technologies, space sciences, nanotechnology (Islam, 2017). This initiative is important in terms of understanding the importance of education for Arab societies and the necessity of supporting science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs. This training plan also aims to train women and men together to support women's participation in the economy.

Gender inequality is not seen in the field of education, the literacy rate of youth is around 98%, while 96% of girls receive high school education, this rate is 65% for boys. The government provides free education for young people between the ages of 6 and 16 (Skousen, November 29, 2020). The government of Qatar provides very generous opportunities for its citizens in terms of education. Qatar University also provides free courses for seniors, the aim is to raise the education level and vision of the people.

In order to improve the quality of education in Qatar, the government began to implement large-scale educational reforms in 2002 (Gonzalez, 2008, p.5). According to the Ministry of Development Plan and Statistics of Qatar, there has been a significant increase in the number of students going to university over the years. While there were 117,266 students in 2011-2012, there were 28,668 students in 2015-2016, and when we look at their percentages, it is seen that there are 65% and 68% female students (The Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2017, p. 17, 49). In 2015-2016, 33% of female students enrolled in arts and science departments, 17% of female students entered economics and administrative sciences, and 9% preferred education and engineering departments. In the same year, 43% of female students graduated from science and arts, 22% from economics and administrative sciences, and 7.5% from educational sciences and engineering (The Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2017, p. 9).

Qatar supports STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education program and according to the 2016 World Economic Forum's World Gender Inequality report, 17% of STEM graduates are female and 46% male (Schwab, 2015, p.302-303). Despite the government's policies to increase women's participation in education and employment, the number of women in high school and tertiary education is still low. The newly established 'Education City' in Qatar was personally financed by Sheikha Mozah, mother of the Emir of Qatar. Sheikha Moza established the Qatar Education, Science and Society Foundation in 1995, of which she is still the chairman. The Foundation aims to develop human resources in Qatar in the fields of education, health and community development, to improve the quality of life, to support technological development and to cooperate with international organizations. Qatar is a Gulf country that makes serious investments to create a centre in the field of higher education. In 2012, branches of well-known universities in North America and Western Europe such as Texas A&M University and Georgetown University were opened, and famous professors and experts from western countries were transferred there (Gray, 2013, p. 138). A significant number of foreign students, especially from the Middle East and African countries, came to these universities (Romani, 2009, p.4). Since the language of education is English in these institutions where a Western higher education program is implemented, it has become widespread to provide education in English in secondary education (Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015, p. 207.) In fact, women's inclination and participation in higher education are higher than men, but the quality of education is not stable, and men are more fortunate and free to go abroad for education (Rathmell & Schulze, 2000, p. 58).

3.2.2. Women in Social and Political Life

The government does not allow the formation of women's rights organizations that do not belong to it. All civil organizations have to apply for registration with the Ministry of Interior, which monitors and inspects their movements (Crystal, 2005). The only active women's group, affiliated with the government, is the Supreme

Council on Family Relations, working independently of other government structures and for the rights of children and women under the leadership of the Emir's mother, Sheikha Muza bint Nasir al-Misnad. The Committee on the Affairs of the Women's Council calls for reform of the Personal Status law and supports the increased visibility of women in the public sphere. As a result of the work of the council, the age of marriage was increased from 14 to 16, women gained the right to divorce without losing their children's custody rights, and it was possible for women to receive alimony for three years after the divorce. The high council supports the appointment of more women to key government and decision-making positions. The Qatari red cross society also helps women in need and tries to provide opportunities to find or establish a job (Crystal, 2005). As of 2015, although there are only two female members in the Qatari parliament, which has 29 members, and there is only one female judge in the judicial system of Qatar, more than half of the Qatar university law faculty consists of female students (Skousen, 2020 November 29).

Despite all these developments, increasing educational opportunities and entering the business world have had an interesting effect on women. It is seen that it is more difficult for women with university degrees to marry because men are hesitant to marry women who are equal or more educated than themselves. In addition, educated women do not accept to be second or third wives. Unmarried women have to get permission from their fathers or older brothers to work, in short, it can be said that educated women often fall into depression because of the dilemma created by the patriarchal structure that is active in family and social life. (Peterson, 1989, p. 34-50). It should be noted that income-generating economic activities increase the self-confidence of Qatari women, change the balance of power in the family, enable them to participate more in the decisions about how the money will be spent. So, women can contribute to their skills and desire to protect their rights against discrimination.

4. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

4.1. Status of Women in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates was impressed by the vision and plans to develop the country of Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Emir of Dubai. Al Maktoum especially emphasizes the importance of increasing the visibility of women in social, economic and political platforms. He states that he aims to create a social structure where women's potentials are not imprisoned and revealed (Al Maktoum, 2013, p. 47).

The conditions that prevented westernization movements in the United Arab Emirates were not as effective as in other Gulf countries. Because until the first half of the 20th century, the Emirates remained unaffected, more isolated and untouched by western interventions. Marriage and family law has not been modernized and changed, sharia continued as a legal way in government administration and family relations, polygamy, that is, the minimum age of marriage for men, the right to divorce, has not been revised. Family life is accepted as the basic building block of the society, the symbol of social stability and continuity in the Emirates, as in other Muslim countries (Jawad, 1998, p. 30). Along with this understanding, the patriarchal structure, that is, the father, spouse or elder brother being the decision maker in the family and being protective and watchful over women is a settled understanding in society. (Al-Khateeb, 1998, p. 113). The most emphasized developments regarding women's rights have been to abolish the use of veils or burqas that cover their faces in some emirates, and to increase women's educational and professional opportunities.

4.2. Women's Participation in the Economy

Another of the changing attitudes towards women has been the acceptance of working outside the home and having a career. Most women in the United States are involved in work for social responsibility or personal fulfilment, not because of their material needs, as the government's generous support ensures that its citizens meet their basic needs. The government's support of both financial support and women's participation in business life increases the options for women living in the United Emirates. In most Muslim countries, the role of women in the family is determined as wife and mother, which sometimes contradicts their working conditions outside the home. However, as a result of the government's approval and support of the working woman figure in the UAE, working as a teacher, doctor, or social worker will be accepted as much as motherhood and companion identity, which will facilitate the society's acceptance of the changing role of women. Today, since more than half of university students are women, it is expected that the roles of women between home and work will be balanced and their participation in business life will increase (Ramazani, 1985, p. 270).

Figure 2. Distribution of Female Employees by Sectors in the UAE

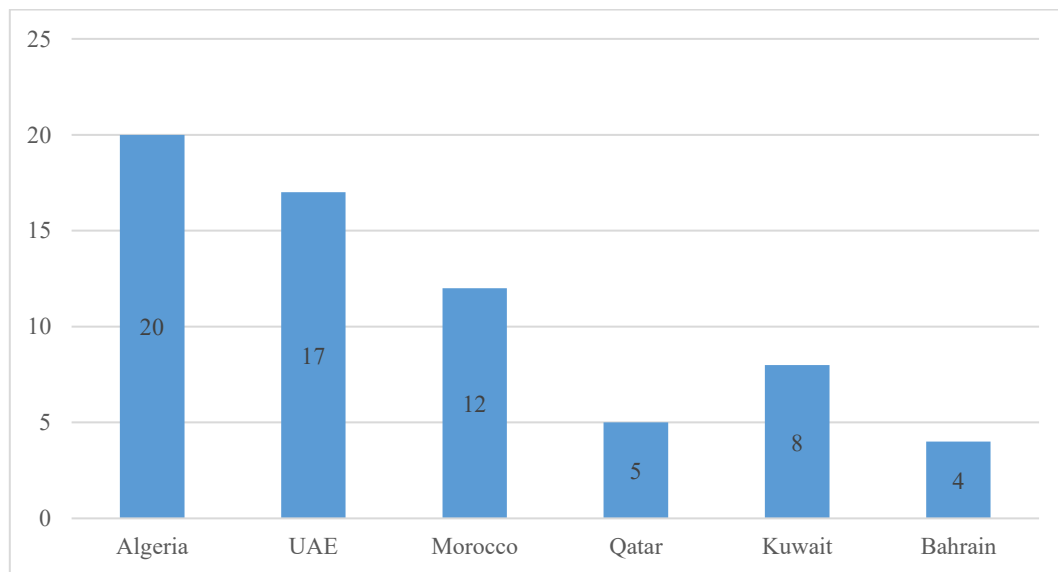
In the National Assembly	%22.5
In decision Making Positions	%30
In the Public	%66
Labour Force	%25
Self-Employee	%4.5
Manager in Commercial Rooms	%15
Medium and Small Entrepreneur	%30
Businesswoman	%11

Source: (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2018).

The table above shows that women mostly prefer to work in the public sector in the UAE. Professionally, the majority of women in the UAE work in the fields of education, health and social work. Most of them work in the ministries of education and social relations to the ministry of health in the public sector. While the number of women working as teachers and in administrative jobs is high, there are not many working as nurses or secretaries. This is one of the cases that shows that there is still a clear distinction between the sexes. In the UAE, as in other Gulf Arab countries, professions such as nursing and secretarial are not considered highly respected as they may cause women to contact men.

In addition, the number of women working in radio and television in the staff of the Ministry of Communication and Culture is high. Although there was a reaction against women showing their faces to men on the screen, over time the public got used to this idea. The number of women showing interest in the sector has also increased. Women have also started to work in areas of working with female inmates as police, in crime investigations, in airport security, in driving tests. As investors, women also prefer to invest in real estate, stock markets, boutiques and taxis. In addition, as in Qatar and other Gulf countries, women do not work in stores, such as salespeople or cashiers, where they have to deal with men. Instead, they prefer to employ staff who will follow their work. As in other Muslim countries, women have the right to control their own wealth, and the high economic conditions of the Emirates create many opportunities for them (Davidson, 2008, p. 153).

Figure 3. Proportion of Women Working in Ministries and Parliaments in 2015



Source: (World Bank Documents, 2016).

As the table shows, their political participation is still very low and it is attractive to work in decision-making positions or as an entrepreneur. The rate of women working in ministries and parliament in the UAE is higher than

in Qatar. The more liberal and tolerant environment of the UAE and its more openness to western culture due to its high foreign population have a great impact on this. The rate in Algeria and Morocco, which are the North African countries, is quite high compared to the Gulf countries. Although all are Muslim countries, it can be accepted that the rate is low in the Gulf countries, the political tradition is different in the Gulf, the influence of the tribal structure still continues, the parliament and ministries are very new. In addition, since the Gulf countries gained their independence very late, the political organizations are also very new, thus women's participation is very recent development.

The information that business women are more active day by day, the number of registered members of the businesswomen's council is 12000 and projects worth \$17 billion is an important sign that women's participation in the economy will increase in the coming days (Jabeen & Faisal, 2018). Women's economic and political participation in UAE society is still very low, indicating that the limitations are still effective in many areas.

4.3. Increasing Education Opportunities for Women

Until the 1950s, educational institutions in the UAE consisted of institutions called *kuttab*, where only little boys and girls attended, where the Qur'an was taught and memorized and a little math was taught. Most of the girls went to these schools before puberty and they prepared for marriage and then for housework (Soffan, 1980, p. 51). The first public school in the United Emirates was opened in Sharjah, one of the seven emirates, in 1953 with teachers from Kuwait. Schools were opened in other emirates with the assistance of Kuwait. After independence in 1971, my education system led the way in Kuwaiti educational affairs during its inexperienced years. Al-'Ain University was opened in 1977, the opening of a local university is especially important for women, as it is very difficult for them to go to study in the city or abroad. Today, female students have the opportunity to participate in education in coeducational schools at all levels, including university, or in schools and campuses opened only for women. While most of the female students continue their education in social sciences and arts, few of them study engineering, medicine or law (Soffan, 1980, p. 55).

Although marriage and having children are the primary goals for most women in the United Arab Emirates, different opportunities are also emerging. Young female students have positive thoughts about the future and graduate. When they are, they can find really suitable opportunities. Although they think of balancing their work and family life and continuing their career when they have children, the majority still do not think of working outside the home (Ramazani, 1985, p. 270).

Although women's education and participation in business life have started to be encouraged in the country, the problems of women's inequality in the face of the law and their underrepresentation in the government still continue. Individually and socially, women face the contradiction and uneasiness created by deep-rooted traditions and habits. Working women who gained their economic independence after higher education and career opportunities were caught between two different worlds. The identity of a woman, professionally an active member of society, is in conflict with the identity of a protected woman, surrounded by traditional values, with limited visibility in society, and forbidden to travel without a man. The fact that a female teacher who trains hundreds of young people and prepares them for the future, and a doctor who saves the lives of patients in important surgeries, can't have the freedom to go wherever she wants creates a strange dilemma. The interesting thing is that most of these restrictions are defended by women because they are made in the name of Islam, and it is said that freedom is accepted as a lifestyle of western women (Skousen, 2020, November 29).

5. WOMEN IN THE GCC COUNTRIES AND ISLAMIC LAW

Qatar's, Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's laws are determined within the framework of Islamic law (*sharia*). Therefore, women's rights are regulated according to the limits set in Islamic law. These countries reject gender equality in local laws and guidelines, civil rights, before the law, freedom movements, marriage and family life. Discrimination against women is made in various ways. For example, while children of women with spouses from another nation cannot obtain citizenship, the situation is different for men in the GCC. According to sharia family law without the children's father permission women cannot independently obtain their children's ID cards and passports. The number of women who apply to the court for divorce and can leave on a fair condition is very few. The laws on custody, inheritance and freedom in their choices are on the side of men (Crystal, 2005). Women can of course go to court, although their legal right to defend themselves is usually represented by a male relative or lawyer. Traditionally and religiously, much of this social control has focused on the countries' guardian system,

whereby a woman needed her male guardian (a father, husband, brother, son, or another male relative) to accompany her in public and to allow her to travel, get an education or a job, undergo surgery, and get married (Human Rights Watch, 2017, May 9). However, if her husband and father died, this situation became so distorted that the grandson could be appointed as a guardian and the travel permission of the woman was left at the mercy of the grandchild. Especially divorced or widowed women suffer a lot from this guardianship law. Also, the testimony of a woman in court is not considered equivalent to a man. These limitations imposed by sharia law on women in family matters and community life in the GCC countries also affect women's participation in the economy and politics.

Polygamy are legal and most widely practiced in the GCC countries (Publishing, Explorer, 2006, p. 11-30). It means, men in the GCC countries are allowed up to four wives, but women are not permitted multiple husbands. The practice continues to be discussed as a women's rights issue for a long time. The increase in women's education rates has also changed their behaviour, many of them practically do not want their spouses to marry another, and the rate of polygamy is decreasing (Ramazani, 1985, p. 273). Multiple marriages are no longer accepted by educated women. Because when women with economic independence face this situation, they prefer to leave their marriage and establish their own lives. However, since the number of such self-confident and well-equipped women is not very high, it would not be realistic to accept that this situation reflects the general society.

In order to find solutions to these problems, many panels and symposiums have been held in the GCC countries in recent years, focusing on this issue. Adding international pressure to this, the Saudi administration prepared the legal infrastructure for many changes in favour of women. With the reform package announced in 2019, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman granted women the right to travel without parental consent, to apply for divorce and marriage, and to have an identity card for their children. Again, with this decision, women were given the right to take an active role in diplomacy and in the administrative levels of the state.

6. THE ROLE OF ROYAL WOMEN IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

In Gulf Arab countries, women belonging to royal families are leading important changes towards women in their societies. Women in these positions have some political power and have the opportunity to participate in political debates and demand change first-hand. However, changing the status quo is not easy and these privileged and powerful women are also under social pressure. Like other female citizens, women belonging to the royal family are expected to abide by the rules of the patriarchal monarchy. While the majority act in accordance with the existing political and social tradition, some royal women, although few in number, try to pioneer changes by forcing their existing political power. They are role models to society. These important figures started to work especially on women's rights advocacy, women's more visible in economic and social life, having options in education and emancipation. Traditionally, royal women have sought to break down women's boundaries by gaining visibility in state institutions in the male-dominated political environment. They want to change the disadvantaged situation of women by taking part in the management of donation institutions, cultures and foundations.

Due to patriarchal rules and gender discrimination, female citizens need the support and protection of female royalty. However, these royal women are unable to bring about more systematic change by making an impact. They cannot make institutional reforms while trying to solve and support some events such as women's divorce, child care, helping women who have been subjected to violence, education of female students and finding a job (Aldosari, 2016, June 24). Because traditional social norms are still extremely strict and religious institutions (mosque) have taken over the duties of other public institutions.

Royal women also hold cultural leadership in all Gulf Arab societies. They lead and open the door of cultural changes in accordance with the changing political identity of the state. This work and leadership of Western-educated and energetic royal women has allowed former Gulf monarchies to thrive and compete with values around the world. This is especially important for the acquittal of the Gulf Cooperation Countries, which want to move from an oil and gas dependent economy to a diversified economy. These countries are accused of exporting ultra-religious ideologies. Significant royal women work for changing this reputation of the GCC countries. For example, Sheikha Al-Mayassa Al-Thani is trying to bring global treasures to Qatar, one of the important cultural centres of the world, in order to create the creative face of Qatar and display it in the art museum (Aldosari, 2016, June 24).

6.1. Qatar

Although it is economically supported by the state for women to be more visible in the society and participate in education and business life in Qatar, since it is difficult to break the established conservative tradition, especially women from important families lead as role models. Some of Qatar's most influential women include:

Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser: Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the mother of the Emir of Qatar, has been the most prominent figure in the formation of the modern cities of Qatar for the last two decades. Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned had a great influence on the acceptance and settlement of social reforms in society. He has been the founder and manager of numerous international organizations, educational, business and management institutions. Being a political figure in the political arena, his activity and influence in the social and cultural arena is rarely seen in the Arabian Gulf. She represented her country alongside her husband in official trips and ceremonies, and received visitors in her own office. Sheikha Moza was photographed meeting with King Abdullah in 2010 at a meeting where all-male politicians discussed political relations in order to reduce the tension between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

When Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani came to power after his father, he married the daughter of his political rival, Nasser bin Abdullah al-Missned, and an agreement was reached between the families. Women who have political marriages such as Sheikha Moza also take the lead in mediation and agreement. Sheikha Moza and her son Sheikh Tamim support women's participation in all fields.

Sheikha Maha Mansour Salman Jasim Al Thani: Graduated from Qatar University, Sheikha Maha Mansour Salman Jasmin Al Thani is one of the most powerful women in the country. Sheikha Maha almost made history when she was appointed as the first female judge of Qatar in 2010. Sheikha Maha also supports and works for women to take important positions at the head of the decision-making mechanism. She says that the big gap between the sexes will be closed in this way. (Expatwoman.com, 2016, March 7).

Hessa Al Jaber: Overseeing the Information and Communications Technology ministry, Dr. Hessa Al Jaber oversees the country's most important telecommunications market. It introduced the online portal named 'Hukoomi,' accelerated the flow process and made communication with the government transparent, and its work has been very effective in the modernization of the government, It has also been heavily involved in child protection and women's employment programs (Expatwoman.com, 2016, March 7).

Dr. Raja Easa Al Gurg: Encourages young Arab women from Dubai starting businesses. In addition to the presidency of Dubai Business Women's Council, she is a member of many different groups. She also works for the advancement of women's rights; she is also the general manager of Al Gurg Group construction company. In 2015, Forbes Middle East was determined as the most powerful woman in the Middle East (Expatwoman.com, 2016, March 7).

6.2. United Arab Emirates

Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed Al Maktoum: Daughter of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who has five children, Manal is also the chairman of the UAE's Gender Balancing Authority and Dubai Women's Board. She spends most of her time working for women's rights in the region. And he helped prepare a book to guide companies in this regard. In addition to women working under more equitable conditions, it also supported women working in the private sector to take time off from work when they become mothers.

Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi: Lubna Al Qasimi was named the most powerful Arab woman in government in the UAE in 2015 and 2017. Al Qasimi is the minister of tolerance and one of the region's most important female pioneers. A member of the royal family, Al Qasimi is a prominent advocate of women's rights. She became the first female minister in the UAE and received the Clinton Global Citizenship Award. Raising women's rights is one of the most important items in the agenda of the Emirates, and providing equal conditions in education and business environment (Singh, 2016, March 7).

Mother of the Nation, Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak: Sheikha Fatima, the third wife of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder and official president of the United Arab Emirates, founded the country's first women's community, the Abu Dhabi Women's Development Organization, in 1973 has established. Then, she established the General Women's Association in 1975, the Family Development Institution in 2006 and the Mother Child High

Council in 2003. In the past years, it has won more than 500 awards, 30 of which are from the United Nations (Singh, 2016, March 7).

6.3. Saudi Arabia

Salma Al Rashid, who is representing Saudi Arabia this year at the Women 20 working group of the G20, chaired by the kingdom, said discussions were often based on forging a new path for women in society (Nihal, 2020).

Princess Reema Bint Bandar Al-Saud is an iconic female figure in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, consistently advocating for women in the region and works tirelessly to expand opportunities for Saudi women. Princess Reema has been a member of the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee since 2017 and of the IOC Women in Sports Commission since 2018. She then became president of the Mass Participation Federation in October 2018 (Joseph, 2021, January 6).

Princess Ameerah Al- Taweel is a famous philanthropist and active humanitarian. Focusing on empowering women's rights and supporting a wide range of humanitarian interests in Saudi Arabia and across the world, Princess Ameerah has opened an orphanage in Burkina Faso and spearheaded humanitarian trips to Pakistan and Somalia (Joseph, 2021, January 6).

Whatever the role of royal women, their influence and expectations ultimately depend on the system they are in and are limited. Although there are highly influential examples, they are few in number and royal women are ultimately bound by patriarchal rules in their family life. Royal women, who are now more involved in decision-making mechanisms, gaining their economic independence, and trying to exist in politics, are also trying to change the traditional view, which is dominated by the mentality of women's place at home. For example, Sheikha Fatima both accepts to be the third wife of the Emir of Abu Dhabi, and works for the promotion of women's rights in her country, and has established many associations for women's rights. Again, the ex-wife of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Princess Haya bint Al Hussein, is one of many wives. While the traditional understanding of women is not approved in the media, it has been seen with her husband at United Nations meetings and in the media. Moreover, she wears western style clothes. Princess Haya accompanied her husband to horse races, sports festivals and international trips. In addition to her mother and wife identity, she represents the well-groomed, stylish modern Arab woman in public.

Likewise, Sheikha Muza, the mother of the Emir of Qatar, is known for her work for the education and development of women. When she took part in international organizations and meetings, she attracted attention with her glamorous elegance, and became a fashion icon not only for women in Qatar but also for women in all Arab countries. She is definitely an important role model in raising the image of the strong confident Arab woman.

However, in all these stages there were no changes in issues such as polygamy, patriarchal structure, representation of women in the law by male family members, their work being dependent on the approval of their spouses. Even royal women show that they completely accept the supremacy of their husbands in society. Royal women can be free and active within the framework of the rights and permissions given to them by their husbands or fathers. In this case, their contribution to the improvement of women's rights and the liberation of women is limited, and in a sense, they play a role in ensuring the continuation of the existing patriarchal hierarchy. In this respect, the situation of royal women in the Gulf reflects a contradiction.

5. CONCLUSION

As in all Gulf countries, the Islamic faith and conservative local traditions play a decisive role in women's lives in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Western-style life and values are generally not found positive, westernization is criticized without question, the claim of modernization without losing their own identity and social values is quite common. But exactly how to do this is not specified.

Although the GCC countries has experienced remarkable economic and social change in the last 30 years, family life and the status of women are the structures that change least and slowly. The idea of changing the roles of women in both family life and social life finds a very difficult response in the conservative and traditional structure. In order for this change to be accepted in the society, the role models of women from royal families are especially important in the Gulf Arab countries. These women are trying to show that women's education, career and being more visible in society will not prevent them from being wives and mothers in their family life. The fact that they

enter the business world, become economically successful, have a say in the political arena, as well as preserve their traditional identities shows the public that this combination is possible. This situation is also a guide for women who face contradictions between traditional values and modernization, and it is important in this respect. In this sense, there is a very interesting result; while women are trying to preserve their traditional roles, they also benefit from the opportunities offered by the modern world for women.

In addition, one of the remarkable results of women's receiving education and gaining their economic independence has been the increase in the number of unmarried women and divorces. Because men in a patriarchal understanding are afraid to marry women who are more educated and economically independent than themselves, and when these women cannot find what they are looking for in marriage, they can decide to divorce faster when they are exposed to domestic violence. Since the UAE has developed economically and is the centre of attraction for the region, it has a more liberal social structure. In this sense, women appear more frequently in the media or in the political arena. The number of foreign companies, foreign schools and thus foreign employees is much higher in the UAE, which has made it easier for the local and conservative culture to soften and even accept western elements. In addition, the Emir of Dubai encouraged women to increase their participation in all areas of society, making the UAE a role model for Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia and Qatar have a more conservative culture than the other GCC countries, improvements have been made in women's rights in these two countries. However, the adoption of innovations in this area in society is slower, especially in Saudi Arabia. Because some conservative tribes can be very influential in the politics, and some parts of the society is concerned that the regulations on women's rights are incompatible with their religious beliefs and will cause corruption.

It has been understood that the participation of women, that is, almost half of the population, in the economy and the increase in their productivity are important for the creation of a strong economy that does not depend on natural resources. However, the roles of women in education, family life and career in today's society in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE are not fully clear. Although the change in the status of women in society is encouraged with the support of governments and the role modelling of the royal elite, laws must also provide a serious support to women's right. Actually, women's rights in the GCC countries are growing compared to the rest of the world, however, the Gulf countries women have still very little freedom and autonomy. There are many women in the Gulf countries who are educated and successful in business life, but they are expected to assume their traditional roles in the social structure and even to comply with the decisions of their husbands or fathers in matters related to their own lives. This situation causes women to face serious contradictions in their society.

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR

Declaration of Contribution Rate: The author contributes the study on her own

Declaration of Support and Thanksgiving: No support is taken from any institution or organization.

Declaration of Conflict: There is no potential conflict of interest in the study.

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