

Example of gender economics- the gender gap in the middle east research paper

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



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Gender Economics- The Gender Gap In The Middle East

Background

Women in the Middle East are normally depicted by veils, conveying their highly domesticated and subservient nature. The world knows that this is the image of women from Middle East and Northern.

In some Islamic countries however, there are examples of advanced gender issue identification and resolution. Turkey is one of them. Turkey started social reforms in 1923, through then Prime Minister Kemal Ataturk, through the provision of rights to vote for women and for the inclusion of women in Parliament. In fact, Turkey has a female Prime Minister by 1993 which signified how it viewed women and gender equality. Woo (2010) says that this is no small feat for a country whose majority is Muslim (about 98% of the entire population of Turkey is Muslim) and has managed to employ women amounting to about 28% of the entire workforce. Woo added that this is a major accomplishment in a Muslim country, considering the fact that the most economically advanced country in the region, Saudi Arabia, has only 15% women workers in the entire workforce.

Women in the Middle East face this problem due to the traditions and

doctrines of the Islamic religion. According to the internet website, Free Thought Nation (2011), the Islamic bible Quran's passages about women say that women are unclean and that women are the fields of men. The site further quotes that men are superior to women and women should obey their men or they could be beaten. It is now widely known that there is a mis-interpretation of the Quran, particularly as it relates to women and marriages. In truth, the Quran says that marriages should strengthen individuals and that the husband should treat the wife as an equal, which means that women should be allowed to find employment on their own. This is not the traditional case for Muslim families.

Gender Equality Movement in the Middle East

The Middle East countries were signatories to the eight global goals referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The MDG is a product of the Millennium Summit of the United Nations and was ratified by 193 United Nation member states plus 23 international organizations. These included the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). UN Millennium Declaration states that all persons in the world have the right to freedom, equality, dignity, and basic living needs. These persons must also be freed from the dangers of hunger and violence. The MDG is proposed to be reached swiftly, having substantial results by the year 2015 and to achieve the MDG targets, operational targets were set up within the 15-year implementation period. There are eight MGDs in all. These eight goals are described using a total of 21 targets plus indicators that are tangible and

measurable for each of the 21 targets and the eight goals. The Millennium Development Goals are listed below and appear in the order presented in the UNDP (2012) website.

The United Arab Emirate is one of the Middle Eastern countries that have steadfast commitment to the MDG and has paid particular focus on gender issues. In 2010 the UAE's Minister of State Reem Ibrahim Al Hashimi declared that the UAE will continue to support the Millennium Declaration and is firm of its conviction towards the implementation of the MDG. According to her, this would bring peace, security and prosperity not just to the UAE but to the world (WAM 2010). Minister Al Hashimi added that the UAE believes that the success for achieving the MDG requires global partnership, in light of the recent and inter-related economic, financial and security conditions experienced by the UAE and the rest of the Arab countries in the past years. One of the most challenging goals for the UAE is the achievement of MGD 3. MGD 3 states that the UAE must promote gender equality and women empowerment by eliminating educational discrepancy. Arab countries culturally have poor gender equality ratios resulting in a highly imbalanced men-to-women social equity. The tables presented below show the UNDP MGD3 statistics for UAE's MDG3 achievement. From 1991 to 2005, the ratio of girls to boys in primary schools has increased however, the trend is not continued in the secondary level enrolment. From 1991 to 2005, the ratio of girls to boys in secondary level decreased from 1. 2 to 1. 01 in 2005. Data from 1991 to 2003 for tertiary education shows the same decreasing trend in education for females. The gender parity index decreased from 1991's 4. 35 to 2003's 3. 16. Still this is encouraging because in the UAE, there are 3

females enrolled in college courses for every 1 male.

Figure 1 Gender Equality: Increasing Educational Opportunities for Females

This results in very low percentage of women in the workforce. The UNDP reports that in 2008, only 20.1% of the workforce is women. In parliament, about 22.5% of the total number of parliamentary seats was occupied by women in 2007. That has been reduced to 17.5% in 2012. However, the National (2010) reports that the UAE has the highest rank for MDG 3 achievements among all Arab countries. There is a marked improvement from 2000, when the MDG was launched to 2005 in terms of politics and education for women. The gender gap in the country, according to the article from the National is narrowing. Kapur (2011) says that the UAE has the highest rank among Arab countries in terms of narrowing the gender difference. It currently places at 103 out of 134. Women that were interviewed in the UAE said that it is the political will that has enabled women to achieve higher literacy rates and an opportunity to gain position in the national parliament that has driven this achievement.

In November 2011, the UAE further strengthened its gender gap achievements, according to Kapur (2011) due to the investments in education that the government has undertaken to make education more accessible to women. The UAE's achievements are not mediocre. The country has 3 females enrolled in college courses for every 1 male. If it continues to do so, UAE will be able to attract better and more talented women into the work force that will participate in the country's overall economic development.

Conclusion

The UAE and Turkey are just countries in the Middle East that are trying to bridge the gap of gender inequality. Through a combination of education, skills development, social training, information dissemination and good governance, these countries have succeeded significantly in ensuring a safe workplace for women. Like the MGDs, gender and equality issues are related to other socio-economic issues in the Middle East. The resolution of gender issues must take form as part of this whole development framework.

Thankfully, we have two countries that have already taken the mantle and are pursuing gender equality in the Middle East.

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