FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN ARAB AND NON-ARAB MUSLIM MAJORITY COUNTRIES

DALAL ALOTAIBI

University of East Anglia
E-mail: misdoly@hotmail.com

Abstract - This study investigated the possible factors that impact FLFP. Using panel data for 18 Arab and 16 Non-Arab Muslim countries, over the period 1991 to 2018. In this study we did not treat all Muslims countries (Arab and Non-Arab) as if they are homogenous. Additionally, we did not treat all Arab countries who are considered as high oil dependent as homogenous, rather we differentiated between them based on their conservatism level. This approach allows to better understand the variations in FLFP between these two groups of countries and within these Arab countries. Based on the empirical results, diversity in religions have strong positive association with FLFP. Suggesting that FLFP is high in countries where people live in the midst of different combinations of religious thought. Furthermore, apart from Islam, one of the possible factors that result in FLFP to be lower in Arab countries comparing to Non-Arab and Muslim majority countries is the Arabic culture. The Arabic culture could magnify negative perceptions or beliefs toward females' employment and hence lower FLFP in these countries.

In the Arab countries who are considered as low conservative, oil dependency has positive impact on FLFP. This clearly may explain why FLFP is high in some oil rich countries and very low in some other oil rich countries. However, being Arab, high oil dependent and have high level of conservatism have a large and negative association with FLFP. Suggesting that this combination of these factors result in low FLFP. High conservatism and Arabic culture may suggest high restriction and discouragements on FLFP, and the high oil dependency would result in high unearned income for those females represented by the financial support given to those females by their male relatives, which ultimately decrease females' motivation to work and therefore their participation in the labour market.

Keywords - Female Labour Force, Conservatism, Islam, Oil Dependency.