

Women's Low Labour Participation in Lebanon

Understanding the Intersectional Barriers to Women's Labour Force Participation

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Abstract:

Problem: Arab states are among those with the highest labour-market gender gaps (ILO, 2018, p.6). In Lebanon, women's labour force participation is only 23.2 percent (UNDP, 2018) despite it not being a Muslim country and having high levels of development and education.

Purpose: The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the reasons behind this low participation by situating it within the context of Lebanese social, economic, and legislative structures.

Methodology: A mixed-method approach was used. Empirical evidence was gathered from the literature and international reports and supplemented by interviews with five high-status professional to explore their interrogation of women's employment in Lebanon.

Findings: The findings clearly illustrate how several factors intersect to hinder women's engagement in the labour-market. These are socio-cultural barriers embodied by the sexual division of labour embedded within Lebanese culture, structural barriers manifested in legislation, and economic barriers relating to neoliberalism and neopatrimonialism.

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Contents

Abstract:.....	2
Acknowledgements:.....	3
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	5
WID, WAD, and GAD:	5
Women’s Employment in the Arab World:	7
Lebanon:.....	9
Aims and Objectives:.....	10
Chapter 2: The Arab World	12
Politics:	13
Economy:.....	13
The Arab Spring:	15
Employment:.....	15
Labour Market:.....	16
Conclusion:	19
Chapter 3: Lebanon	20
Politics:	20
Economy:.....	21
Legislation:	23
Women in the Labour Market:.....	24
Conclusion:	29
Chapter 4: Barriers to Women’s Employment	30
Methodology:.....	30
Results:.....	31
1. Sexual division of labour:.....	31

2. Laws:.....	32
3. Religion:.....	33
4. Economy:.....	33
Discussion:.....	34
Gender Roles in the Arab World:	34
Laws: Patriarchy in a Confessional State.....	37
Labour Laws:.....	39
The “Myth of Religion”:.....	40
Women’s Employment in a Capitalist Economy:	43
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	47
Intersectional Barriers:	47
Limitations:.....	48
Appendix 1:	51
Appendix 2: Interviews.....	53
1- Interview Guide.....	53
2- Transcribed interview (Translated from Arabic)	54
References:.....	65

Chapter 1: Introduction

Women's employment is central to the debate on gender equality and women's empowerment (Balliamoune-Lutz, 2016, p.320). It impacts a country's economic and human development and has been framed as an indicator of a region's growth potential (Besamusca et al., 2015, p.123). Economic growth is expected to increase women's labour-force participation and orient it away from agriculture and informality towards manufacturing and services (Handoussa, 2005, p.7). According to Moghadam (2013, p.77), employment is an integral aspect of economic citizenship and one of the social-economic rights. Working women are financially independent, have increased decision-making power, and higher engagement in politics. They have better chances at leaving poverty and abusive relationships (EL Awady, 2018, pp.23-25). The World Bank portrays women's labour-force participation as "smart economics". It argues that the "business case" for investing in women's labour-participation is its "economic and social returns" such as poverty reduction and improved community welfare (World Bank, 2006, pp.2-5). If policies guaranteeing gender equality are enacted, the world could gross an additional \$12 million in GDP (El Awady, 2018, p.26).

WID, WAD, and GAD:

Women's employment was not always perceived as crucial for development. Until the 1970s, women were not involved in economic policies but seen as mothers and wives, dependent on male breadwinners and targeted with health and family planning programmes (Beneria et al., 2016, p.5; Kabeer, 1994, p.6). The Women in Development (WID) approach emerged calling for women to be equally "integrated into the economy to improve women's status in developing countries" (Beneria et al., 2016, pp.5-6). The movement emerged after modernisation had marginalised and excluded women from work (Razavi and Miller, 1995, pp.2-4; Rathgeber, 1990,

p.491). With gender equity linked to development, the United Nations institutionalised the idea in the UN Decade for Women in 1975 (Beneria et al., 2016, p.9). In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) extended its concern to reproductive rights alongside equality in laws and state provision of childcare (Razavi and Miller, 1995, p.6). WID was heavily critiqued for framing women's empowerment as purely instrumental for development and failing to tackle the gender relations behind women's subordination (Rathgeber, 1990, p.491). Consequently, Women and Development (WAD) movement emerged inspired by Marxist thought. It emphasized the intrinsic inequalities in neoliberalism and promoted the restructuring of economic and development systems (Beneria et al., 2016, p.12; Rathgeber, 1990, p.492). Emerging in the 1980s, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach further tackled the underlying social construction that ascribes male and female roles and allocated the state an important role in women's emancipation (Razavi and Miller, 1995, p.12; Rathgeber, 1990, pp.494-495).

It is obvious that the debate on women's employment includes several agents, the private family sphere, the state, and the market. But despite decades of advocacy, gender equality in the labour force is far from attained. Worldwide, only 48.5 percent of working-age women are in the labor force compared to 75 percent of men, and they earn 24 percent less (UN Women, no date, p.17; ILO, 2018, p.6). The gap is widest in emerging countries, although this may be attributed to increasing female education. In developed countries, the gap decreased due to increasing education, public services facilitating a work-life balance, and supportive environment. Developing countries have the smallest gap owing to poverty which forces women into employment (ILO, 2018, p.6). The Arab world is a mixture of developed and developing countries and poses an interesting case for studying women's employment.

It is important to note that labour-force participation indicates the “size of labour-supply” and looks at those over 15 years who are employed or unemployed (ILO, no date (a)). However, the employment-to-population ratio accounts for those actually employed whether self-employed or paid. It helps assess the “economy’s ability to create employment” (ILO, no date(b)). Unemployment rates measure how many people of working age are not working but have the capacity to work and are searching for employment. People not seeking employment are not counted in the labour-force participation rate (ILO, no date)

Women’s Employment in the Arab World:

Arab states are among those with the highest labour-market gender gaps (ILO, 2018, p.6). The region has been characterised by generous social expenditure financed by its natural resources revenues (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2018, xi). However, this has not translated into decreased gender gaps. Four decades ago, the region fared the worst worldwide in women’s status and is still lagging behind (Handoussa, 2005, pp.8-12). Four out of five women in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are not in the labour force and many work in the informal sector. This is estimated to cost \$575 billion loss in regional income. If women were included in the labour-force on par with men, GDP would rise by 47 percent, productivity would be enhanced, and women’s issues would be better represented (World Bank et al, 2019; UNDP, 2016, p.78). Hence, female labour-force participation presents an “untapped potential in the Arab world” (UNDP, 2016, p.78). The barriers hindering it pose a thought-provoking case.

The Arab world falls within “the belt of classic patriarchy” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.278), and favours the traditional division of labour (Afiouni, 2014, p.316). Patriarchy is “a system of social relations in which there is gender inequality between socially defined men and women” (Nash, 2009, p.102). According to Walby (1990, p.24), two forms of patriarchy exist. The first is private

within the household and the second public manifested in employment and the state. The private family sphere poses a constraint to women's labour force participation owing to the sexual division of labour. Marxist feminism defines the sexual division of labour as "the ideological and material ordering of rights, roles and values in the family and workplace which have their origins in the male-female sexual difference and women's reproductive capacity" (Moghadam, 2013, p.24). By virtue of their nurturing capacity, women are seen as compatible with the domestic sphere, while male's instrumental role is well-matched with productive labour (Parsons, 1956 quoted in Walby, 1990, p.30). In the Arab world, "the confluence of Islam and patriarchy" have exacerbated women's struggles (Jamali et al., 2005, p.583). Religion strongly contributes to the shaping of reality and legitimizes gender roles (Azzam, 2007, xv). Its impact can be felt through state legislation. According to Walby, "the state is patriarchal and capitalist, its actions have gender-differentiated effects and its structure is highly gendered" (1990, p.151). Indeed, capitalism is seen as an enemy of women. By rolling back state services, capitalism has bound women to the house in caretaking roles as men sought work outside. Simultaneously, it has exploited women by recruiting them as cheap labour in lower-status jobs (Beneria et al., 2016, pp.114-115; Kerr, 1999, p.192). It has been argued that economic rationality and men's power over women are incompatible. If there were equal opportunities in accessing employment and wages, gender power dynamics and male hegemony would be disrupted (Connell, 1995, p.176). Thus, the capitalist economy functions just as much through the "gendered division of labour" (Kerr, 1999, p.190; Molyneux, 2006, p.429).

It is obvious that several factors intersect to form barriers to women's engagement in the labour-market (Moghadam, 2013, p22). It is from this complex viewpoint that my interest in women's employment emerged. I will look at the barriers from an intersectional lens. The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw to show how race and gender cannot be treated as mutually exclusive (Crenshaw, 1989, p.139). More broadly, intersectionality is "the complex,

cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2019). Moghadam expounds this by arguing that women’s employment and access to resources are highly interlinked with the state’s legal policies and development strategy adopted (2013, p.2). I do not seek to delve into the theory of intersectional feminism, but rather to show that women’s employment cannot be alienated from the surrounding political and economic environment which in turn cannot be alienated from global and regional developments (Moghadam, 2013, p.2). With this in mind, this dissertation will focus on Lebanon, a country where multiplicity and intersectionality are part and parcel of its existence.

Lebanon:

The Republic of Lebanon is a small densely populated Arab upper-middle income country (Institute for Women’s Studies in Arab World (IWSAW), n.d, p.2). The population was estimated at 4.5 million in 2013 and just over 6 million including Syrian and Palestinian refugees in 2017 (European Training Foundation (ETF), 2015, p.4; World Bank, 2019a). Contrary to neighboring Arab countries, Lebanon has no official state religion but 18 different religious sects (Fakhoury, 2014, p.508). It never had a thriving public sector as its economy is strictly neoliberal based on service and finance sector (Salloukh, 2016; Traboulsi, 2014, p.30). Similar to Arab countries, Lebanon has high health and education indicators ranking as a high human-development country (UNDP, 2018). However, women’s labour force participation is only 23.2 percent (UNDP, 2018). Lebanon ranked as 140th out of 149 countries in the 2018 Global Gender Gap Index (WEF, 2018, p.8). Along with three other Arab countries, it is among the worst-performing in the world in political representation of women, has a gap exceeding 90 percent in “managerial opportunities”, and ranks 136th in terms of female economic participation (WEF, 2018, pp.8-9). This is interesting considering Lebanon has been viewed as a country where “women have assumed functions and

responsibilities beyond that of the traditional role due to the diversity of society, civil war, and the economic situation” (Jamali et al., 2005, pp.582-585).

Aims and Objectives:

My purpose is to investigate the reasons behind this low participation by situating it within the context of Lebanese social, economic, and legislative structures. At the outset, my research question centred on social barriers embodied by patriarchal ideology and gender stereotypes. However, the literature and interviews revealed that the barriers are much more complex. This is characteristic of qualitative enquiry which is “fluid and flexible” leading to a shift of emphasis as new ideas emerge (Richards, 2009, p.11). The academic literature on women’s employment (Afiouni, 2014; Jamali et al, 2005; Mernissi, 2011) has placed the onus on social barriers, while data from international organisations (UNDP, UN Women, etc.) emphasizes legislative and economic barriers but lacks nuance. Thus, my aim is to bring a holistic outlook to the constraints facing Lebanese women in accessing the labour market. I argue that restrictions on women’s employment can be attributed to the socio-cultural context, embodied by the sexual division of labour in the family, the structural context manifested in the laws, and the economic context of neoliberal and neopatrimonial policies. I will also contextualise the debate on religion which is integral to any discussion on women in the Arab world.

However, a significant barrier to discussing issues in Lebanon and the Arab world is the dearth of statistics; there is shortage in recent census data and limitations in producing reliable statistics (Moghadam, 2014, p.84; World Bank, 2019). Kadri argues that the fact that a rather simple task of production of knowledge exceeds the region’s capacity is indicative of its de-development (2014, p.1). Moreover, the bulk of academic literature dates is outdated (Shehadeh (1999), Jamali et al. (2005), etc. In order to bridge this lacuna, a mixed-methods approach of empirical was utilised

(Leech and Onwuebuozie, 2009, p.267). Empirical data was collected from reports by national and international organisations such as World Bank, ESCWA, UNDP, etc. This evidence aimed at providing an understanding of the economic and political context of the Arab world and Lebanon, the percentage of women's labour-force participation, and the sectors in which they are employed. This data is laid out in Chapters 2 and 3. To supplement the scarcity of literature, qualitative primary data was collected through interviewing five high-status people in women's and international organisations. Interviews are utilised in social sciences to provide data on people's understandings of phenomena (Arksey and Knight, 1999, pp.1-4). The specificities of the methodology, results and discussion of the interviews are demarcated in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 then summarises the findings and elucidates on the limitations of this research while recommending future research avenues.

Chapter 2: The Arab World

The Arab region consists of 22 countries and has around 350 million people, 50 percent of whom are youth (UNDP, 2019). According to the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), Arab countries have achieved important gains in health and education between 1980 and 2010 (UNDP, 2016, p.24). Several countries have almost achieved universal primary school enrollment. In secondary and tertiary education, female enrollment surpasses male enrollment (ESCWA, 2016a, pp.32-39). However, the region has fallen behind in income; its HDI has plateaued and inequality has risen since 2010 because of economic and political crises (UNDP, 2016, p.24). According to the Global Gender Gap Report, the MENA region ranks last globally with an overall gender gap around 40 percent (WEF, 2018, p.24). Kuwait, Tunisia and UAE have closed their gender gaps by over 63 percent but suffer from high gender wage inequalities. Ranking the lowest, Syria and Yemen have closed their gap by around 50 percent (WEF, 2018, p.24).

This chapter first gives a brief introduction into Arab political systems, then looks at the economic model adopted in the region and its repercussions. Third, it looks at the labour market discussing employment and unemployment rates and then delving into the different sectors where women work.

It is noteworthy that data varies depending on which countries are included. There is a difference between the Arab world which includes all 22 countries, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Middle East which includes data on non-Arab countries, and ESCWA's Western Asia countries. The different countries included in each are listed in Appendix 1. These differences along with the inconsistency in data collection lead to different findings on overall women's employment and rankings and exacerbate comparison.

Politics:

Arab regimes vary from monarchies to republics. However, Charrad (2011, p.50) and Nehme (2016, p.14) argue that they all are neopatrimonial. Patrimonialism is a term contrived by Weber to describe systems where a ruler “exerts power through personal ties”. Patrimonial states work in accordance to rulers’ personal interests (Nehme, 2016, p.34). Neopatrimonialism refers to the imbedding of traditionally patrimonial systems into modern states wherein the lines between formal legal bureaucracies and informal relations are blurred (Erdmann and Engel, 2007, p.105; Cheeseman, 2019). In the MENA region, patrimonial arrangements are kin-based and patriarchal as they are organised around male lineage. Different kin-related households split resources among them and expect loyalty in return for support (Charrad, 2011, p.53). Among the resources are states whose institutions and regions are segmented among followers (Nehme, 2016, p.25). Furthermore, Arab states are neopatriarchal wherein “the family is the building block of the community with distinct roles for men and women” (Sharabi, 1988 quoted in Moghadam, 2013, p.17). Thus, there is similarity between the way states are organised with the patron at the head and the way families have male figures as the “head-of-the-pyramid” to be obeyed and respected (Karmi, 1993, pp.153-154).

Economy:

Arab countries exhibit diverse socio-economic statuses (Chaaban, 2010, p.9). They are categorized according to natural and labour-market resources: some are oil-rich and labour-poor countries like GCC, others are mixed economies of oil, agriculture, and labour-force (Iraq, Egypt, and Algeria). Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen are non-oil economies with the majority of investments in human capital (Chaaban, 2010, p.10; Moghadam, 2013, p.94). Consequently, levels

of development differ. While the oil-rich Qatar and Bahrain have very high development indicators, the poorest country, Yemen, has low human development. The rest rank between medium and high human development (ILO, 2018, pp.6-7).

The region has followed a process of globalisation since the 1970s-1980s. The oil price increase in the 1970s allowed for investments in development projects and industries (Moghadam, 2013, pp.81-94). State intervention played a major role in the oil boom; citizens were offered stability, public employment, and social provisions. This allowed Arab countries to catch-up rapidly with developed countries in development indicators (Malik, 2014, pp.101-102). However, a rentier economy was built around natural resources that stifled business growth and sustained the patronage system (Bahout and Cammack, no date; ILO, 2014, p.63; WEF, 2018, xi). Women benefitted from increased jobs outside agriculture and new jobs opened up by the migration of males. Their levels of education increased, and they were provided with social benefits like maternity leaves and childcare. However, most of the jobs created around the oil industry were capital intensive and excluded women (Moghadam, 2013, p.22; 82).

In the 1980s, oil prices dropped, and governments could not sustain the high levels of public employment and migrant populations. The region plunged into debt which led International Financial Institutions to intervene with Structural Adjustment Programs advocating roll-back of the state (Harvey and Chen, 2016, p.56). In 2019, economic growth in Arab States is expected at 2.3 percent with 2 percent GDP growth (ILO, 2019, p.42). The region lacks high-productive industries and job creating sectors and is burdened by youth and refugees (ILO, 2014, p.63). There is a strong argument to diversify the economy and boost competition in the private sector (ESCWA, 2016, p.8; Chaaban, 2010, p.34).

Data on poverty is lacking, but it is estimated that a fifth of the population is considered extremely poor (Abu-Ismaïl and Al-Kiswani, 2018; ESCWA et al., 2017, p.4). 13 percent of working women in the Arab region are under the poverty line compared to 22 percent of men, and only 45.9 percent of the population is covered by social security with coverage for women even lower (ILO, 2019, pp.11-18;43). The situation has been exacerbated by conflict which has driven away investments and undermined hopes of growth (Kadri, 2014, p.193).

The Arab Spring:

The Arab world has witnessed the most conflict on earth since the second half of the 20th century (Kadri, 2014, p.4). The Arab uprisings, emerging out of frustration with economic and political exclusion, saw men and women equally demanding reform (UNDP, 2016, p.22). However, women were faced with gender-based violence like harassment and rape by police forces, notwithstanding their plight with violence and child marriage as refugees and captives by extremists (International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), 2012, pp.4-9; Esfandiari and Heideman, 2015, p.304). The gains from these uprisings regarding women's rights are not guaranteed especially as Islamist politicians have forsaken women's issues to gain popularity among conservative groups (FIDH, 2012, pp.4-10; Esfandiari and Heideman, 2015, p.303).

Employment:

According to the ILO, employment growth in 2018 in Arab States was 2.4 percent (2019, p.42). Male labour-participation was at 77.2 percent compared to 18.9 percent for women. This 58.3 percentage point difference is 30 percentage points below the global average for female labour-participation (ILO, 2018a, pp.18-19; ILO, 2018b, p.7). Female employment rate is 16.7 percent compared to 68.05 percent for men (World Bank, 2019b). Female labour-participation in

countries like UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait exceeds 50 percent, however, the rates may be skewed by the inclusion of migrant workers. Other countries have much lower rates like Iraq (12 percent) and Jordan (14 percent) (ILO, 2019, p.43; World Bank, 2019c). Females enter the labour-market at lower rates than males in the 15-24 age group (21.57 vs. 49.87 percent). Their labour-participation peaks between 25-34 years at 38.75 percent compared to 93.34 percent for males. It then decreases, while males retain the peak (ESCWA, 2016b, p.42).

Total unemployment is 9.94 percent with female unemployment more than double male's (18.69 vs. 7.7 percent). In Qatar and Kuwait, female unemployment is reported at 0.6 percent and 4.6 percent respectively. It increases to 12 percent in Oman and 50.8 percent in West Bank and Gaza (World Bank, 2019d). Increased education levels seem to have increased job-lessness; unemployment rates for people with tertiary education are 22 and 43 percent in UAE and Saudi Arabia respectively (ILO, 2014, p.64). Women's unemployment is often attributed to their studying of humanities and social sciences while employers seek technical and scientific disciplines. However, this is unfounded as women constitute 20% of technical graduates in some Arab countries and have qualifications surpassing job requirements (ESCWA, 2015, p.6). Consequently, youth unemployment is at 20.1 percent in 2018 and young female unemployment at 34.4 percent (ILO, 2019, p.43). This increases the risk of poverty among youth and pushes them into the informal sector (UNDP, 2016, p.32). Consequently, non-GCC countries suffer from high rates of working poverty. Extreme working-poverty (living below \$1.90/day) is 17.8 percent, and moderate working-poverty rates (living between \$1.90 and \$3.10/day) at 24.7 percent (ILO, 2018, pp.11-19).

Labour Market:

The labour-market is "horizontally-segregated" whereby men and women occupy different jobs, and "vertically-segregated" such that women occupy lower status jobs compared to

men (ESCWA, 2016, p.43). Moreover, the gender wage-gap reaches 20 and 35 percent in Jordan and Egypt's public sectors respectively and up to 80 percent in Egypt's private sector (UNDP, 2016, p.80).

1. Public sector:

The public sector accounts for a large percentage of women's employment (Chen and Harvey, 2016, p.52; Nasser, 2018, p.160). It was hit the hardest by structural adjustment programs (Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), 2003, p.153). For example, it absorbed 70 percent of Egypt's workforce in 1980 but only 23 percent in 2000. Only GCC countries have retained public employment capacity accounting for 80 percent of national female's employment (UNDP, 2016, p.79; ESCWA, 2016b, p.44). Public employment as teachers, nurses, or administrative staff offers women stability, high equal wages, and flexible working hours. These "professions" are seen as suitable for women (ESCWA, 2016b, p.44).

Despite high participation rates in the civil service, women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions (Nasser, 2018, p.163). Similarly, the percentage women in politics is 18.1 percent below the world average of 22.2 percent. Some countries have quota systems ensuring female representation. Algeria has surpassed the 30 percent quota while Yemen and Oman have less than 4 percent women in parliament (UNDP, 2016, p.91).

2. Agriculture:

Agriculture accounted for 34 percent of employment in 1992 but only 21.44 percent in 2018. It accounts for more than half of employment in poor countries like Mauritania and Djibouti but as low as 1-3 percent in Qatar and Jordan (World Bank, 2019e). Female employment in the sector surpasses men's (29.94 compared to 19.5 percent for men). The rates are highest in

Morocco and Yemen at 59 percent (World Bank, 2019f). However, these numbers remain under-representative as women work as unpaid family labourers in agriculture (ESCWA, 2009, pp.12-13).

3. Service Sector:

This sector has grown with the restructuring of the economy and urbanisation. It employs the most people in oil-rich countries like UAE at 73 percent but only 21 percent in Somalia. Female employment in services was 60.9 percent in 2018 exceeding male's employment (World Bank, 2019f). But women mostly work as secretarial staff and salespersons (AFESD, 2003, p.154).

4. Informal Employment:

Informal employment includes those working for their own-account or "contributing family workers" (ILO, 2018, p.9). In 2014, informal employment in MENA, excluding GCC, was 65 percent, reaching up to 91.4 percent in Yemen (Harvey and Chen, 2016, p.56). Informal unwaged labour is prevalent in countries with large agricultural sectors and MENA is the only region where more men work informally than women because rural women work in agriculture while urban women are publicly employed (Chen and Harvey, 2017, p.7; ILO, 2018, p.9). Women in this sector suffer from wage discrimination, mistreatment, and harassment (Adly, 2016, pp.97-101; Tailfer, 2010, pp.43-45). They are over-represented among "contributing family-workers" (10.6 compared to 3.3 percent for men) than "own-account workers" (6.9 compared to 14.5 percent for men (UNDP, 2018, p.80; ILO, 2018, p.9).

5. Entrepreneurship:

Arab women owned 20 percent of firms in 2013, below the average in other regions (ESCWA, 2016, pp.49-50). However, a 2006 study looking at women entrepreneurs in Lebanon,

Bahrain, Jordan, and UAE reported that the majority are sole owners and have bigger firms and higher revenues than their North America and “counterparts in Western Europe and North America” (International Finance Corporation and Center of Arab Women for Training and Research, 2007, p.7). More recently, *The Economist* reported that female tech-founders in the Middle East outnumber those in the West at 35 percent due to the meritocracy and lack of male-domination in the field (2013).

Conclusion:

Evidently, the Arab world is not homogenous, and neither are the opportunities open to women in it (Moghadam, 2013, p.7). Nonetheless, the region suffered from the highest rates of unemployment worldwide prior to the Arab Spring. This can be attributed to an economy with dwindling jobs relative to the labour force. "Where neoliberalism failed, wars decimated the labour force physically and ideologically" (Kadri, 2014, p.182). Benhadid argues that Arab women are “politically socially and economically disempowered and poverty disempowers them even more” (2003, p.108). Arab women have entered paid labour albeit at low levels and in positions inferior to men (Benhadid, 2003, p.106). They have also borne the brunt of neoliberalism by losing the safety valve that public employment provided (Kadri, 2014, p.181; Benhadid, 2003, p.106; Sabh, 2003, p.129).

Chapter 3: Lebanon

The previous chapter provided a glimpse into politics, economy, and women's situation in the Arab world. This chapter follows a similar path in looking at the empirical evidence on women in Lebanon and their participation in the labour-market. Lebanon is a pluralistic country with a small population (Jamali et al., 2005, p.584). It has had a globalized economy since the 1950s. It is known for its sectarian system which has "penetrated all aspects of society, from economy and social life to politics and ideology" (Trabousli, 2014, p.18). Women in Lebanon have low labour participation "reflecting potential for untapped economic and societal gains from gender equality" (Saliba et al, 2017 p.15).

Politics:

Lebanon's diversity is celebrated in the Muslim-dominated Arab world. The country has no "state religion" and the constitution safeguards freedom of belief (Fakhoury, 2014, p.508). Christians account for 40.5 percent of the population while Muslims constitute around 54 percent. The Druze form a minority of 5.6 percent (Shehadeh, 1999, p.10; Index Mundi, 2018). Politics and religion are inseparable as the confessional system is based on power-sharing between the 18 sects (Sleem and Dixon, 2018, pp.339-340; Fakhoury, 2014, p.508). Political parties, defined along sectarian lines, are in constant conflict over their share in power (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2018, p.10). Neopatrimonialism in Lebanon functions along sectarian lines. Sects provide an array of services from health and education to employment and public administration, effectively functioning as "surrogate states" (Trabousli, 2014, p.20). This patron-client dynamic allows sectarian leaders to maintain control over their electorates (Fakhoury, 2014, p.519). Lebanon's confessionalism pre-dates its emergence as a state (Salamey, 2014, p.14). When France declared the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, it was perceived as a "Christian entity" where Maronites, who had strong

Lebanese-nationalist sentiments, were given political authority (Sulh, 2004, p.4; Salamey, 2014, pp.23-24). However, Greater Lebanon incorporated the Shia-majority Bekaa and Sunni-majority coastal cities which were Syrian provinces and identified as Arab (Sulh, 2004, p.4; Shehadeh, 1999, p.10). This Christian-Arab identity persists till today as does Syria's hegemony (Shehadeh, 1999, pp.10-13; IWSAW, n.d, p.2). This resulted in a 15-year civil war, a military occupation from Syria, several Israeli military aggressions, and the 2005 "Cedar Revolution" aimed at expunging Syrian control after the assassination of the PM (Fakhoury, 2014, p.509; Bertelsmann-Stiftung2018, p.5).

Women were not passive during the war. They advocated for peace by enacting demonstrations and sit-ins. They began to work as seamstresses, house-sitters, etc. to sustain their families at a time when men were more at risk of kidnappings or killings. This is notwithstanding their community role of holding society together by rationing and substituting for the damaged state services (Shehadeh, 1999, pp.27-49). But women also broke down gender constructs by fighting in militias, seven even carried out suicide attacks against Israel (Deeb, 2006, p.204; Shehadeh, 1999, p.27)

Economy:

Lebanon is a high-human development country and an upper-middle income economy with the GNI per capita at \$7,690 in 2018 (World Bank, 2019a, b). Lebanon's economic model is neoliberal "par excellence". This was spearheaded post-war by PM Rafic Hariri who built a liberalised economy around the service sector, tourists, and remittances from Lebanese diaspora especially in oil-producing countries (Salloukh, 2016). Agriculture and industries are weak because of international competition and lack of protectionism (Traboulsi, 2014, p.30; Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2018, pp.22-23). International finance organisations termed the post-war period a "decade of growth" in which domestic production increased by 77 percent between 2000 and 2010 (ILO, 2015, pp. 10-11). However, despite this portrayed "rosy and successful" growth as Kadri (2014, p.2) termed it, Lebanon's economic model has its shortcomings.

GDP growth has fluctuated between 0.9 and 2 percent since 2010 reaching its lowest level of 0.2 percent in 2018 (World Bank, 2019b; Central Intelligence Agency, no date). Science, technology, and innovation are rarely addressed. There is little investment into productive activities that would diversify the economy and increase jobs (ILO, 2015, p.12; CIA, n.d; Tailfer, 2010, p.10; ETF, 2015, p.4). Nonetheless, neoliberal trends are intensifying. The 2019 budget was described as the “most austere in Lebanon’s history” (Agence France Press, 2019). It relies on cutting public wages and increasing taxation to control the debt currently at 155 percent of GDP (Annahar, 2019; Bertelsmann-Stiftung., 2018, p.24; Khraiche, 2019). These reforms are conditional for Lebanon to receive around \$11 billion mostly as concessional loans by the international community in CEDRE conference (CEDRE, 2018).

Poverty rates, last measured in 2007, show that 28.6 percent of Lebanese were living below the upper poverty line of \$4/day and 8 percent below the lower line of \$2.4/day (Kukrety and Al Jamal, 2016, p.7; Saliba et al, 2017, p.14). Beirut and Mount Lebanon are the least deprived governorates (Laithy et al., 2008, p.4). Poor households are characterized by low education, low income, and reliance on daily wage in low-paid informal sectors (Kukrety and Al Jamal, 2016, p.8). Women-headed households constituted 14.4 percent of households in 2007 but were not significantly poorer than men. Women heads-of-households often have low education and jobs in traditional sectors such as hairdressing, embroidery, etc. Women who were widowed during the war are particularly vulnerable (Tailfer, 2010, p.19). Poverty is compounded by the lack of social protection. Safety nets are sporadic, and more than half the population has no form of coverage, and three quarters have no pension plans (Kukrety and Al Jamal, 2016, pp.18-22; Traboulsi, 2014, p.5).

Therefore, high poverty and inequality levels predate the Syrian crisis. Nonetheless, it has been argued that the massive influx of refugees has exacerbated the conditions. Refugees have

settled in already poor areas and increased the demand on already inefficient services (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2018, pp.18-19). The crisis has decreased foreign investments, cross-border trade and imports from Syria simultaneous with increased expenditure on public services to cope with the population increase (ILO, 2015, p.13; CIA, n.d; ETF, 2015, p.5). The World Bank (2019a) argues that the influx of Syrian refugees has plunged 200,000 people into poverty and around 250,000-300,000 into unemployment. Poor Lebanese householders, including women and girls, working in informal and semi-skilled jobs have been the most impacted by refugees willing to work for lower wages (Lebanese Centre for Research and Consulting, 2019; UNDP, 2017).

Legislation:

The constitution affirms equality before the law, and laws do not restrict women's access to education, property, or employment (Carreras, 2017, p.7; IWSAW, no date, p.4). However, in Article 9, the constitution affirms the right of "religious communities to apply their own laws in personal status matters" (IWSAW, no date, p.4). Hence, personal-status laws (PSLs) fall under the jurisdiction of Islamic Sharia courts for Sunni and Shia and the different ecclesiastical courts of each Christian denomination, in total amounting to 15 religious courts (Salameh, 2014; HRW, 2015, p.1). All the PSLs obligate the husband to pay spousal maintenance to meet the wife's needs (HRW, 2015, p.87; Kafa, no date). The Armenian Orthodox sect prevents women from working without their husband's approval, and "obliges" them to work if the husband lacks resources for maintenance (Kafa, no date; UNICEF, 2011, p.2). In Muslim sects, it is easier for a man to initiate divorce, and women often hasten divorce by forfeiting their dowry and pecuniary rights (UNICEF, 2011, p.2; HRW, 2015, p.3). Neither marital property nor non-monetary contributions to a marriage are recognised, leaving property mostly under male ownership (Lazzarini, 2019). Non-Muslims are governed by the Civil Law of Inheritance that grants women and men equal

inheritance, while Islamic law grants women half the proportion of male's inheritance (UNICEF, 2011, p.2).

The 1946 Labour Law made no distinction by sex in "wages, promotion, competence and clothing" (Doughan, 2006, p.54; UN Women et al.,2018, p.41). However, it excluded "domestic, agriculture, and family workers" (Ministry of Labour, 1946). Women are prohibited from working in mining, slaughterhouses, and other "hazardous" jobs. Their protective measures are grouped with those for juveniles (Doughan, 2006, p.54). Maternity leave is for ten weeks to be paid by the employer; this remains less than ILO's recommendation of 14 weeks. The law protects women from being dismissed during maternity leave but does not ensure return to the same position. There are no legal stipulations for childcare service provision or sexual harassment (UN Women et al., 2018, p.25; HRW, 2015, p.1; Carreras, 2015, p.8). In the work place, women are more often denied sick leaves and vacations (Tailfer, 2010, p.53). Married women do not receive tax deductions except when head-of-household unlike a married man who receives deductions for dependents. Similarly, in Social Security Law, women employees receive "compensatory payments" only when their husband is deceased or disabled while a male employee is compensated for unemployed spouse (UN Women et al., 2018, p.41).

Women in the Labour Market:

Prior to the civil war, women accounted for "17.5 percent of the economically active population". 20 percent of whom, mostly low-skilled, worked in silk and textile industries, 23 percent in agriculture, and many as teachers, secretaries, and housecleaners (Shehadeh, 1999, p.47). Women entered public employment as secretaries and typists. Those with access to private universities graduated as physicians and lawyers as early as 1932. Even with tertiary education, many worked in administrative tasks due to the limited opportunities available to women. The

majority of working women were young and single (Shehadeh, 1999, pp.41-47). Women's integration in "non-traditional" jobs was aided by male migration (Jamali et al., 2005, p.584). The war highlighted the importance of female education as women became the sole breadwinners and had to sustain their families. In 1974, the percentage of females in higher-education was 25.2 percent compared to 74.8 percent for males. After the war, it increased to 48.2 percent (Shehadeh, 1999, pp.53-54). With increased education, labour-participation increased from 16.2 to 27 percent between 1970-2007 (Tailfer, 2010, p.30). Now, more than two thirds Lebanon's workforce has attained tertiary education on par with OECD countries (Robalino and Sayed, 2012, p.13). The literacy rate is 91.2 percent, and females dominate secondary and tertiary education (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2018, p.26; UNDP, 2018). However, labour-participation has stopped growing contingent with education.

Labour force participation is 71.1 percent among males and only 23.2 percent for females (UNDP, 2018). The employment-to-population ratio in Lebanon is 44.34 percent, 21.16 percent among females and 67.4 percent among males (World Bank, 2019g). Similar to the Arab world, more than half of working women are under 35 years (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011, p.7). Men's participation in the labour market is higher in every governorate even Beirut governorate has a gap exceeding 30 percent (ILO, 2016, p.2).

There is high discrepancy on unemployment data (Homsy, 2018). Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) reports it at 6.3 percent, 10 percent among women and 5 percent among men (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011, p.9). UNDP reports youth unemployment (15-24 years) at 16.5 percent (2018). Contrastingly, World Bank reports unemployment at 11 percent, youth unemployment at 34 percent, and women's unemployment at 18 percent (Robalino and Sayed, 2012, p.16). Similar to the Arab world, unemployment is double among university graduates compared to those with

primary education (Robalino and Sayed, 2012, p.17). The next section looks at the sectors where women work.

1. Public Sector:

The World Bank estimates public sector employs 30 percent of employees, while CAS estimates it at 15.7 percent (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011, p.3; Robalino and Sayed, 2012, p.16). Public employment is lower in Lebanon than the surrounding Arab region as its private sector has always been dominant (Moghadam, 2013, p.85). Public employment offers health, social services, and pension schemes which makes it an attractive sector (ETF, 2015, p.7). However, government employment has been frozen for long and workers have been recruited informally in temporary contracts receiving no social benefits (Adly, 2016, p.98). Women are more likely than men to accept these jobs for their flexibility and shorter working hours (Wallace, 2013, p.24). Women occupy more than 36 percent of categories three and four of public office, but only 24.1 percent and 10.1 percent in categories two and one (Beyond Reform and Development (BRD), 2017, p.12).

2. Women's Political Participation:

Lebanese women's political participation remains amongst the lowest worldwide (WEF, 2017, p.9; BRD, 2017, pp.16-17). The bill for a quota of 30 percent women in parliament has failed to pass despite effort from civil society and encouragement from some politicians (BRD, 2017, p.2). PM Saad Hariri has stated that women have proven their competency in leading ministries and hoped a woman will one day become Prime Minister although many still resist the inclusion of women in politics (MTV Lebanon, 2019). This is reflected in the low representation of women in the constituencies and political bureaus of parties except in women's committees (BRD, 2017, p.40). In 2018, 6 women were voted into parliament out of 128 members, and 4 won seats in the Council of Ministers, two of them heading key ministries for the first time (Ministry of Energy and Water and Ministry of Interior and Municipalities) (Yazbeck, 2019).

3. Service Sector:

Most jobs created in Lebanon are in the service sector accounting for 76.5 percent of employment (UNDP, 2018). 60.2 percent of women work in services and 21.5 percent in commerce (BRD, 2017, p.13). Women are less represented in trade and information technology but outnumber men as shop and market workers (Tailfer, 2010, pp. 31-37; Yaacoub and Badre, 2011, p.6). Banking has attracted large numbers of female employees (90 percent), although they only represent 19 percent of assistant general managers/general managers (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011, p.6; Jamali et al, 2005, p.585). However, the sector also includes many contractual rather than permanent workers (Wallace, 2013, p.23).

4. Professionals:

Women's participation in community and social services as doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers, pharmacists, engineers doubled between 1980s-1990s due to the war (Shehadeh, 1999, p.56). These sectors are seen as an extension of women's nurturing capabilities and their caretaking role (Wallace, 2013, p.22). In 2007, women outnumbered men as professionals (26 compared to 8 percent) and accounted for 70 percent on teachers in Lebanon in the public sector (Carreras, 2017, p.10).

5. Industry:

The industrial sector accounts for around 25 percent of the GDP (Ministry of Industry, 2018). Very few women work in this sector, 0 percent in construction and 8 percent in manufacturing (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011, p.4). Tailfer conversely argues that women constitute 12.4 percent of employees around half of them working in tobacco. Large numbers of women work in this sector as unpaid unaccounted family labourers (2010, p.31).

6. Agriculture:

12.1 percent of workers work in agriculture. Female employment is 15.6 percent slightly higher than male-employment at 10.9 percent (World Bank, 2019h). Agriculture forms a substantial source of income for the country's poor but affords minimal social benefits. Women's work is undermined as supplementing the family's survival rather than an income-generating activity (ESCWA, 2001, p.16; ETF, 2015, p.5). Due to cultural and legal constraints, women own 7 percent of land with mostly small non-arable land and growing staple crops (Tailfer, 2010, p.41; Carreras, 2017, p.11).

7. Informal Work:

Informal work permeates all sectors. Informal enterprises with no more than 5 employees account for more than 90 percent of Lebanese enterprises posing significant competition for formal businesses (Saliba et al, 2017, pp.11-12). The informal sector accounts for 56.2 percent of employment in Lebanon, the majority of whom are rural workers (Adly, 2016, p.96). Women constitute 57 percent of informal labourers compared to 61 percent of men (Tailfer, 2010, p. 43).

8. Entrepreneurship:

Women head 18 percent of Lebanese companies. The majority in Beirut and Mount Lebanon with a sizeable number in the South (Tailfer, 2010, p.48). Women account for 39 percent of the self-employed outside agriculture but register their businesses less often than men due to lack of networks (Wallace, 2013, p.31). Women constitute 14 percent of "own-account" workers and a high percentage of contributing family workers. However, they form only 1 percent of employers (Yaacoub and Badre, 2011, p.5). Women entrepreneurs tend to be younger, married, and better educated than their male counterparts. Most opt for micro and small-enterprises managed from home (Tailfer, 2010, p.48).

Conclusion:

The country is in a “slow growth trap” despite its production of surplus educated labour (ILO, 2015, p.12; CIA, n.d). It is hard to envisage how women will be mobilized into a job market that is almost non-existent. The confessional patronage system has exacerbated growth in a country that is already “security deficient and financially exposed” (Kadri, 2014, pp.71-72). Due to the continuous crises Lebanon faces, gender equality has been relegated to a subordinate position and paid little more than lip service (Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World, no date, p.3). Despite the dire economic and political situation in the country, it is noticeable that women remain more marginalized and excluded from the labour market. The next chapter will turn to look at the barriers of women’s labour participation.

Chapter 4: Barriers to Women's Employment

Methodology:

Interviews were conducted with 5 high-status persons from different organisations. The profile of the interviewees was as follows: consultant with a UN regional commission, lawyer, and member of women's NGO; project development consultant at a semi-public women's organisation; British journalist with expertise in Middle East and Lebanon; project manager at a gender equality organisation, and regional advisor for UN regional commission with development expertise. Four of the interviewees were females, the regional advisor was male. The small sample size is common in interviews as it is influenced by resources and study's purpose. The aim here is not to generalize findings but to supplement the scarce data found and understand interviewees' interrogation of the situation (Clarke and Braun, 2013, p.55; Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.4). Purposive sampling was utilised to find interviewees with expertise and capacity to provide "rich information" (Clarke and Braun, 2013, p.57). This led to a sample of elites who are normally hard to access. Accordingly, interviewees were recruited by snowballing strategy through networks of my dissertation supervisor, an instructor at the University of Balamand, and one of the participants (Clarke and Braun, 2013, p.57).

The interviews were semi-structured and included themes picked out from the literature beforehand. It was loosely adhered to as most interviewees chose to detail the barriers to women's employment with minimal probing (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.7). The interviews were carried over Skype in English or Arabic lasting between 30-60 minutes. Recording allowed going back to interviews especially Arabic ones and translating accurately. This was followed by partial transcription of main ideas and examples. Data analysis utilized coding and thematic analysis. Clarke and Braun argue that "codes are building blocks which allow organizing data and from which themes

emerge” (2017, p.297). Similar codes were grouped together as patterns emerged (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p.83). Seeing as the interviews were semi-structured, thematic analysis was deductive (Clarke and Braun, 2013, p.175).

Results:

The results section will set out the main findings from the interviews as quotes. The section after will discuss and contextualise these findings within relevant literature. One fully transcribed interview is provided in Appendix 2 to give a nuanced presentation of the transcripts.

1. Sexual division of labour:

The division of labour between what is considered a male’s role and female’s role within and outside the household was considered an important impediment to women’s employment. Firstly, the interviewees argued that there is a strict division of labour within the household where men are breadwinners, and women are responsible for childrearing, care-work, and domestic chores:

A woman can be educated and have a career, but at some point, she is expected to get married, have children, and run the household while the man provides for the house (Journalist).

The interviewees argue that the house-work balance is an important constraint:

A female may finish tertiary education and get a job but will face difficulties when married because of gender roles. She is required to do all the reproductive and domestic care-work in addition to the productive work. This leads to a double burden which is exhausting and forces women either to work part-time or quit (Project Manager)

This double-burden impacts women’s competitiveness in the absence of state services:

A woman is less likely to leave her children to attend a conference abroad or to work weekends to finish a project. This impacts her skills and competitiveness in the field (Lawyer-Consultant).

There are minimal provisions like childcare. A woman either has to pay a considerable amount of her salary on childcare or leave the child with extended family which could be burdensome (Project manager)

The gendered division extends to waged-labour:

Women, especially in rural areas, are treated as “second-class citizens”. They are exploited in low-status positions such as secretaries, cashiers, factory employees (Lawyer-Consultant)

Women are not retained in high-ranking positions. They are either fired, not promoted, or are not given opportunities to reach board member positions. Youngsters are taken in because they are paid lower wages (Project Consultant)

2. Laws:

The interviewees highlighted the significant constraint embodied by legislation. This was not an aspect probed in to but one that emerged during the interviews.

Lebanon has a very patriarchal society, but on the surface it does not appear so. There is common culture willing to change, but our laws and institutions are very patriarchal (Regional Advisor).

i. Labour law:

The labour law is discriminative against women in some respects and neutral in others:

Labour laws are not explicitly discriminate, but they are written with the underlying idea of men being the money-makers (Project Consultant)

Moreover, the law does not sufficiently safeguard women’s rights:

It tackles issues of maternity leave and pregnancy, but women face a lot more barriers such as unequal wages and sexual harassment which are not alluded to (Lawyer-Consultant).

ii. Personal Status laws:

Although they may not tackle employment per se, interviewees argue that personal status laws on impact women’s employment:

Women in law are treated as second-class citizens who must be submissive to males. Men can force women to get married at a young age and then her chances of employment decrease (Lawyer-Consultant)

Laws impact women's access to assets and resources and her ability to take out bank loans which often need high collateral. While Christian laws allow for equal inheritance, in reality, both Muslim and Christian women are pressurized to abdicate their inheritance to male relatives and end up deprived of assets (Project Manager)

3. Religion:

When asked if they thought religion played a role in constraining women's employment and whether there is a difference between Islam and Christianity, most interviews said it did not. One interviewee termed this "the myth of religion":

There is a myth that Christians are more engaged in labour market while Muslims are constrained by Islam. The issue is not Islam-Christianity but related to culture and development. Beirut and Mount Lebanon saw increased levels of education, jobs, and bourgeoisie social class from the mid-19th century. In contrast, the South, North and Bekaa governorates with their Christian and Muslim communities alike were decades behind (Regional Advisor)

Another interviewee supports this idea:

It is not about religion. There is a divide of class and education (Journalist)\

4. Economy:

The nature of the Lebanese economic growth model and its shortcomings were highlighted as an important hindrance to women's employment:

The neoliberal development model adopted by consecutive governments post-war has resulted in a stagnant economy that fails to create jobs. It is based on capital accumulation with no short or long-term plan for decreasing unemployment (Lawyer-Consultant)

One interviewee pointed out the neopatrimonial status of Lebanon:

There is an integral flaw in the formation of the Lebanese economic system. There is a combination between neoliberalism which aims at profit and is disinterested in inequalities, and neopatrimonialism which aims at achieving as much profit as possible on the short-term. In this system, gender is not remotely on the agenda (Regional Advisor).

Discussion:

Based on the interviews, it is evident that impediments to women's employment in Lebanon are diverse and interrelated. The themes that emerged align with those identified by Jamali et al, (2005), Afiouni (2014), Avis (2017), Sayed and Assi (2018), and Karam and Afiouni (2017). The restrictions on women's employment in Lebanon can be classified into the following categories: The first, socio-cultural embodied by the sexual division of labour indicative of the "private patriarchy" embedded within Lebanese culture. The second, structural manifested in legislation, and the third, economic relating to neoliberal policies, their failure to create jobs, and their inherent gender inequality. I will also discuss how religion did not emerge as a salient barrier. The discussion will tackle each theme separately, but, quoting Rai (2008, p.2), "to separate the three spheres, social, economic and political, can only ever be a heuristic device. But in employing this device we begin to see a troubling pattern of winners and losers".

Gender Roles in the Arab World:

In the introduction, it was argued that private patriarchy and its ensuing division of labour constitute barriers to women's employment (Walby, 1990, p.24). Chapters 1 and 2 validated this by showing the drop of female labour-participation after the age of 30 and the overrepresentation of women in traditional sectors (National Commission for Lebanese Women, no date, p.27). When talking about private patriarchy, the family emerges as a crucial pillar. This can be attributed to the neopatriarchy of Arab societies which have modernized but without modifying traditional patriarchal relations (Haghighat, 2006, p.86). Karam and Afiouni (2017, p.632) argue that, "a general

consensus exists in Lebanon which legitimises women not engaging in paid work due to its hindrance of women's household responsibilities".

The good of the family must be prioritized over individual interest particularly as women have been brought up with the notion that caring for the husband and extended family is a priority (Afiouni, 2014, p.317; Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001, pp.6-7). Often after marriage, they are expected to quit working unless their husbands allow them to continue or a financial need exists (Metcalf, 2006, p.103; Hamieh and Usta, 2011, p.13). Karam and Afiouni's research on unemployed women from various backgrounds finds that marriage and childrearing are among the top reasons women leave work. Society emphasizes women's presence in the household to maintain spousal harmony and nurture for the children especially among middle and high-income families (2017, pp.635-641). Working women are made to feel guilty because men portray it as a sacrifice of their comfort (Usta et al., 2013, p.363). But this view is not exclusive to men. Jamali et al. (2005) in their study of female Lebanese managers argue that women in the Middle East perceive their role to be as mothers and homemakers (p.588). Shia women in suburban Beirut argue that a woman must not engage in community work if she cannot keep things in order at home despite the "superhuman" energy this requires, otherwise, the family and husband will feel neglected (Deeb, 2006, p.210-212). Thus, running the household is seen exclusively as a woman's responsibility even if she is working (Habib et al., 2006, p.327). Men do not take initiative to help because it is seen as not their role and "demeaning" to their masculinity (Kian, 2014, p.340; Azzam, 2007, pp.196-197). This results in women's "double shift" (Kimmel, 2004, p.195)

These gender constructs of a "woman's role" are engraved from a young age. Hamieh and Usta in their research with men in Baalbek argue that men are socialized into this ideology by agents like the family, school, and media (2011, pp.5-6). The results show that, from their youth, males are given more freedom and expected to "earn money" and be "tough" and "protective". Their

education is prioritised in tight economic conditions. Daughters, however, are expected to be obedient, “beautiful”, and “devoted to the family”. Their behaviour is linked to a family honour, and they are often asked to serve their male kin (Hamieh and Usta, 2011, pp.11-14). Men act out their masculinity by earning money, while women fulfill their role by providing nurture and care within the domestic sphere. Thus, gendered behavior is created within the context of families and communities remaining under “the auspices of social norms” (Beneria et al., 2016, p.60).

The advent of capitalism and increasing expenses have forced women to work out of financial necessity (Jamali et al., 2005, p.587; Walby, 1990, p.61). Men acquiesce because work helps women “fulfil private-sphere responsibilities” (Karam and Afiouni, 2017, p.632) Moreover, men are no longer capable of maintaining “the material base” of their patriarchy by being the sole money-makers (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.281). Furthermore, “modernisation has dented the traditional patrilocal extended family structure” as nuclear families with smaller household members now prevail (Karmi, 1993, pp.150-154). But gender roles still impact women’s choice of careers. Chapters 1 and 2 provided evidence that women are more engaged in the service and public sector because of cultural preferences that view professions as compatible with women’s nature and facilitating of a work-life balance (AFESD, 2003, p.155). One interviewee argued:

Women have been trying to work long hours and be equally engaged in labour market, but the system as a whole has not been helpful. Consequently, women are again wanting to work in the public sector or as teachers because of their flexibility and short working hours
(Project Manager)

Teaching and academia, for example, are a suitable sector because they do not affect a woman’s family life and allow the same vacations as the children (Kian, 2014, p.341; Afiouni, 2014, p.323). Moreover,

“Women’s work in teaching, nursing and medicine has become undisputed in the Arab world and allowed in religious circles. In Islam, value is attached to the responsibility of mothers and teachers in morally educating the nation” (Afiouni, 2014, p. 329).

Thus, women are pushed into sectors that fulfil their reproductive role of bringing up generations.

Laws: Patriarchy in a Confessional State

Mernissi argues that “Muslim societies are inflicted not by an ideology of female inferiority but laws and customs that subjugate women” (2011, p.19). The impact of legislative barriers on women’s employment was a ubiquitous theme across the interviews and literature (IWSAW, no date, Jamali, 2005; Wallace, 2013, p.30). Laws are a manner in which the patriarchy manifests and reproduces itself in an institutionalized manner (Karam and Afiouni, 2017, p.631). Two sub-themes emerge under laws, personal status laws (hereon PSLs) and labour laws.

In Chapter 2, the empirical evidence on legislation was described. This section will elucidate on the repercussions of these laws on women’s employment. El-Saadawi argues that there is a chasm in Arab legislation. On the surface, equality is enshrined in the constitution and sex-based discrimination is prohibited. Under public law, women are allowed work, health, mobility, etc. However, the private sphere is a site of oppression and male control (1988, pp.9-10). The latter is reflected in the multiple Lebanese PSLs. According to CEDAW, “multiple legal systems based on factors like religion or ethnicity preserve discrimination against women” (2013, p.4). Lebanon has made reservations to CEDAW on Article 16 pertaining to PSLs related to marriage, divorce, inheritance that contradict its main purpose of establishing “equal rights in family and marriage” (UNICEF, 2011, pp.1-2; Salameh, 2014, no pagination). In light of Lebanon’s sectarianism, these laws sustain the authority of religious leaders over their communities and are integral to maintaining a demographic equilibrium that sustains the political power of the many sects (Clark and Salloukh, 2013, p.738). By asserting a husband’s responsibility to pay spousal maintenance, PSLs

legitimize his breadwinner role and authority as head-of-household (Kian, 2014, p.334). One interviewee argued:

This demotivates women from working as they perceive it as the male's role to provide for them. PSLs thus contribute to undermining women's productive role (Lawyer-Consultant).

CEDAW's report argues that "the impact of family laws and division of labour on women's economic well-being is no less than that of labour market structures and labour laws" (2013, pp.1-2). Although non-Muslim males and females inherit equally, in reality, both Christians and Muslims give up their inheritance to male relatives to maintain positive relationships with the family and have a safety net if their marriage fails (Joseph and Slyomovic, 2001, p.4). Consequently, women remain excluded from family wealth and dependent on men (Carreras, 2017, p.11; HRW, 2015, p.6). For example, Druze men may leave their female relatives "usufruct rights to land, crops, room, etc." with brothers/sons responsible for their maintenance. However, this is rarely sufficient to meet women's financial needs, and many are pushed into working as housecleaners or other informal jobs to survive. They may also be prohibited from working and commuting so as to preserve "family honour" (Azzam, 2007, pp.198-200). The problem posed by discriminative inheritance laws is most evident among entrepreneurs who need assets or capital as collateral for bank loans to launch a business (Jamali, 2009, pp.233-234; Carreras, 2017, p.11). While more than a third of entrepreneurs are females, their access to bank loans is merely 3 percent (IFC, 2016, p.12). From her sample of ten women entrepreneurs, Jamali argues that most sought "family or personal savings for financial support" which constrains initiating and expanding their businesses (2009, p.242). This reinforces class inequalities as wealthy women may access traditional funding while low-income women remain trapped in informal enterprises (Bastian and Sidani, 2017, p.20; Abdo and Kerbage, 2012, p.69).

Labour Laws:

More pertinent to women's employment are labour laws. One interviewee argues:

The neutrality of the labour law defies CEDAW's Article 4 which advocates for special measures to decrease the labour-gap between men and women and achieve equality (Lawyer-Consultant).

However, as shown in Chapter 2 and argued by the interviewees, discriminatory measures persist. Lebanon has "opted out of clauses on family allowance, sexual harassment at work, and rules for part-time and home-bound work" despite ratifying CEDAW and ILO conventions promoting gender equality (Wallace, 2013, p.30).

First, the absence of protection against sexual harassment is a crucial constraint especially in the Middle East where women are the bearers of the family honour and men have the right to defend this honor (Afshar, 1993, p.11). Men often oppose women' employment for fear of harassment either at work or while commuting to work (Hamieh and Usta, 2011, pp.13-15; Karam and Afiouni, 2017, p.641). And women feel uncomfortable considering the male-dominated nature of most jobs, particularly high-status positions (Wallace, 2013, p.28).

Second, making employers pay for maternity leave deters many from employing women, and the absence of child-care facilities deters women from working (Doughan, 2006, p.55; Wallace, 2013, p.27). This contradicts CEDAW's recommendation that "governments should encourage the provision of necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family and work responsibilities" (Doughan, 2006, p.55). A survey on more than 4000 Arab women shows that 30 percent were asked about their plans on getting married or pregnant during job interviews (Bayt and YouGov, 2017, pp.12-14). Although pregnant women cannot be dismissed, they are pressurized either to quit or find a substitute (UN Women et al., 2018, p.41). The absence of paternity leaves indirectly assumes that the onus of reproductive work falls on the mother and exacerbates the

work-life balance (Elson, 1999, p.612; El-Awady, 2018, pp.23--24). Unemployed women argued that the absence of proper daycare has forced them to remain at home (Karam and Afiouni, 2017, p.644). While women in academia whose universities provide on-campus daycares found this to be a valuable asset allowing them to return to work (Afiouni, 2014, p.327).

Third, the labour law does not discriminate in wages between men and women (Ministry of Labour, 1946). However, two of the interviewees argued that there are no mechanisms to enforce equal wages in the private sector, and there are several ways of circumventing equal wages in the public sector. Thus, the wage gap is around 16 percent with females' GNI at \$5,523 compared to \$21,182 for males (UNDP, 2018b). Women are rarely present in high status positions in public institutions such as trade unions, syndicates, chamber of commerce, general directories of ministries, etc. In the private sector, only a third of senior executives and managers are females while they form 99 percent of secretaries and 78 percent of cashiers (BRD, 2017, p.30). According to a survey among 4053 MENA working women, fewer training and promotion opportunities were a primary challenge and 30 percent felt discriminated against in salaries and benefits (Bayt and YouGov, 2017, pp.12-14).

Therefore, "there is a yawning gap between rights-in-principle and rights-in-practice". Laws are not a purely technical instrument but are "embedded in and are a reflection of societal relationships" (Boesten, 2010, p.6).

The "Myth of Religion":

The impact of religion is not exclusive to legislation, it plays a role in shaping the culture. This is particularly prominent in the Arab region where Islam has been considered a key contributor to gender inequality. The name of this section is inspired by one interviewee's comment.

A lot has been written about the relation between women's employment and Islam in the Arab world. Islam has been considered oppressive especially by Western feminists who argue that the Muslim world has failed to develop due to gender inequality (Moghadam, 2013, p.4). This is due to the submissiveness and modesty it requires of women and the discrimination in laws (Metcalf, 2006, p.95; Ziai, 1997, p.72; Mernissi, 2011). However, many arguments have been raised contending this. Moghadam argues that "Islam is neither more nor less patriarchal than other religions" (2013, p.6). The problem lies in the cooption of religion by the patriarchy, particularly when measures are disguised under Sharia to make them more accepted (Jamali et al., 2005, p.583; Kandiyoti, 1997, pp.8-9). States utilise legislation and Islam to promote or demote women's employment depending on their needs. For example, Hijab (1988) argues that when Iraq and Tunisia needed manpower, they mobilized several channels to break stereotypes about women and incorporate them in the labour-force. However, when male unemployment became problematic, the discourse returned to traditional gender roles (Quoted in Haghighat, 2005, p.88). Similarly, Iran imposed quotas on the number of females studying chemistry or engineering to decrease male unemployment while pushing women into medicine and education because these fields are sex-segregated (Kian, 2014, pp.335-336).

The empirical evidence does not provide a clear-cut argument either. As evidenced in chapter 2, Muslim countries like Qatar and Kuwait have female labour participation much higher than Lebanon. In studying women's employment in Egypt, Turkey, and Jordan, Papps (1993, p.115) finds that religion has little influence on women's and firm's attitudes regarding hiring women. Read reports that high religiosity in Arab-American women is correlated with lower labour-force participation especially when children are present, but there was no difference between Muslims and Christians (2004, p.1048). In Lebanon, Jamali et al. point out that patriarchal attitudes and cultural barriers were a more important constraint to Muslim female managers than Christian

managers (2005, p.591). A comparison between Lebanese Muslims and non-Muslim students' attitudes towards women's employment within the same community showed no significant difference. In fact, Muslim youth appeared more supportive of women's work (Dodd, 1974, pp.120-126). Contrastingly, Abouchedid's study of Lebanese university students found Christian males to have more egalitarian attitudes than Muslim males (2007, pp.201-203).

In a sectarian state like Lebanon, the debate is complicated by the interrelation between sectarianism and development. Traboulsi argues that "political, social and educational rights are things one enjoys as part of a confessional community" (2014, p.20). This links to how social classes emerged in relation to sects. When Lebanon was established under French rule, the Maronite Church had the material wealth to establish charity and education organisations even in remote villages giving Maronites a chance at social mobility and the church a social base for political mobilization (Sulh, 2004, p.5). Most schools, including higher education institutions, were established by Christian missionaries for both boys and girls (Shehadeh, 1999, p.35; Sulh, 2004, p.4). Post-independence, public schools and higher-education institutions increased (Shehadeh, 1999, p.36). Sunnis and Maronites benefitted from the "economic and structural development" targeting Beirut while Shia had minimal funds targeted at their rural communities and much lower living standards (Deeb, 2006, p.73). In 1996, Maronites "formed the majority of upper and middle-class" while Shi'a formed the working-class majority (Makdissi, 1996, p.24). This is not to say that Shia were idle due to the marginalisation of their areas. One interviewee argued that they were involved in agriculture, but it was unaccounted for. When the Shia began their mobilisation in 1974 under the "Movement of the Deprived", women became heavily involved in orphanages, charitable associations, schools, cultural centres, etc., but they remained in low-status positions (Deeb, 2006, p.91; Karagiannis, 2009, p.367). Nowadays, North, South and Bekaa governorates still have per capita consumption below the national average (Laithy et al., 2008, p.3). One interviewee argued:

Rural areas like Bekaa have limited education opportunities except a branch of the public Lebanese University which offers literary and humanities subjects. Females, who are unable to commute to the city, end up studying these subjects which have constricted job market as opposed to studying trade, commerce, or industries, etc. (Lawyer-Consultant)

Hence, Christian and Sunni women may have had more opportunities to work than Shia owing to structural inequalities rather than religious ideologies. This also negates the debate adopted by the human capital theory and international organisations shown in Chapter 1 that women are in secondary positions due to their choice of subjects. Evidently, it is underlying structural factors that bring about such decisions (Beneria et al, 2016, p.67).

Women's Employment in a Capitalist Economy:

The third factor that impacts women's labour-participation is the economy. One cannot discuss women's high unemployment rates in isolation of an economy that does not create jobs. Kadri argues that the Arab world has "de-developed, it has failed the test of development defined as economic growth, expansion in employment, and technological progress" (2014, p.1). He attributes this to "the neoliberal age". As shown in Chapters 1 and 2, public employment had been a source of safety for many, particularly women, in the Arab world. However, the advent of neoliberalism framed all forms of state intervention as inefficient. It argued that large public sector employment caused stress on government resources and minimized the dynamism of the private sector (Kadri, 2014, p.192). Opening up the markets and cutting down public employment were portrayed as the key to attracting investments and creating labour-intensive jobs (Beneria et al., 2016 pp.21-22; Elson, 1999, p.617). But the neopatrimonial nature of Arab states eliminates any chance of economic efficiency (Nehme, 2016, pp.34) and government spending in Lebanon is rarely for the purpose of long-term macroeconomic stability (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2018, p.24). Personal interests are the lines along which the state and economy function, and the rentier

economy is a secondary concern compared to political gains (Nehme, 2016, pp. 73-74; Charrad, 2011, p.50). Consequently, the Lebanese face repression of wages, low taxes on the rich, and deficits which impede any meaningful development or job creation (Tailfer, 2010, p.9; Salloukh, 2016). Under this system, women face a “double-bind” (Kimmel, 2004, p.195).

First, women have always been on the negative end of neoliberal development. Boesten (2010, p.2) argues that there is a “tension inherent in the juxtaposition of women’s emancipation and development.” In the introduction, it was argued that capitalism allows the exploitation of women under the guise of male supremacy and marginalizes them in production system (Sabban, 1988, p.126). The Lebanese economic system from its creation has been disadvantageous to women and has had a weak public sector (Akiki, 2019). Sabban argues that Lebanon’s integration into the capitalist system “distorted the economy, marginalized women’s productive role, and mystified their reproductive role” (1988, p.125). Under French rule, women were low-paid undervalued workers in silk industries (Sabban, 1988, p.129). After WWII, they worked as typists, secretaries, and servants as Lebanon’s economy became centered on finance and banking (Sabban, 1988, pp.131-133). Therefore, in the private capitalist enterprises, men and women carry out different tasks at different levels of skill and remuneration (Kabeer, 1994, p.271). ESCWA argues that the “private sector is unfriendly to women; they receive lower remuneration than men and are less likely to be promoted to decision-making positions.” (2009, p.16). This negates the argument advocated by economists of the labour market as a “neutral arena” of interaction between buyers and sellers (Elson, 1999, pp.611-619).

For this reason, there is scepticism regarding the benefits that loans from CEDRE will bring to women in light of austerity measures. The impact of CEDRE on women is almost nonexistent in its statement (CEDRE, 2018). One interviewee argued:

The bulk of money from CEDRE will be used for infrastructure reform and construction in which very little jobs for women will be created. Moreover, the halting of public employment will disproportionately impact women (Regional Advisor)

Moreover, capitalism reinforces women's reproductive role by eliminating state services that alleviate some of the domestic burden as shown in the Labour Law. Under capitalist ideology, only productive waged labour is accounted for. Unpaid caring activities integral for the reproduction of the labour force, and mainly carried out by women, are called "reproductive economy". They are considered a liability for employers and an externality not accounted for in wages or prices (Elson, 1999, p.612; Kabeer, 1994, p.77). Families are left on their own to satisfy care responsibilities (Beneria et al., 2016, p.218). Hence, Akiki calls the austerity measures to be implemented in Lebanon "gender blind" (2019). The increased taxes and decreased public spending would strain household incomes and force women to buffer the impact by substituting for state services (Akiki, 2019; Chant and Sweetman, 2012, p.519). Kerr argues that when "governments deny their responsibility to provide adequate health, education, or transport, the onus of meeting these needs falls on women who are society's primary care givers" (1999, p.191). This was perfectly summarised by one interviewee:

In Lebanon, the family plays the role of social protection because there are no social services provided by the government. In the case of illness/disability, caretaking and spending is the family's role, particularly women's (Journalist)

The second bind is the prevalent sectarian neopatrimonialism. Sects can ensure members have a job either by protecting their monopolies or preventing it. Positions in state, public, and increasingly private sector are allocated by sectarian affiliation. This extends to who gets promotions, better wages, and power in organisations regardless of skills or merit (Traboulsi, 2014, p.21; Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2018, p.13). Women owing to their socialisation and gender roles have less chances at networking beyond family members (Haugh and Talwar, 2014, p.645). This exacerbates gaining employment through brokerage or *wasta* which is particularly crucial for female

entrepreneurs to build networks (Metcalfe,2007, pp.100-101; Bastian and Sidani, 2017, pp.19-20). The impact of neopatrimonialism is also evident in politics where political leadership follows family ties. The few women who have reached parliament are those who have “inherited” political position, such as, Bahia Hariri the sister of assassinated PM Rafic Hariri, Sethrida Geagea the wife of Lebanese Forces chief, and Nayla Tueni the daughter of assassinated parliament member Gibran Tueni (Joseph, 2011, pp.155-156).

Hence, although political elites may argue that they are in support of women’s labour-force engagement, they utilise the neopatriarchal family unit as a way to eschew the state’s welfare responsibilities (Deeb, 2006, p.118).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Intersectional Barriers:

Moghadam (2013, p.25) argues:

“Contemporary gender systems are designed by ideologues and inscribed in law, justified by custom and reflected in policy, sustained by socialisation, and reinforced through institutions. But they also operate within a larger matrix of socially constructed distinctions like class and religion”

It is evident from the above discussion that barriers to women’s employment in Lebanon “overlap and intertwine” (Boesten, 2010, p.5). The Middle East and Lebanon embody how culturally entrenched gender roles impact women’s employment. Decisions on work and family are interdependent, and Arab kinship structures have proven “less adaptable to the increased demand for female labour participation that accompanies economic development” (Haghighat, 2005, P.86). In addition, the Arab region is a testament of failed development. Opening up markets and strengthening the private sector were supposed to increase productivity and push women into labour-force, but conflict, sectarianism, and neopatrimonialism have driven away investments. Women have either pushed women into poverty employment or bound them to the household to buffer the impacts of wars and SAPs (Kadri, 2014, pp.191-193). When they do work, women are bound by “sticky floors” and limited by “glass ceilings” (Kimmel, 2004, pp.195-196). Entrenched in this debate is legislation which plays an important role as the “breeding place of a nation trapped in gendered inequalities” (Boesten, 2010, p.4) which are also sectarian in the Lebanese context and reinforce the grip of religious and political authority over the people. Thus, women’s employment does not exist in isolation of the broader political and economic and cultural praxis (Moghadam, 2013, p.6). The dominant debate on religion and patriarchy is now

being eschewed by that on legislation, the economy, and equal opportunities. In 2005, Laframboise and Trumbic (p.7) argued that "Arab women remain marginalised and underutilized in all arenas notably in terms of their economic and leadership abilities". Alas, this is still true, and with idleness imposed on a large majority of women, "Arab development goals constantly fail to be met" (Kadri, 2014, p.71).

Limitations:

The choice of interviewees might have impacted the results. First, the power relationship between myself and the elite interviewees deterred extensive probing (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.89). This can be attributed to my inexperience as a researcher. However, its impact was attenuated by the interviewees' expertise and experience (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.39). Second, four of the five interviewees were females in high-status positions. There may be a class element to their perspective of barriers, and they may not be representative of the majority (Arksey and Knight, 1999, pp.57-58). However, the impact of this was attenuated as the interviewees provided concrete examples and seemed to have grounded expertise.

Another limitation is pertinent to the semi-structured interviews. While practical, they may have limited the answers to the set themes. This did not seem to be a substantial problem as the interviewees expanded beyond the questions. Moreover, I was unable to pilot them within the time and capacities available and the status of participants chosen. To circumvent this, the questions were shared with my supervisor and instructor from University of Balamand who has gender expertise. Their advice was taken into consideration and the questions modified accordingly (Arksey and Knight, 1999, pp.95-96). There was no opportunity to have the translated transcripts checked by another bilingual researcher. But the interviewees received a copy of the

transcript and were asked if they had any modifications. Two interviewees did not reply to this despite several emails.

Indeed, a better methodology would have been interviews with women who are working or are unemployed themselves rather than an elite sample. Future research must aim at developing a nuanced understanding of the interaction of the different factors in women's everyday lives. This must be done across social classes to demarcate how patriarchy and neoliberalism play out among the richest and poorest quantiles.

As for the barriers in the discussion itself, there are some aspects that have not been tackled due to time and resource constraints. This dissertation was limited to a discussion on Lebanese women and did not delve into the constraints faced by refugees and foreign domestic workers. It is expected that among these groups, barriers would be compounded by issues of race and class and would truly embody intersectionality. This is worth looking into in future research. Second, I did not delve into domestic violence which is a major problem in Lebanon (Hamieh and Usta, 2011, p.5). It is worth noting that men may resort to violence when women begin to work because they feel that power dynamics in the family have shifted and they need to reinforce their masculinity. This falls within the remit of gender roles.

There are two areas that were inquired about in the interviews but later dropped due to space constraints and their digression out of focus. The first relates to women's political representation. The responses from interviewees were very interesting but went into the debate on gender mainstreaming and the impact of international funding on national priorities. This is a massive topic on its own and has not been tackled sufficiently in Lebanon. Thus, it poses a niche for research. The second are women's empowerment programmes currently underway in Lebanon. Similar to the global trend, these target low-income women mostly with microloans and training on

sewing, cooking, and other small businesses. The limitations of such programs have been heavily documented worldwide (Chant, 2008; Rahman, 1999; Kabeer, 2005, etc.). But there has been little research into it in Lebanon and could be an interesting research question considering the above mentioned intersectional barriers which do not allow an enabling environment for businesses and investment particularly among low-income women.

Appendix 1:

Table 1. List of countries in accounted for in ESCWA, World Bank, UNDP, and WEF in comparison to

the 22 official Arab States in the League of Arab States

	League of Arab States	ESCWA (United Nations Economic and Social Council for Western Asia (UNESCWA, 2019)	World Bank Arab World (World Bank, 2019)	World Bank Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) (World Bank, 2019)	UNDP	World economic Fund Global Gender Gap Report (MENA)
Countries	Algeria	Bahrain	Algeria	Algeria	Algeria	Algeria
	Bahrain	Egypt	Bahrain	Bahrain	Bahrain	Bahrain
	Comoros	Iraq	Comoros	Djibouti	Djibouti	Egypt
	Djibouti	Jordan	Djibouti	Egypt, Arab Rep.	Egypt	Iran
	Egypt	Kuwait	Egypt, Arab Rep.	Iran, Islamic Rep.	Iraq	Iraq
	Iraq	Lebanon	Rep.	Iran, Islamic Rep.	Jordan	Israel
	Jordan	Libya	Iraq	Rep.	Kuwait	Jordan
	Kuwait	Morocco	Jordan	Iraq	Lebanon	Kuwait
	Lebanon	Mauritania	Kuwait	Israel	Libya	Lebanon
	Libya	Oman	Lebanon	Jordan	Morocco	Mauritania
	Mauritania	Palestine,	Libya	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia	Morocco
	Morocco	Qatar	Mauritania	Lebanon	Somalia	Oman
	Oman	Saudi Arabia	Morocco	Libya	Sudan	Qatar
	Palestine	The Sudan	Oman	Malta	Syria	Saudi Arabia

	Qatar	Syrian Arab Republic	Qatar	Morocco	Tunisia	Syria
	Saudi Arabia	Tunisia	Saudi Arabia	Oman	UAE	Tunisia
	Somalia	United Arab Emirates	Somalia	Qatar	Yemen	Turkey
	Sudan	Yemen	Sudan	Saudi Arabia	Programme	UAE
	Syria		Syrian Arab	Syrian Arab	of	Yemen
	Tunisia		Republic	Republic	Assistance	
	United Arab		Tunisia	Tunisia	to The	
	Emirates		United Arab	United Arab	Palestinian	
	Yemen		Emirates	Emirates	People	
			West Bank	West Bank and		
			and Gaza	Gaza		
			Yemen, Rep.	Yemen, Rep.		

Appendix 2: Interviews

1- Interview Guide

Thank you for consenting to take part in interviews for my dissertation on the impact of social structures on women's employment in Lebanon.

Kindly find below the questions for the interview, if there are any modifications you would prefer, please feel free to inform me. Catherine El Ashkar, at pt18chea@leeds.ac.uk

- 1- How would you characterise (describe) the gendered labour market in Lebanon?
- 2- How did this come about? And, what are the factors that support the current situation?
- 3- What do you think is considered a "woman's role" in Lebanon. To what extent is this bound by cultural norms and traditions?
- 4- Is it possible for perceptions of women's role to change?
- 5- To what extent do you think religion plays a role in women's ability to choose to work? Is there a difference in the impact on women's employment between Islam and Christianity?
- 6- Do you think the political system in Lebanon impacts women's employment in general and work in politics in particular?
- 7- To what extent does class division impact women's ability to choose to work?
- 8- What do you think of the role of the family in Lebanon?
- 9- What do you think of the impact of foreign domestic workers on women's work?
- 10- Why do you think the recent focus has been more on political representation rather than women's employment?

11- What do you think is needed for women to work in higher numbers? To have equal pay for equal work?

12- Do you think if women were more engaged in work and in politics, they could bring about change in society?

2- [Transcribed interview \(Translated from Arabic\)](#)

Interview 2: Lawyer, Consultant for UN regional commissions, and member of women's organisation

1- How would you describe the labour market in Lebanon? Where do men and women work?

1. There are no statistics or studies that show which sectors women work. National and international reports show different statistics between 23 and 24 percent. The most agreed upon is 29 percent.
2. This is an indicator that women are not equally present in the labour market
3. No studies on which sectors, but there is general consensus that women are found in professions that are traditionally considered appropriate for females, but there is no scientific research. Women do not occupy decision making positions.
4. There are two areas: the formal labour market and the informal one in which women are present in higher percentages
5. Even though there is the Central Administration for Statistics, government says they do not have financial and human capital to allow for statistic generation.
6. Civil society which works on employment is not producing statistics either, and even ILO has deficiency in statistics
7. Nonetheless, all percentages indicate a low presence of women in the labour market and Lebanon is ranked low in terms of gender gap.

2- Why are women not working?

There are several intersectional factors, some related to work itself, some to political and economic and some related to the women per se.

A. Job market and economic strategies in Lebanon in General:

- i. When talking about women's employment one has to talk about the general employment sector in Lebanon and high unemployment and the country's inability to create development strategies that lead to job creation, equal wages, and social protection. So, when talking about women, we have to begin with general.
- ii. Lebanon's economic strategy is an important factor; successive governments after the war have chosen a development strategy that is dangerous and neoliberal meaning it leaves the big capital owners to be in charge and the government is non-interfering. When the government does interfere, it is to allow these capital owners to devise strategies that suit them. So, all the economic models so far have not aimed at job creation or decreasing unemployment neither in long or short term. Now we pay the price in economic crises, high deficit and debt.
- iii. People who have paid the price of this are those who are most marginalized among those working in private sector because a lot of shops have closed which leads to loss of jobs.
- iv. Informal labour is the most prevalent and this is unregulated, there is no social benefits or stability. This is due to the weakness of syndicates over a long period of time. There were systematic and intentional strategies to weaken syndicates and hinder them from playing the role of pressure groups that

would hinder unfair wages or wage raises or social services. Consequently, Lebanon has failed to achieve work for all.

- v. Women are already vulnerable, and this weak syndicate movement exacerbates getting their rights.

b. Women outside the labour market and how this impacts their labour market participation:

i. Sexual division of labour

1. Does not admit that women have a productive role and when it does think of this role it is secondary. Women's productive role is not equal to men's. Women are considered in charge of reproduction, and thus childbirth and care of family. This is an important hindrance for work because women have all the burden of reproductive work and it is time consuming and difficult. This impacts their capacity to work and also to build their skills. It impacts the chances they have to build their skills and have equal opportunities to enhance their capacities to be able to compete on equal footing.
2. The labour market is neutral to gender so how can a woman working from 8 to 5, losing even more hours commuting be expected to have the same capabilities and same passion for competition.
3. Social awareness in Lebanon links breadwinning to men

ii. Labour Law:

1. Is old released in 1946 and prevented women from working in certain sectors such as steel, phosphate, mining. It places women in the same

category of women and children. So, its philosophy reflects women as vulnerable.

2. It only talks about maternity leave and wage discrimination in relation to women. While the issues that hinder women's labour participation capacities is beyond unequal wages, there are a lot of other factors. For example, there is no law on sexual harassment.
3. By law, the employer cannot fire a woman because of pregnancy but in reality women are subject to a lot of pressure to find a substitute during pregnancy period, or she is fired, or she is bound by contract to not get married during the period, or she gets half the maternity leave.
4. The law is neutral to issues that are actually pertinent to women and has no indication of any measurements to protect women
5. CEDAW in article 4 when talking about temporary special measures to achieve equality for women did not limit it to political quota because government has to hasten to take measures to decrease the gap.
6. The government has no measures to eliminate the gap and increase women's participation

iii. **Protection measures: Labour Arbitration Council**

1. It deals with anything related to labor such as arbitrary dismissal, not registering employees in social insurance fund, wrong wages, wage theft etc. But the problem is that this is not protective, raising a case in court is free but can take up to 5 years, so a vulnerable worker would think twice before taking matters to court, and women will have to think even

more because they have to hire a lawyer and she does not have money, or her husband might tell her to drop it.

2. These factors are invisible, but they contribute to making the labour market unequal to men and women

iv. **Personal Status Laws:**

1. These are not related to work they are related to inheritance, custody child marriage divorce, etc.
2. The philosophy of these laws is based on men's power inside the house and this extends to the public sphere, the parliament government, the work etc
3. It is based on submissiveness of women, for example a father can force his daughter into marriage.
4. These laws deal with women as if they are minors.
5. There are variations between sects, but all allow for child marriage and how can you ask these women about their labour market
6. In all sects, a man's responsibility is spending. When women get married in their consciousness and unconsciousness, they perceive maintenance to be the man's job. This is reflected in all aspects of their lives even if they have degrees because maintenance and family spending is not seen as their responsibility.
7. A lot of women work not to improve their career or to build a career or because of passion and ambition but because of financial necessity and the need for two incomes. In this mindset she would not want to

compete or leave her child to attend conferences abroad or to work weekends.

8. Personal status laws reflect on the role expected of women and is reflected on men's capacity to oppress women. Women based on the laws (Islamic law) she is forced to be submissive, although she does not need permission to work. But he can take her to court for "deviance" if she worked without permission because of disobeying the man's opinion.
9. This reflects on the relationship between men and women.
10. The low percentage of women working include those working for their own passion and ambition and those working out of financial need. In the 70 percent of women not working, how many were child marriages, how many were educated and what did they study, how many perceive work as not their job, and how many are not allowed to work by men because he cannot be seen as not enough of a breadwinner. And, also, those whose husbands are perfectly willing for them to work, but who can no longer balance work and home life. Example of a girl who is highly educated and used to work in environment-related job and has good socioeconomic status, now she quit for work because she is exhausted despite having a domestic worker. She feels like she wants to spend time with her children. There is no direct violence but there is invisible violence because of the division of labour.

11. Another example is banks, where there are a lot of women, but they are really tired and exhausted. The benefit of working in bank gives them patience to continue working despite feeling guilty and tired and anxious. All of these lead to eventually quit.

v. **EDUCATION:**

1. In recent years, education among girls has increased especially in tertiary education where women surpass men (54% females)
2. But why isn't this reflected in jobs? But this education spike is recent and depends on the subjects women are studying.
3. For example, in Bekaa (not generalizable but can be an indicator), the only university available is Lebanese University which has literary subjects available.
4. This is reflected in that 80 percent of private teachers are female and in the syndicate of private education 75-80 percent of members are women.
5. So, the increase in education is not reflected in the job market in terms of work in sectors like industry, trade, commerce, etc. Women are still working in traditionally feminine fields for example nurses. Where majority are women.
6. Service sector is supposed to attract women but depends on how many are studying related subjects.
7. You may find women working in the sector but not in decision making positions. They do not own banks or tourism enterprises

vi. **Women as employers**

1. To be an employer or someone who owns a business they need capital but in Islamic law they inherit half and the majority do not actually take that and abdicate for men. in Christianity, women inherit equally to men but also majority give it up.
2. Women do not own capital which mostly comes from inheritance or land assets. If the women do inherit, they may inherit financial capital but not land.

vii. **Domestic violence:**

1. All forms of it, rape, trafficking, sexual abuse, etc.
2. Institute of violence that justifies women's economic abuse, so it justifies exploiting them as secretaries or giving them low wages in factories
3. This makes women feel like second class citizens and to think twice before deciding to work, we r talking about most marginalized groups such as secretaries seamstresses cashiers, supermarket workers,

3- To what extent do you think religion plays a role in women's ability to choose to work? Is there a difference in the impact on women's employment between Islam and Christianity?

1. Arab world is mostly Muslim and adopts Sharia law, there is no research in Lebanon that compares Christianity and Islam.
2. Victims of domestic violence have been from both. Politically as well, women both have not nominated women in parties and the role of women in parties has been similar and traditional.
3. The form of violence may differ between them, but it is present and is present in all social classes as well

4. For example, what a refugee is subjected to in a tent and has no money is different cause she is more at risk of trafficking for example. While a refugee in a fancy apartment is not at risk of trafficking but may be subjected to another form of violence being cheated on, marital rape, domestic violence.
5. The class difference changes the form of violence and their capacity to resist or fight against this violence.
6. This applies to sects in Lebanon too, for example a Muslim woman has to fight for half of inheritance while a Christian may have to fight less, but both will be subject to societal pressures and be urged to give money to brother
7. It is hard to account for workers by religion, custody fights, child marriage, divorce is a major issue for Muslims but in Christians their inability to divorce is a form of violence.
8. The solution lies in a civil law then ends the jurisdiction of personal status laws and equates between women in all religions and does not leave them at risk of the characters of the Sheikh or priest

4- Why do you think the recent focus has been more on political representation rather than women's employment?

- a. The focus on politics is one of the gaps that was contributed to by civil society unfortunately. It has become a trend meaning that all funding came for politics, and political parties began competing on how they encourage their women to participate in politics although how exactly is ambiguous. Donors played a big role intentionally. All strategies and funds targeted it maybe because it is easily measurable.

- b. Some religious parties like Hezbollah declared that they will not nominate women at least in the time being, while other political parties that claim to be democratic began saying that yes they want women in politics even if they do not wholeheartedly believe this so. It was an easy point to play on by donors.
- c. No one has the willingness to work on employment especially local NGOs, they end up working the disastrous aspect of economic empowerment or they give them money or loans (microfinance) and go create a business. This has not been proven effective and is a waste of money. Women are trained in areas like nursing. The problem is the women cannot run a project, or they do not have the money for it and where would they make the project, and which would work.
- d. NGOs focused on this because it attracts funding while working on policy level and job creation strategy requires a long time, leads to clash with power and donors do not give funding to this because the reason behind the failure of the job sector is neoliberal policies advocated for by the same donors.
- e. When women do actually get to political power, it does not disturb the power of political parties as long as the women are part of their sectarian politics
- f. Also, when talking about economic empowerment as discussed by international conventions, it is supposed to be placed in an enabling environment so what is the point of being empowered if the man prevents the woman from working or if there is no reallocation of reproductive labour.

5- What do you think of the impact of foreign domestic workers on women's work?

- a. It is helpful for women to go to work but at the same time it is slavery for the workers themselves. And they are deprived of their basic rights.

6- What do you think of the role of the family in Lebanon?

- a. The role of family in orienting girls to specific education subjects
- b. Age of marriage
- c. The culture of work that is ingrained by family
- d. There is discrimination that begins from childhood where the girl is seen as a doll to be cared for protected by her brother and the father will pay for her and to get married so she will perceive her husband's role to be spending
- e. It raises women to perceive employment as not their domain.
- f. Look at the 70 percent unemployed in terms of rural areas. There is no equal education there and of low socioeconomic status and will not send their daughters to the capital

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