



Women's Economic Participation in Jordan

Reality and Challenges of the Private Sector

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March, 2016





Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics Studies

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Executive Summary

Preface

Jordan has witnessed major developments in the field of human resources over the past three decades. In recent years, it's managed to achieve significant degrees of gender equality in many fields, especially health and education – a fact corroborated by fresh figures, which indicate remarkable progress regarding women's enrollment in higher education. According to 2014 figures of the General Statistics Department, [university] enrollment rates in Jordan stood at 51.7% for women to 48.3% for men, which can be considered a significant leap from what it was like in the mid-nineties, when this percentage did not exceed 42%. It could be argued, though, that such progress may have been the result of governmental policies aimed at combatting the broader issue of general illiteracy – more than 10% of GDP has been allocated to the education and health sectors, and women, like men, have benefited from these policies, which reflected positively on the lives of both genders.

Nevertheless, figures arrived at by the Department of Statistics show that the contribution of women to the overall economic activity in Jordan in 2014 amounted to a mere 12.6% of the total – roughly the same as in 1995. These numbers go in tandem with the percentages of economically active women, which are still dwarfed by those enjoyed among men, both nationally, globally, and in the Middle East – the global average of economically active women averages 50%, whereas in the Middle East this figure drops to 25.2%. In regards to the economic participation of women, Jordan ranked 142 out of 144 countries in 2014, at a time when unemployment rates among women constituted double that figure among their male counterparts (Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2014). This, of course, poses the issue of high dependency rates in Jordanian society, which are particularly worrying among women.

Labor statistics in Jordan reveal that the female fraction of the workforce is beset by two parallel phenomena. One is the preference of women for working in the fields of education, health,

and services, especially in the public sector; the second is the weak presence of female workers in fields such as industry, transportation, construction, trade, and tourism.

Dilemma of the study

According to information gathered, it is clear that the greater portion of the employed female workforce in Jordan is to be found in the education and health sectors. More than 41.8% of working women in Jordan are engaged in the education sector, 15.3% in health and social services, 12% in social security and public administration, 6.6% in the industrial sector, 5.5% in trade, and the remaining 0.4% in home and tourism services (Employment and Unemployment survey, 2015).

In order to present a clearer view of the status of women in the sectors that concern us in this study, we may begin by comparing the number of female workers in each sector to that of their male counterparts, per every 100 workers: in the finance, insurance, and banking sectors, there exist approximately 24 female workers for every 76 male workers; in the telecommunications sector, this ratio drops to 21 female workers per 79 male workers; the transformative industry sector employs 13 women for every 87 men; and, finally, in the tourism sector, there can be found a mere 6 woman workers for every 94 male workers (Employment and Unemployment survey, 2014).

Regarding the distribution of workforce over general sectors according to gender, it was found that male workers constitute 87.6% of the workforce in the public sector, whereas female workers accounted for a 21.3% [sic]; in the private sector, where male workers make up 86.4% of the workforce, women were shown to represent only 13.6% of workers (Annual Report, the International Monetary Fund, 2013).

In lieu of seeking positions in sectors with steeper growth rates, such as the ones mentioned above, women are particularly drawn to the education, health, and services sectors. Between 2010 and 2014, the impact on GDP of the finance, insurance, and business services sectors grew by 23.1% at fixed prices, while the information and communications sector grew at a rate of 13.6%, and the tourism and transformative industry sectors grew by 10.8% and 10.2%, respectively (Employment and Unemployment survey, 2014).

What is noteworthy in these figures are the inequalities in the distribution of jobs desired by females in the various economic sectors, half of which employ minimal levels of female workers – under 15% (Employment and Unemployment survey, 2014). In the education, health, and services sectors, contrastingly, the number of jobs held by female workers exceeded the anticipated rate, meaning that most female workers not only favor joining the lower-growth sectors, but also those with lower labor productivity (education, health, services).

There is, however, a clear link between this reality and the public spending cuts undertaken by successive governments in Jordan over the past twenty years, which have led to a reduced contribution of the public sector – one seen as being favored by, and more protective of, women – to the creation of jobs to absorb a portion of the unemployed workforce. The impact described above has been further corroborated in the annual Survey on Newly Created Jobs carried out by the Department of Statistics, whose results showed that the number of jobs created by the public sector in 2014 did not exceed 17,158, while the number of jobs created by the private sector reached 32,777 – a 52% increase in relation to 2014 figures (Employment and Unemployment survey, 2015).

Upon examining the relationship between level of education and unemployment, it was observed that about two-thirds of unemployed males hold sub-secondary levels of education, whereas, in contrast, data indicated that the higher the level of education attained by women, the dimmer their chances of finding a job, and the stronger the possibility that they'd be thereby forced to stay home (The Department of Statistics, 2014).

In spite of the levels of unemployment, the lack of opportunities offered in the labor market, and the wave of uncertainty afflicting the public sector and its workforce, the outlook of women towards the private sector seems to slowly but steadily be changing. This phenomenon prompted the present

investigation into the underlying sociological and anthropological circumstances, and their impact. Therefore, and in light of the proposed direction of the inquiry, it was decided that this study would focus on three main aspects.

Firstly, it will be pertinent to begin by identifying and introducing some of the fundamental concepts that will constitute the theoretical framework of this study, in particular by shedding some light on the nature of the chosen postmodernist approach – and postmodernist feminism in particular – seeing as this school of thought is the lens through which indispensable concepts such as that of role, gender division of work, as well as mechanisms of construction and normalization of identities, will be regarded, and subsequently related to the concepts of power and dominant discourses. In addition to these, the concept of development will be defined in relation to those of gender and process of empowerment, which are here regarded as being of fundamental importance to the sociological and anthropological understanding of the process through which gender roles and positions are built.

Another aspect that concerns us in this study is the relationship between the female workforce and the private sector – the reasons why women might choose to seek employment therein, or to avoid it altogether, as well as their reasons for remaining privately employed or to withdraw from the sector. Likewise, we will seek to gauge the dominant mentality in Jordanian society

regarding women's engagement in the labor market, through information gathered from a sample group of male and female employers and employees. In addition, we will attempt to ascertain which factors most affect the professional progress of women, as well as the challenges they face, both from the perspective of employers and from that of the working women themselves. Lastly, concerning this aspect, we will examine the types of work and sectors that Jordanian women seek, and avoid, and the reasons behind their preferences.

The third and last aspect to be considered will be the economic and political challenges that women face in the private labor market in particular, from the viewpoints of both the researcher and the respondents, with special emphasis being given to the role played by government and its stance regarding gender-sensitive policies. As such, an assessment study will be conducted regarding the effects of changes in modern labor law regarding female employment in the private sector, and the role of government in empowering women as workers and in facilitating their access to the private sector. In addition, we shall strive to identify the list of skills that a woman must possess in order to engage in the private labor market and constitute an asset to employers, from the viewpoint of the latter.

Overall objective of the study

This study will seek, first and foremost, to explore the realities faced by Jordanian

women workers in the private sector, by identifying the nature of the sociological and anthropological factors and causes behind the willingness, or lack thereof, of Jordanian women to engage and remain in the private sector, or to seek opportunities elsewhere. In the scope of this investigation, particular attention will be given to the banking, tourism, information technology, and transformative industry sectors.

In order to achieve this study's stated goal, the following must first be accomplished:

- Identify the economic and political factors that affect the work of women in the private sector;
- Understand the role of government policies in stimulating the private sector towards employing women, as seen from the standpoint of employers;
- Identify the conditions and reasons that motivate women to engage and work in the private labor market;
- Identify the reasons that motivate female workers to remain in the private sector or to withdraw therefrom;
- Identify the types of work in the private sector that women desire to engage in, those they seek to avoid, and the reasons behind their stated preferences;
- Seek to understand women's attitudes towards entrepreneurship in these sectors;
- Identify the role played by labor legislation in Jordan in creating a

- balanced and woman-friendly work environment in the private sector;
- Identify the main challenges affecting women's involvement in the private labor market in Jordan;
 - Explore employers' attitudes towards women's work in the private sector;
 - Identify the attitudes of men working in the private sector towards the economic participation of women;
 - Identify the major challenges faced by employers in the private sector when employing women.

Methodology of the study

The study will rely on scientific methodology, by way of a qualitative approach deemed suitable to examine relevant trends among employers in the private sector and their views towards women's work issues, as well as the factors that influence women's participation in the labor market and the reasons that drive them to engage in or withdraw from economic participation.

The main methodological elements of the study have been the conduction of focus group discussions, four of which were held in the North, Center and South of the Kingdom, hosting groups of local male and female factory workers, and the conduction of 18 in-depth interviews with employers in the private sector, male and female employees (in upper, middle and lower-level positions)

in target companies and institutions representing of the study's focus sectors, viz., banking, tourism, information technology and the transformative industry, as well as with male and female representatives belonging to relevant governmental bodies and institutions.

More than a single data-collecting tool was resorted to in the course of this study, including the setting up of a guide for the focus group discussions, and a number of semi-structured forms to guide initial data collection in the context of the qualitative interviews. The process of tool-building drew largely from the researcher's previous experiences and theoretical inclinations.

In regards to the community and sample groups envisioned in this study, the main demographics targeted were that of male and female workers employed by the private industrial sector in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of the Kingdom. The focus of this inquiry was to investigate and assess the target groups' perspectives towards women's integration into the workforce, as well as any possible concerns regarding their performance; to ascertain the underlying causes of such concerns, and to understand the extent to which labor laws impact the lives of actual and potential woman workers and their rapports with the labor market. Furthermore, it was of importance in this study to determine the degree to which such legislations are capable of facilitating the creation of a suitable work environment for women. Lastly, it was considered of the

utmost importance to highlight the main reasons driving women to integrate the workforce and the challenges they face in doing so. As stated above, such goals were accomplished, on the one hand, through the summoning of focused discussion groups, and, on the other, through in-depth interviews with both male and female workers in the three managerial categories – senior, middle, and lower – and lower-level subordinates. Attempts were made to include a plurality of male and female participants whose traits, backgrounds, and circumstances were deemed to fit the goals of this study, including varying levels of education, work status, marital status, gender, and the nature and sector of their current job placement.

Regarding the theoretical instruments and methods of analysis, this study has been dynamically based upon the postmodernist *modus operandi* in explaining social phenomena. In other words, the present analysis has sought to unravel its basic proposed dilemma regarding the realities faced by working Jordanian women in the private sector by identifying and observing the sociological and anthropological factors and causes underlying these women's reasons for either choosing to remain employed by the private sector or to seek other, perhaps better, opportunities elsewhere.

In an attempt to dismantle and thereby analyze these phenomena, we have, in this study, adopted a so-called “EMIC-ETIC” type of approach. That is, in this attempt

to identify the rhetorical patterns that frame these phenomena, as well as their implications, and in order to determine the relational patterns that prevail between the various rhetorical trends pertaining to the same phenomenon in the target community, it becomes significant to distinguish between two analytical angles: the first, pertaining to the communal dimension (EMIC), refers us to behaviors or convictions constructed by and within the social actor in the context of his or her culture, as reflected in discourse; the second relates to the external, outsider's vision of the researcher (ETIC), and it presupposes objectivity, neutrality, and the capacity to operate generalizations (Ferraro, 2006).

To elaborate further, in this study a method has been adopted which focuses on the linguistic resources that people possess based on their authority, in relation with the power and prestige they enjoy in society. Such resources include, though they are not limited to, metaphoric phrases, as well as miscellaneous sayings and expressions present and therefore available in any given culture. To this we call the method of critical analysis of discourse, or postmodernist interpretation.

To briefly summarize the findings and conclusions of this study, although women have become increasingly present in the private sector of the Jordanian economy, they remain absent from a number of fields of key importance, such as banking and

finance, telecommunications, tourism, and transformative industries.

Jordanian women have been pushed to work, against the traditional paradigm and the conventional conception of the woman's role in the family, by economic need, but also by an increasingly present array of options offered by modernity – many of which go against the previously established system of values and the patriarchal mentality of traditional Jordanian society.

However, their increased economic participation has not yielded the fruits it promised. Namely, women taking on new responsibilities as workers and providers has not relieved them of their functions, their “duties”, as mothers and wives. On the contrary, they are now commonly expected to perform both roles, carry both burdens, all the while being subject to the limitations imposed on their options by traditional discourses – namely, what kind of work they are or aren't allowed to perform.

1. Theoretical framework of the study

Most modern studies pertaining to women's participation in the economy were, until recently, the theoretical prerogative of the liberalist and Marxist schools. Over the past two decades, however, a significant shift has occurred in the intellectual paradigm, through the criticism of the most predominant "metanarratives" in human sciences, and in particular regarding the issue of female workers and their participation in the economy.

Amidst controversial debates and discussions, doubts were cast upon such theories' capacity to provide accounts of issues such as labor and development in different cultures. Emerging theorists slowly began to argue in favor of fresh viewpoints – regarded by some as contradicting the major structuralist tenets, considered by others as allowing for the inclusion of structural aspects, and by some as even being complementary to the traditional theories in some aspects.

The theoretical framework of feminist postmodernism, especially, has been the preferred ringing stone for analysis and interpretation methods in the study of such social phenomena as concern us here. A number of questions, however, must be answered regarding the chosen approach: What is postmodernism? Which are the specificities of its feminist variation? How can this theoretical perspective be summarized and which are its core concepts? How is it able to shed any light on the issue of women's economic participation and development?

In truth, the postmodern school hardly seems reducible to any single definition or general idea. According to Lyotard (1993), its main sticking point has been the doubt it's cast over the dominant social theories of the twentieth century. Such theories had sunk their roots into the primacy of rational thinking and into the trust in technological development to equally be the beacon of moral, legal, and social progress. Over the years, however, several instances of undeniable failure in the modern endeavor had damaged theorists'

reliance on this assumption, and likewise on the capacity of Western intellectuals to provide a legitimate understanding of the predicaments of the Third World, and thereby develop solutions and policies which could be trusted to counter its afflictions. At first, postmodernism as a school of thought stemmed from the critiques of philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze, who are still considered to be its most prominent contributors. From there, it evolved into the perspectives of Alan Touraine, Daniel Bell, and Callinicos.

According to proponents of this school, all major theories stemming from liberalism and Marxism had been the products of an era marked by European and North American dominance over the world stage. In this, dominant theories had been made deaf to any third voices, viewing different cultures through the skewed perspective of the Eurocentric orientalist. According to Lyotard, one of the most prominent postmodernist theorists, the knowledge brought by modernity carried within it the seeds of terrorism – a story to stifle and silence all others, striving, by nature, to impose itself as the dominant, or indeed the only, narrative, and sole legitimizer of the rights to speak and decide (Lyotard, 1983).

Foucault, in his turn, was the most consequent intellectual in questioning the major theories' adequacy in providing convincing explanations of social phenomena. Against such theories, Foucault postulated that

facts were socially constructed – local, circumstantial, and contingent on social and historical contexts. According to Foucault, discourse amounted to nothing more than a structure of sayings, phrases, classifications and postulations built into culture and society through a successive, shared, historical experience (Foucault, 1972, 1980). Discourse, furthermore, has in power its sole legitimizer, in its compatibility with the will and interests of the main institutions, as well as between the will of these and that of the more relevant international players: with power comes the prerogative of defining dominant discourse (Scott, 1988).

From a methodological viewpoint, Foucault, as well as the remaining proponents of postmodernism, maintained that a researcher could understand social behaviors via the analysis of discursive patterns, given their understanding of discourse as the root of action in society. In other words, actors and their identities are, in the postmodernist approach, understood as arising from the discursive frameworks which define their place in the world – a world predefined as a cultural construct – in relation to others. We, as social entities, thus assume social roles that have been preordained as rhetorical concepts; only then are we able to conceive and make sense of our selves. In this sense, personal experience ceases to be the veritable root of identity, in that it itself stems from dominant discourse (Foucault, 1980).

Therefore, in order to approach any

cultural concept, one must understand how discourses influence people's behavior in society, in relation to said concept. The fact that identities are products of discourse is further substantiated by how the meaning of any given concept varies according to the form of discourse employed by the one conceptualizing. And this, of course, is applicable to the concepts that concern this study.

The more power is associated with any given discourse, the more prevalent it becomes. As such, dominant discourses may be defined as the rhetorical prevalence attained by any given social reality, by way of which it legitimizes social structures as well as the power relations existing therein. Those discourses that are most difficult to challenge will therefore likely constitute what could be termed as "common sense" in the society in question.

In this manner, individual experience is captivated by the dominant cultural discourse. Judith Butler in fact maintains that there is absolutely no individual existence outside the social structure, in the sense that people in any given community understand and experience life through the lens of discourse, in social contexts. In other words, language is what sheds light on our daily experiences, and thereby frames them into social "facts". The self is therefore understood as nothing more than a reflection of a sort of implanted experience derived from complex historic and social contexts, and may only be analyzed

and understood as such.

In this regard, it is essential to underline that, although the actor cannot himself be contemplated outside of any given social structure, he or she is nevertheless able to act against said structure (Butler, 1992). The postmodernist school demonstrated the need to dismantle language and discourse in order to understand the ways through which it is defined and thus becomes the foundation of our understanding of the world and the realities that surround us, determining our behavior (Parpart, 1993).

Postmodernism has sparked controversy within academic circles, and no less through its postcolonial variant, led by Edward Said. Said's work on orientalism focused on the concept – and discourse – of "the West," and its ontological dependence on a counterpart, or flipside, which it found in "the Orient," – a primitive, backwards, irrational, and simultaneously ancient and magical world. This conception of the Orient therefore became prevalent in the minds of academics and tourists alike (Said, 1978). Said thus explained how the West defined itself through a combination of ideological binaries, such as "progress and stagnation," "growth and retardation," "science and imitation," "mind and passion," and "democracy and tyranny." At first established in representations, these dichotomies were then built into realities (Said, 1978).

1.1. Postmodernist feminism

The adequate description of postmodernist, or poststructuralist, feminism, requires that a number of key structuralist concepts be first clarified, as they have long been employed in theorizing the social and economic injustices which commonly underlie gender dynamics.

According to Karl Marx, capitalist society is one in which relations between agents are determined by the production process of food and consumer goods. Social inequalities between genders, as much as between classes, then arise as direct consequences of how social relations are established. According to Marxist theory, capitalists, i.e., those staking a claim to the means of production, build their wealth through appropriating any surplus resulting from workers' labor, and limit themselves to paying meager salaries and wages, as opposed to making workers partners, equally entitled to any profits arising from the product of their work.

In the same way, women are kept in a state of perceived inferiority in relation to men in that they are unpaid, confined to the household, and in the labor market are rewarded with lesser wages, which reveal unfair prejudice towards their abilities as workers (Holmes, 2007).

It has been maintained that the grave exploitation of women in capitalist societies is the only reason such societies are allowed to thrive in the first place – through the exploitation of women at home, where they

are expected to provide unremunerated education, care, and support, and in the labor market, where their work is deemed less valuable than that of men, and where this reality is reflected in the size of their wages (Delphy, 1984).

Many feminists, like Silvia Welby (1996), further claim that this reality is aggravated under patriarchal social systems, which are sustained and strengthened by the aforementioned dynamics.

These discrepancies are corroborated by recent UN figures. In industrialized societies, it has been shown that women commonly earn only between 75% and 80% of wages collected by their male counterparts, whereas on the global scale women earn, on average, 60% less than men (United Nations Statistics, 2005).

One of the main objections, however, is that while such figures surely are relevant when assessing the impact of economic power on the roles of men and women in society, they are categorically incapable of shedding any light on the social realities and discourses underlying the established gender roles.

In spite of their relevance and importance in raising the issue of gender inequality, both Marxist and liberalist structural theories suffer from a number of inadequacies where investigations into this phenomenon are concerned. Namely, they do not account for, and are seemingly incompatible with, the reality of cultural diversity among

women; they base themselves upon fixed historical imperatives which are perceived to govern social change, whereas, once more, such universal hypostases shy away from recognizing the existence of a vast plurality of highly contrasting cultures and experiences throughout the world; and finally, they are suspected abolishing individual agency, i.e., ability to act outside of, and thereby challenge, the dominant sociocultural structure, whereby women are perceived as being unavoidably subject to structures and other determinants (Holmes, 2007).

Postmodern feminist thinkers subscribing to these criticisms found solace in the theories of Michel Foucault, which they saw as a valuable new approach to the sociology of gender, in that it allowed for a new understanding of how systems of meanings and ideas, i.e., discourses, directly impact individuals' bodies, regardless of the underlying economic and historical circumstances.

Several feminists followed in Foucault's footsteps in criticizing the liberalist and Marxist notions regarding the marginalization and subjection (oppression) of women. According to this new school of feminist thinkers, the old paradigm illegitimately presupposed a constancy in women's identities across disparate cultures. Such blanket concepts, condensing a vast plurality of experiences into a single frame, was understood and rejected by postmodern feminists as deriving from cultural

projections operated by the West in regards to other cultures, and "the East" in particular.

One prominent feminist, Chandra Mohanty, drew from the writings of a number of Northern feminists in analyzing literary portrayals and accounts of the Third World, and concluded that women in the South are very often described as poor, fragile, and weak, while their North-European and American counterparts were perceived as being more educated, liberal, and receptive to modern values.

Gayatri Spivak (1990) called, in her turn, for the adoption of a new outlook on the experiences of women in the Third World. An outlook, that is, that would challenge the dominance of Western pragmatism – one capable of revealing the true experiences of women in Third World countries as coherent, understandable, and meaningful, while emancipated from extrinsic notions and projections.

It is, however, important to note, as Edward Said himself underlined, that Western thinkers aren't the only ones guilty of orientalism; that, in fact, many a Third World researcher had fallen prey to, and expressed, orientalist perspectives in their writings (Said, 1978). On this issue, Third World feminists proved to be no exception, with many presenting skewed accounts of the actual experiences of women in their societies and communities.

In light of these approaches, it became

increasingly clear how the postmodernist worldview and method of research was capable of legitimizing the perspectives of the marginalized, including immigrants and exploited and oppressed non-whites (Hooks, 1992), therefore empowering them. In response to postmodern feminist currents, liberalists and Marxists accused postmodernism of the inability to provide clear policies promoting gender justice and equality. Authors such as Judith Butler and Flaks (1992) retorted by emphasizing the importance of demanding rights in the names of those who are unlike ourselves, exalting the principle that social justice arises from the understanding of the differing needs, desires, and rhetorical practices through which the social demands of others are legitimized.

Dominant discourses, according to postmodernists, are not eternal – that is, they are susceptible to change. They expand and dwindle, they have a history, and may at any time be dethroned by new discourses. Drawing from postmodernist theory, many feminists regarded this emergent school as presenting several novel concepts capable of contributing to the theorization of feminism. Indeed, very few among these were considered to be conflicting with fundamental feminist convictions (Butler, Scott, 1992).

From this stems the necessity of developing an analytical and methodological model capable of accounting for the impact of discourse on Third World individuals' understanding of, and engagement in, their

respective surrounding realities. One that, for instance, encourages women to articulate their needs and agendas while remaining free from a rhetoric which only portrays them as fragile, vulnerable, and marginalized victims, and from being dependent on Western historic experiences in drafting solutions to their social ailments. In fact, such projects soon began to be regarded by postmodernist theorists as more of an obstacle than a solution (Marchand and Parpart 2001).

These perspectives eventually demanded a reassessment of modern Western feminist projects. Many a doubt has since been casted on the modernist worldview, with traditional Western perspectives receding as greater focus is placed on the relevance of heterogeneity and the diversity of identities, and as greater emphasis is placed on the relationship between language and power. All the while, the dismantlement of colonial and postcolonial discourse on “the other” has shed further light on issues pertaining development. The question, however, now beckons, as to how postmodern feminism has approached the subject of gender in relation to that of overall development.

1.2. The concepts of gender and development

Since the 1940's, and with increased momentum in the post-WWII period, a particular concept asserted itself as the keystone around which all relevant economic

and political discourse must be tailored. In fact, the West's uncompromising conception of "progress," or "development," as it is understood, had not been forced to justify itself in response to any consequent critical rebuttal on behalf of Marxist circles, which prided themselves in their flagship status as the bastion of criticism against the injustices inherent in the capitalist system and its class structure. Furthermore, Marxists and liberalists both seemed to agree that progress and development, as understood by each, was the only fair and safe course towards a society's transition from a pre-developed stage into that of one successfully modernized. In short, both schools categorically shunned the "backwardness" associated with traditional institutions and values, in favor of the more rational and scientific worldviews associated with "advanced" Western models.

This perception, however, was short-lived – beset, as it was, on all sides by critics who, since the sixties, began underlining the continued state of poverty and suffering ailing the Third World. This then prompted several intellectuals to develop new tools, and new theoretical schools, aimed at analyzing social phenomena, such as poverty and famine, and to adequately counter them, from outside the liberalist and Marxist scientific paradigms. Accordingly, a group of economists and sociologists such as Frank (1978), Samir Amin (1978), and others, began to accuse the West of what could be termed intellectual arrogance, in that Western theorists and politicians imposed their views

as holding a monopoly on legitimacy, all the while marginalizing and effectively silencing all forms of opinion and scientific approach. Others' feeling of dependency on European experience gave way to an impression of capitalism as the first – perhaps the sole – beneficiary of the persisting predicament of poverty in the Third World.

A new approach to development was therefore called upon, that would consider differences, as well as the stifled voices and neglected worldviews of the Third World; one that would recognize the need for accounts and explanations in syntony with the realities and cultures of the Third World; one capable, in short, of developing coherent solutions to its problems and of thereby promoting palpable social and political advancement.

Such concerns eventually extended to the statuses of women in the Third World. In the mid-sixties, economists began to detect discrepancies between the promises and the realities of progressive-developmental doctrines, especially among women. A study conducted by Ester Boserup (1970), one of such many studies conducted in the seventies regarding this subject, stands out in that it showed that many development projects in the Third World not only didn't promote, but in fact hindered, women's access to economic resources and social status, weakening their stance when, in fact, they should have been empowering them.

This study, pursuing the approach of other similar inquiries, has identified a pattern

which seems to call for a strengthening of the role of women in development. In lieu of approaching the issue of women's economic participation as a merely economic issue, a methodology must be adopted which allows for a better understanding of gender relations and ideology.

In the eighties, several researchers and activists began to call for new approaches, ones with greater focus on issues pertaining women's rights, to be considered. These demands were prompted by an increased awareness of the conditions faced by men and women in Third World countries.

The need to address such issues might have appeared obvious, seeing as how such concerns had been voiced in the conferences of 1976 and 1985, encouraging many a Third World writer to illustrate and reflect on these problems (Sen, Grown, 1987).

Vandana Shiva (2013) has established herself as one of the main proponents of this critical view, having gone to the extent of accusing some of the aforementioned schools of not only promoting poverty in Third World countries, but also of sponsoring a dynamic of violence between "center" and "edge" countries – one which is not contained within local and national borders, but bleeds and spreads into the larger political and economic structures that rule the world.

In Shiva's eyes, women commonly pay doubled taxes, and they are the first victims of poverty, unemployment, exploitation,

displacement and exile, and are commonly subject to rape. In her view, the emancipation of women can't come but through their liberation from a patriarchal capitalist system which is violent by nature (Shiva, 2013).

Another aspect which should not be neglected is how capitalist systems, which favor the private sector, commonly fail to provide adequate protection for women, whether in relation to unpaid work – at home – or in those matters concerning privately employed women, who are often found to be living on the brink of labor law and human rights standards. In addition, it should be noted how the disintegration of social and economic security systems, particularly throughout the underdeveloped world, contributed to the exacerbation of female poverty, in close connection with the rise of gender-based violence (Johnson, Nevala, 2008).

Voices countering the old paradigm in interpreting the social realities of Third World countries have pushed for the development of a new emergent approach, relying on the concept of empowerment rather than that of development (Moser, 1993).

We are thus witnessing a shift of focus that favors the actual, observable predicament of women over the emphasis on the dynamics of gender and development. As a result, the notion of gender has begun to be approached as a patriarchal social construction of femininity developed over numerous social and historical circumstances by the community itself (Kabeer, 1993).

New social perspectives have begun to take shape under the conviction that these social roles, and the possibility of changing them, are rooted in mutable societies, as opposed to any immutable laws of human behavior.

Although it has not successfully challenged the dominant conception of development, still firmly rooted in the notion of modernization, the postmodern feminist approach has deeply impacted academic discourse on development. Furthermore, it has greatly influenced the discourse employed by international institutions concerned with the Third World, namely those supervising training programs (Marchand, Parpart, 2001). Owing to such new criticisms, previously held convictions have been challenged with the goal of shedding more light on the real, everyday experiences of women, trading the emphasis on the development of largely unsuccessful policies and social projects for a promotion of the social self-confidence of women, which is deemed more efficient in countering patriarchal controls over their bodies and work (Kuper, Kuper, 2005).

The postmodernist approach has emerged as a new method of research, capable of revolutionizing both policy-making and the establishment of development projects. In fact, not only does it seek to shatter traditional Western approaches to the issue of development, i.e., the colonial and postcolonial paradigm, but strives also to present an alternative, in the form of a perspective capable of encompassing, and

accounting for, differences in sociohistorical context and cultural plurality. In striving to achieve this, it relies heavily on a language-focused approach to race, class, and gender representation – which confers it the necessary versatility to account for non-dominant and marginalized discourses.

The emergence of postmodernism as a novel approach to social issues, in discarding fundamental aspects of the traditional theorizations of development, eventually found itself in want of more pragmatic, i.e., less theory-oriented perspectives on the issue; ones capable of becoming greater contributors to policy-making. This necessity begot a new postmodern feminist approach intent on linking language and discourse, on the one hand, to the material demands of social life, on the other (Marchand, Parpart, 2001).

In fact, going back to Foucault, it can be said that, in spite of his emphasis on the construction of meaning, as well as his interest in highlighting the methodological insufficiencies of Marxism arising from its adoption of economy as a principle through which to define social life, Foucault's theory maintained a close link with the material world – even while conceiving the latter as sociologically determined by signs and meanings. For this reason, Foucault was conceived of simultaneously as a structuralist and as a poststructuralist. More importantly, however, this underlines the fundamental relation between the sign and the signified

– the meaning and that which is meant. Through his focus on the relation between things and words (the physical and the discursive), Foucault sought to understand their interdependent ontology – one that is ever fleeting and ever mutable (Holmes, 2007). This idea, pertaining to the relation between ideas, on the one hand, and the economy and other material manifestations of the social reality, on the other, has always been at the heart of the postmodern feminist analysis of social phenomena.

Novel perspectives derived from postmodernism begot new ways of interpreting difference and identity, as well as the respective ways in which these are constructed. Many studies, in fact, emerged, describing gender relations and identities as historically, culturally, and socially determined, according to dominant outlooks and representations.

Therefore, in defining actual and potential social roles, as well as gender-based division of labor, arbitrariness should be discounted, and factors beyond the material conditions should be taken into account, including dominant social discourse and the ruling dynamics dividing the perceived capacities, roles, and spaces attributed to each gender. Such divisions, dependent in their legitimacy on “common sense” and the ability of public discourse to continuously produce and reproduce the visions and representations, which appear mirrored in people’s behavior as natural and spontaneous, thereby place

their (albeit unwilling) proponents beyond accountability.

This study will, as stated, be concerned with the economic participation of Jordanian women in the private sector. It will draw from postmodernist theory in that efforts shall be made to deconstruct the phenomenon into linguistic, discursive, and representative concepts underlying male and female workers’, as well as officials’ and employers’ understandings of the issue. Efforts will then be undertaken to provide an account of the mentioned discourses and the conditions under which they thrive, never discarding any relevant material circumstances, which will likewise be adequately interpreted whenever such need arises.

2. Previous studies

In his essay, titled *The Reality of Arab Women in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and Support for Their Participation in Economic Activity*, Lutfi (2015) sought to assess girls and women’s degree of economic participation in the labor market according to their level of education and technical/vocational training. The author proceeded, in his research, to organize a symposium in which relevant issues were to be discussed. The list of participants was comprised of Palestinian women.

Among the more relevant findings was the part played by the Israeli occupation in the deterioration of the Palestinian education

infrastructure, which led to the lack of an adequately integrated system to address the needs, interests, and inclinations of students, capable of assisting them in making decisions regarding their education and specializations – a decision which remains the prerogative of the students and their families.

Lutfi's study underlined the low rates of female engagement in the technical and vocational education sectors – a type of education which plays a major role in most countries, and contributes heavily to the gross domestic product (GDP) and the national income at large. The work situation of Palestinian women is thus afflicted by a broad inaccessibility to the job market and a remarkable scarcity of opportunities, compared to those available to men.

In light of these findings, the study concluded with a list of recommendations:

- Establish a genuine partnership with local and international community institutions;
- Improve the quality of the education system;
- Continue to optimize usage of available resources, towards the development and betterment of a vocational education system increasingly capable of meeting the needs of Palestinian society;
- Improve the professional performance of teachers and trainers, and promote their educational training skills through the implementation of various courses and workshops;

- Increase focus on raising community awareness regarding the importance of education, with particular emphasis on that of vocational and technical training directed at young women;
- Seek to align supply and demand in regards to the subjects offered at educational and vocational training centers.

Another study, conducted by the National Committee for Women's Affairs (2008), titled *Women's Participation in the Informal Labor Sector*, proposed the following course of investigation: to build a statistical database accounting for women's participation in the informal labor market in the Greater Amman Municipality; to look into the nature of jobs held by women in the informal labor market; to assess the living conditions of sampled families, and women's motives for working from home; to then conduct an in-depth analysis of the information gathered, particularly into the demographic, economic situation, and level of education of women working from home; and, finally, to facilitate comparisons with statistical figures registered in foreign countries pertaining to this phenomenon.

The study relied on a quantitative approach consisting in the elaboration of a survey questionnaire, the determination of the characteristics of a pertinent sample group, and subsequent data collection and processing. Elements of the sample were chosen based on type of residence, estate,

gender, marital status, work status, and by favoring the inclusion of diverse age groups.

Among the most relevant figures arrived at were the following: the total economic participation rate, i.e., percentage of employed individuals over the age of 15, was shown to be 71% among sampled males, to only 22% of females; 92% of the economically active population was reported as being employed, to 8% of unemployed workers; 8% of the overall employed workforce were shown to be made up of men working from home, 78% of which were married; it was also concluded that 11% of working women worked from home (making up 27% of all such workers, both male and female), and that 80% of these were married; furthermore, 19% of all workers employed elsewhere were shown to be women. Regarding education, it was concluded that 83% of men and 85% of women working from home held secondary or lower levels of education. Concerning their respective work sectors, figures showed that half of males working from home were engaged in construction, whereas 40% of women likewise working from home were engaged in transformative industries. In turn, 56% of men and 40% of women working from home were shown to be engaged in handicraft and related trades. Finally, 57% of men and 39% of women working from home claimed to be self-employed. The main motives presented by female workers for choosing to work from home were child and family care (64%), whereas among men the most common stated reason was the low

operational cost of working from home. The study also arrived at a number of percentages pertaining to spending and home owning for home workers, as well as the obstacles they face, and, most crucially, the impact of competitor practices, economic instability, access to financing, and transportation, in their lives. In addition, results also showed that over a quarter of employers and self-employed home workers resorted to media outlets in marketing their products – 25.6% of men, and 31.8% of women. 28% of home-based employers and self-employed workers, however, claimed to favor the usage of telephone services – 32.5% of men to 22.7% of women. Finally, the study sought to assess the differences between men and women's attitudes towards women working away from home. In this respect, it was concluded that social customs and family-based traditions constituted the main factors for disapproval – with 52.4% of disapproving men to 31.1% of disapproving women. The second most common reason supporting reservations towards women working away from home pertained to the circumstances of the family, while the third rested on children's need for maternal care – expressed by 25.6% of women and 15.7% of men.

In light of these figures, the study finished by listing the following suggestions:

- Intensify research efforts in relevant fields;
- Conduct periodic field surveys and continuous follow-ups regarding realities and conditions faced by the

workforce, as well as identify the obstacles that persistently hinder any given economic sector, thus preventing their accumulation and providing timely solutions and support thereto;

- Develop more effective social legislations and lighten procedures and requirements, which includes reorganizing bureaucratic procedures and hindrances which prevent the informal sector to integrate itself into mainstream economy. (In fact, this business sector is perceived to be a potentially fruitful partner in the of recent supplementary income programs implemented by the Ministry of Social Development to combat poverty in Jordan.)
- Increasingly consider the informal sector as a partner, as opposed to a competitor, of official economic sectors, and as such provide it with adequate credit systems that will allow business owners and other economic units therein to finance their activities, either through borrowing – on mutually favorable terms – or through development funds and other arrangements agreed upon with both governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- Increase awareness of the importance of the role of employers' and workers' organizations in developing an adequate framework for the informal sector, which would operate in tandem with the promotion of the development and improvement of the terms and conditions of informal employment, and,

more crucially, in matters concerning employment opportunities, in close coordination with labor departments;

- Modify labor law in accordance with international standards, and address the conditions of home workers in legislative documents.

Yet another study, authored by Alsoyouf (2015), titled *Determinants of Jordanian Women's Contribution to the Labor Market*, and claiming to constitute “a qualitative analysis into public discourse,” sought to accomplish the following goals: to identify the main social, economic, and demographic trends among working women; to monitor modern tendencies and discourses pertaining to the economic participation of women; and to analyze the causes underlying women's withdrawal from the labor market, and their low levels of economic participation therein.

The study's author opted for a qualitative content analysis approach, particularly the organization of focused group discussions and in-depth interviews, by which it sought to obtain more detailed information regarding the economic participation of Jordanian women. The chosen investigative approach consisted of the following: the conduction of focus group discussions including male and female participants between the ages of 20 and 40, working and non-working, as well as married and unmarried women, and both working and non-working men, from the Kingdom's North, Center, and Southern regions.

Among the conclusions arrived at were the

following: there is an observable trend among both males and females towards acceptance of women working whether within or without the labor market, provided that their economic participation satisfies the temporal and spatial demands of dominant societal and cultural norms. Furthermore, economic factors were shown to be the predominant motive behind the desire of women to engage in economic activity, and behind men's acceptance of their choice. As such, the higher the returns and their reflection on economic stability, the longer women would remain engaged in the labor market, whereas lower and insufficient economic returns would reflect in women's willingness to depart in search of better opportunities or to abandon the labor market altogether. Married, working mothers expressed the most symptoms of social and psychological pressure resulting from their participation in the labor market, with strong feelings of imbalance and social and familial dysfunction being commonly associated with their economic roles. Among married working women belonging to lower and middle classes, furthermore, it was concluded that they face severe consequences in terms of physical and psychological health, as well as social repercussions and a general impression of being underappreciated in the eyes of both officials and social entities. Indeed, a working woman might leave her job after 22 years without the slightest sense of accomplishment or appreciation for the fruits of their work, which contributes to a feeling of futility further exacerbated by

the meagerness of their pensions. On the other hand, women living above middle and economic social class standards are able to secure devices and alternatives which allow for their continuous economic participation in the labor market, such as maids, electronic devices, and other factors which lighten the burden of the woman's roles at home. As a result of this, they benefit from greater stability than their lower-class peers, who do not possess the economic capacity to access their privileges. Consequently, women belonging to higher-income socioeconomic classes benefit from a far wider range of opportunities than their lower-class counterparts – a fact largely related to their widespread access to skills and competencies favored by the labor market, in addition to their relative ease in acquiring complementary skills which provide them with the upper hand in the competition for job opportunities, including knowledge of foreign languages and additional courses pertaining to the nature of their work.

Perhaps in relation to these realities, a mounting tendency has been observed according to which unmarried females are increasingly willing to procure a husband holding a high-paying position or a promising career – one that will, in short, ensure the satisfaction of their needs and priorities, without the need for economic contribution, which is seen by many as a sacrifice. The issue of gender roles, however, remains contentious, subject to the social, cultural, and historical perspectives of the community.

It fluctuates between what is acceptable to men from their male perspectives, including those issues susceptible of impacting on the man's dignity and parental authority over the family and household, and the realities of women, who bear the responsibility of childbirth and family care, and who are, simultaneously, asked to be contributive and productive in their careers, all the while facing unjust competition by men.

Conclusions regarding women's engagement in, or withdrawal from, the labor market, were largely connected with the insufficient application of laws pertaining to female labor, particularly in the private sector – the inadequacy of minimum wages, lack of diversity in the fields of work accessible to women, the insufficiency of development and awareness programs which would assist women in managing and expressing their feelings towards the many stressful aspects of life, the scarcity of available specialized training opportunities for women, especially traditional productivity training in areas such as sewing, embroidery, and food and animal production, the failure to involve men engaged in the legislative and legal systems in supporting and stimulating the economic participation of women, and the fact of their exclusion, from the age of forty, from the labor market, where men in the same demographic enjoy considerably broader scopes of opportunity (this, of course, excluding unremunerated economic activities within the various sectors), and the scarcity of such alternatives as presented by

home employment, part-time working, and flexible shifts.

In accordance with the aforementioned conclusions, the following recommendations were issued:

- Ensure the development and enforcement of laws supporting female workers' rights;
- Tighten control over institutions, especially in the private and non-governmental sectors;
- Aggravate penalties for non-abidance and violations of procedure;
- Ensure that reports concerning such violations of women's rights in the work environment are properly conveyed to the Ministry of Labor and other such concerned agencies;
- Raise the minimum wage;
- Ensure diversity in the workforce by making more jobs accessible to women in Jordan, including factories and sectors where only minimal skills and technical knowledge are required, all the while repressing preconceptions regarding women's role in society and in the workforce;
- Implement psychological guidance and support programs for working women focusing on providing a space for the voicing of their concerns and expression of their feelings regarding the labor market, where they may find solace in shared experiences among their peers;
- Implement self-empowerment programs

directed at working and non-working women alike, regardless of their economic, social, and educational status, which may provide them with skills useful in managing their lives – including time, negotiation, and conflict management, communication and networking, self-knowledge and awareness, problem-solving and decision-making, as well as other skills capable of improving women’s self-confidence and their ability to face disparate situations and bear responsibility for their decisions;

- Apply lending and saving mechanisms deemed capable of assisting large numbers of women in starting small projects suited to their needs, potential, and circumstances;
- Provide more part-time jobs to women, boosting productivity and home-based work programs. (It should be noted that this last aspect hinges on women’s overall efficiency, as well as their ability to apply pertinent technological skills at work, namely those pertaining to marketing, design, information analysis, translation and other related fields.)

Yet another study, conducted by the Higher Population Council (2015), and titled *The Withdrawal of Women from the Jordanian Labor Market* (actual data from the General Organization for Social Security) aimed to identify female social security beneficiaries’ withdrawal from the labor market, taking their economic situation, demographic,

and social status into account. The study sought, furthermore, to identify the main types of jobs held by women prior to their disengagement from the job market, as well as the difficulties and challenges they face as workers, which lead to low levels of female participation. Finally, the study proposed to analyze legislation (laws, regulations, and instructions) impacting the lives of working women, and identify any shortcomings and gaps therein. The study relied on both quantitative and qualitative approaches, including the elaboration of a questionnaire, including a number of both closed and open-ended questions, which was then distributed among 110 recent female graduates in Irbid. In addition, a focus group discussion was held in the Al Koura district, which was attended with seven recent female graduates.

The following major conclusions were drawn: there is a general lack of employment opportunities; gender-based discrimination in employment puts women at a disadvantage; female workers are subject to financial exploitation by employers, parents, and spouses; and, finally, there is significant competition posed by Syrian refugees.

The results of the survey showed that the private sector in the Irbid Governorate is today increasingly inclined towards hiring female Syrian refugees, thus exploiting their willingness to work longer hours, for lower wages, and without such benefits as health insurance, social security, and vacation – a situation which thus reduces the number

employment opportunities for female workers in the Governorate. In addition, it was shown how social traditions prevent women from finding work far from home, which further narrows their chances at employment, by promoting only their engagement in gender appropriate, or womanlike, roles and jobs. In Amman, the number of sectors available to women is particularly narrow, with a general trend towards an overcrowded education sector. According to findings, the economic participation of women is affected by a lack of social services commonly required by working women, particularly private nurseries. Simultaneously, educational opportunities available to women differ from those enjoyed by their male counterparts; as a result, their chances to find a job are diminished – a phenomenon further exacerbated by their preference for subjects related to the education sector. Women's inclination towards certain types of education, in detriment of others, thus results in their lack of specialized training, in line with the skills and experience in demand in other sectors.

Another important conclusion of the study regarded the potentially negative impacts of pregnancy and maternity on working women, namely affecting their employment opportunities, wages, and bonuses. Furthermore, just as women aren't allowed to perform certain functions, they are likewise not allowed to work at night; they commonly suffer from psychological stress resulting from unwelcoming work environments; they are prevented from spending enough

time with their families; they face difficulties in professional decision-making in the workplace; and they face harassment when using public transportation. In short, traditional social roles and responsibilities, as well as the way in which they are still portrayed in society, continue to hamper Jordanian women's ability to secure a job.

The World Bank's 2014 report, *Women in Business and Administration*, drew from the conclusions drawn in another study, also conducted by the World Bank, with the stated goal of achieving a wider understanding of the obstacles hindering women's advancement in the field of business and administration. It suggested possible approaches in addressing the issue, highlighting good practices between the private sector and employers' organizations. The study relied on a 2013 survey conducted by the Office of Employers' Activities of the International Labor Organization, which included nearly 1300 privately-owned companies and firms from 39 developing countries, as well as on a series of workshops held with national employers' organizations in five regions between 2012 and 2013. The data gathered pertained to the status of women in the business and administration sectors. The sample included small and medium-sized firms, as well as large multinational companies and those based in emerging regions and developing countries with large informal economies. As for the results, ILO data showed that women's participation rates in the labor market are still relatively

higher than those of their occupation of administrative roles, with several countries showing this gap to be significantly wider than the average, although the number of female managers is reportedly increasing.

In most countries for which there was available data, collected by the International Labor Organization over the past 10 years, the percentage of female managers increased in 77% of the 104 countries considered. In 23 countries, this increase was of 7% or more. In approximately 23 other countries, however, the number of women in management roles actually decreased, in spite of their increased participation in the workforce and their mounting levels of education. From this, it can be concluded that any progress achieved in these matters is always susceptible of giving way to receding figures, and that any advancements may be undone in the absence of continued, concerted efforts. Those countries showing a decline in the percentages of female managers were often of different regions and levels of development. Regarding the relation between the rates of female participation in the labor market and the percentage of female administrators, there were instances in which both figures declined.

The report advanced the following recommendations:

- Change the ways of thinking phenomena pertaining to gender diversity and conduct more studies on the subject;
- Adopt equal-opportunity policies in employment;

- Review human resource development plans.

A 2003 World Bank study titled *Economic Progress for Women in Jordan*. An assessment of social gender, aimed at accomplishing the following: diagnosing gender-related differences and constrains, as well as their impact on the economic progress of women; highlighting considerations pertaining to economic growth; assessing strategies for combating the predicament of poverty; identifying priorities and proceed to draw policies regarding these phenomena.

In the course of the study, particular attention was given to the economic advancement of women and their level of participation in public affairs as key indicators of the impact of past policies, as well as the main factors to be considered when tackling issues related to social gender, which are deemed as being of vital importance in the development of new policies aimed at promoting the skills and capabilities of both men and women.

The report concluded as follows: the level of female participation in the labor market suggests that Jordan is capable of increasing its production capacity. Based on estimates regarding Middle Eastern and North African countries, as well as other regions of the world, the level of female participation in the labor market in Jordan is only about half of what could be expected. Its levels are among the lowest in the MENA region, second only to those registered in Iraq, although figures did increase between 1980 and 2000. These numbers of course impact

on the well-being of families and their overall economic performance. Another clear consequence is the conservation of high economic dependency rates among women. This percentage reaches 2.6% in Jordan – one of the highest in the developing world, more than double the 1.2% average in the MENA region. Even after corrections were made to account for age, demographics, and unemployment, Jordan still showed a dependency rate of approximately 2.1% – a figure largely owing the low levels of women's involvement in the workforce.

In light of the conclusions reached by the report, the following recommendations were made:

- Conduct educational reform, promoting a comprehensive approach to the current agenda of the World Bank by strengthening the links between the results of assessments regarding the country's social gender and the program of knowledge economy;
- Reform the pension and social security systems, as well conduct analyses into policies appropriate in addressing the impact of gender differences;
- Reform the public sector and promote increased performance in the private sector, in order to better integrate gender issues into national programs and policies aimed at reforming civil service and restructuring government spending, and promote legal reform initiatives;
- Conduct additional research into social gender issues in Jordan, with particular

emphasis in areas for which no figures are available, and highlight any gaps in the information already under scrutiny in the country's gender assessment;

- Conduct follow-up assessments and evaluations in support of the Jordanian government's efforts to promote progress, and shed further light on the results produced by national women's development strategies.

The country's assessment report, conducted by the World Bank in 2013, aimed to identify gender disparities and gender equality shortcomings in political participation and in the labor market, including individuals' freedom of choice and access to justice, with the goal of providing the Jordanian government with a framework of potential policies and procedures capable of countering such imbalances, as well as to present political actors and legislators with a stable base for the implementation of plans aimed at achieving greater gender equality. In addition, it was deemed important that partnerships be developed and strengthened with and among government institutions, civil society organizations, and academic entities in Jordan, in a push to enhance cooperation in addressing issues pertaining to gender equality – issues which directly affect community development.

The assessment report on social gender equality also corroborated the widely held belief that progress achieved in human development had not been reflected in an

adequate increase of women's participation in economic, political, and social life. As such, greater focus must be placed, in the context of this assessment, on individuals' freedom of choice and access to justice.

Some additional conclusions were as follows:

- Jordan shows remarkable levels of gender equality in the health and education sectors. The country has also achieved significant progress concerning human resources development over the past three decades, which in turn contributed to improvements in human development indicators at the household level;
- Achievements in the field of human development, as has been said, did not correspond to an increase in the level of women's economic participation, which remains amongst the lowest in the world. This inverted relationship has been widely termed the "social gender paradox", and is particularly sharp and notorious in Jordan;
- The majority of the unemployed consists of lower-class women with low levels of education. However, high unemployment rates were also recorded among the young, as well as more educated groups;
- Gender-based discrimination in the economic structures of employment and production contributes to the further distortion of women's participation in the workforce – female workers have not benefited from the advantages of economic growth over the past decades due to widespread reluctance and, at times, outright refusal, to employ women, across large swathes of the fastest growing, more productive sectors. While one in every four women integrates the workforce, the public sector employs 44% of them. The education and health sectors accounted, respectively, for 38% and 12% of employed women, with female workers accounting for slightly over 50% of employees in these sectors (Survey of the Committee of Experts on the Labor Market in Jordan, 2010);
- Figures show that restrictions imposed on the economic participation of women begin at the educational level, but are also reflected in the means of development of economic incentives, as well as at the level of public opinion, customs, and tradition. In Jordan, there exists no correlation between women's skills and level of education, and those required by the labor market, especially in the private sector. In fact, women seem increasingly inclined towards human sciences, as opposed to natural sciences and technology at large;
- The challenges faced by women thus prevent them from exercising meaningful freedom of choice. These largely stem from, and perpetuate, gender-based discrimination in the application of the legal devices which are meant to counteract the widening of social gaps,

as well as certain social customs which are known to restrict behavior and narrow women's array of choices;

- Regulations and legislation often partly reflect social customs, therefore remaining in constant conflict with the principles of non-discrimination and equality under law, namely perpetuating legal limitations which impact on women's right to choose;
- Social customs play a major role in limiting women's ability to choose and have been known to stretch their influence beyond established legal limits in favor of commonly held ideas pertaining to the traditional social roles of women – which is often claimed to be done to safeguard women's reputations. Social customs and legal restrictions still hinder women's ability to make choices regarding their economic assets, their personal and family lives, and their political participation;
- Economic growth theoretically enhances women's freedom of choice by increasing their control over economic assets. However, there exist numerous obstacles simultaneously depriving them of access to, and control over, said assets, namely in what pertains income, land and estate, inheritance and retirement. Women's exercise of the right to choose is thereby undermined.

In his 2015 study, *Promotion of Entrepreneurial Culture and Initiative Among*

Female Arab Business Owners, Yaghmour sought to shed light on the realities and challenges faced by working Arab women, in general, and in Jordanian society, in particular, namely those arising from societal perceptions of, and restrictions on, women. The study looked into the underlying honor/shame culture, the forms of discrimination women face, the lack of consideration for the impact that circumstances such as pregnancy and motherhood have on working women, and the meagerness of available wages.

Within this area of focus, the study sought to achieve the following: the development and promotion of entrepreneurial culture, and of a better understanding of its role in creating jobs for young adults; the establishment of incentives targeting potential female Arab business owners; and the highlighting of the important role played by small and medium-sized enterprises in the development of labor culture and initiative. In what pertains the study's methodology, a descriptive approach was chosen; among the study's sources were documented statistics, field surveys, and previous studies.

Some of the findings pertained issues such as: societal marginalization hindering women's economic participation; the dominance of honor/shame culture; and the rise in unemployment owing to an uneven demand in labor across the various sectors.

The following recommendations were drawn according to the study's conclusions:

- Emphasize the need for introducing self-employment as an alternative;

- Promote initiative and leadership early on, and in school curricula;
- Move from planning to implementation of measures, which would, at a first stage, call for the identification of unwanted professions, especially those where the demand in labor is high, and strive towards the improvement of the work conditions in those jobs;
- Confront honor/shame culture and progressively delegitimize it;
- Provide counseling services and professional guidance to researchers focusing on the needs of workers, and assist employers in fulfilling their needs in terms of young male and female workers.

A study was also conducted by the Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies, titled *The Reality of Jordanian Women's Economic Participation*, into what has so far been achieved in terms of increasing women's level of participation in economic life. After consideration of a number of key indicators, it was noted that, in spite of strategic plans and policies designed and implemented over the past twenty years in efforts to broaden women's economic and social roles, their levels of economic participation and contributions to the labor market remain modest, and well under expectations. Official figures indicated that the index of economically active women, i.e., the percentage of women over 15 engaged in the workforce, was still very low in 2009, standing at about 14%, compared to 65.2% for males. Putting these

figures into perspective with the broader realities of Arab and Third World countries, where women's economic participation rates reached 20%, and further comparing national figures with those registered in developed countries, which averaged 50%, Jordan's progress in these matters was shown to be insufficient. In addition, figures released by the Social Security Corporation in 2008 show that women accounted for 25% of the total number of beneficiaries.

A survey on employment opportunities in the Jordanian economy in the first half of 2009 further confirms the decline in women's participation in economic life and the labor market, with studies indicating that in regards to newly created job opportunities, only 19% were claimed by women, with the remaining 81% going to men.

Considering the fact that women account for a third of workers in the public sector, which makes up half of the female workforce, the percentage of female employment in the private sector is dwarfed in comparison.

Furthermore, it should be underlined that the unemployment rate among Jordanian women constituted almost double that of men in 2009, reaching 20.3%, whereas male unemployment was estimated to be around 10.5%. Women in Jordan face disproportionate challenges in the labor market compared to men, considering their similar levels of enrollment in higher education – according to 2009 figures, women made up 51% of undergraduate students in various

universities. Indeed, women's low levels of participation in the formal private sector, in small enterprises, as well as institutions in the informal sector, seem to stem from the failure of these sectors to provide working conditions which suit the circumstances and needs of women.

Further discrepancies have also been registered regarding wages, where the gap between genders reached 38 JOD a month, with the average monthly wage among men in Jordan amounting to 315 JOD, to an average of 277 JOD for women. The gap was shown to be particularly wide in the private sector, where the average monthly wage among women was 66 JOD lower than that of men, whereas this figure dropped to 27 JOD in the public sector. In addition, women were shown to suffer discrimination in regards to promotions and training courses – both those conducted in Jordan and in foreign countries.

The weak participation of women in economic life is one of the fundamental obstacles faced by the Jordanian national economy. On the one hand, it implies a diminished production capacity, which is reflected in a slower development of the national economy; on the other hand, it increases the dependency rate in Jordanian society, where family providers have, on average, four dependents – one of the highest rates in the world.

It should be noted that the rates of female economic participation in Jordan are affected by women's social situation, number of children and their ages, and the availability of services

vital to working women, particularly nurseries. The size of the female workforce is also largely affected by women's ages and their marital status, with the rates of withdrawal from the labor market rising in proportion with increased numbers of married women, and their number of children. In addition to this, employing women, especially married women, is perceived to be costly, in the sense that the employer is, for instance, required to bear the costs of maternity leaves. As such, employers are not uncommonly reluctant to employ women.

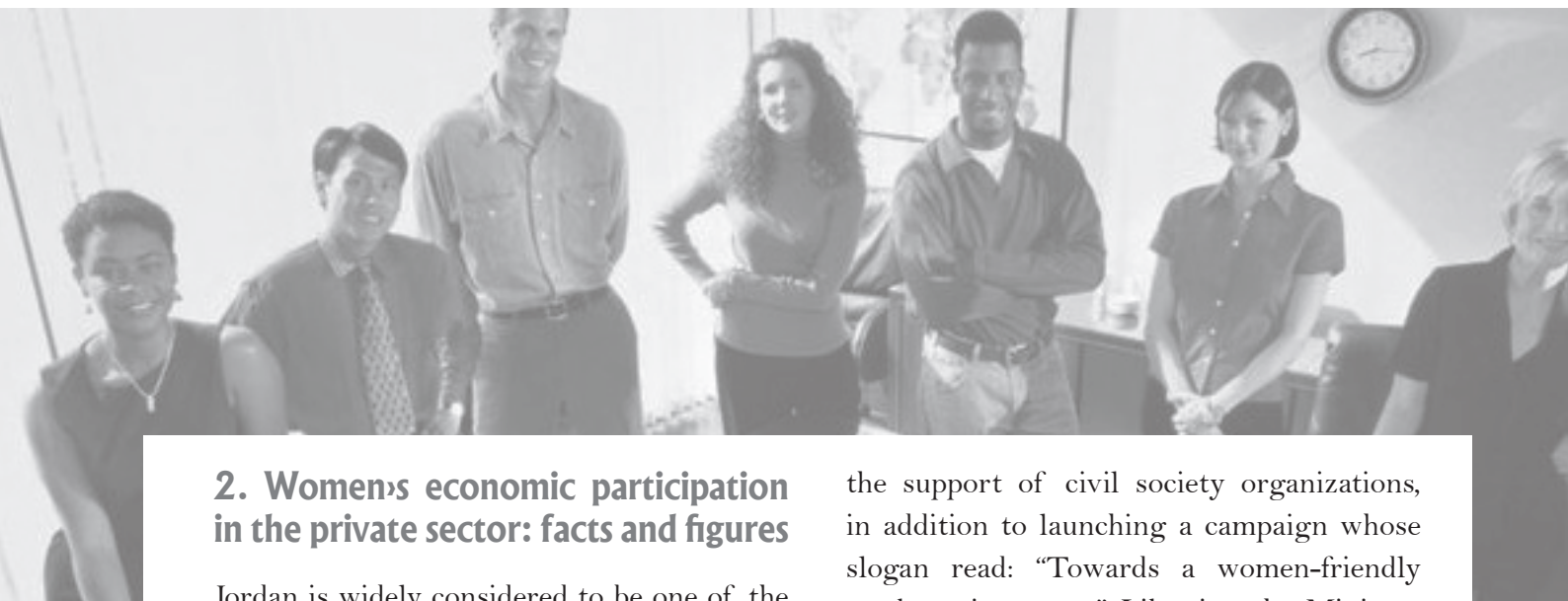
Yet, Jordanian legislations concerning the work of women are considered to be among the most advanced in the region, and even in the world at large: they are largely in conformity with international labor standards; women have a right to fully paid, 10-week maternity leave, as well as a daily 1-hour period for breastfeeding; businesses employing over 20 married women are required to provide a suitable place for their children, should there be more than 10 who are under the age of four; there are mechanisms in place to prevent pregnant women from being fired starting from the sixth month of pregnancy up until completion of maternity leave; and, finally, pregnant women are protected against being assigned stations deemed hazardous or harmful to their health. In theory, then, Jordanian labor law strives towards gender equality in the work place and job market.

The study's recommendations are as follows:

- Reassess legislations, so as to overcome the obstacles facing women's integration

into economic life and the labor market. Among the most urgent reconsiderations is the revision of social security law, and establish a special fund dedicated to covering the costs of maternity and breastfeeding leaves, in order to assist employers in bearing such costs. In addition, labor law should be revised in order to explicitly demand gender non-discrimination in what concerns wages, and to impose a quota (minimum percentage) of required female workers in the private sector. Finally, the role of labor inspectors must be strengthened, in a push to better protect working men and women from violations;

- Intensify campaigns encouraging women to engage in the labor market, as well as motivating employers to hire them;
- Conduct a periodic review of the various strategies and programs aimed at strengthening the role of women in economic life and their presence in the labor market, both those conducted by government agencies and by civil society organizations. This is deemed necessary in order to ensure not only a better protection of women's rights, but also the correct implementation of such policies.



2. Women's economic participation in the private sector: facts and figures

Jordan is widely considered to be one of the most advanced Middle Eastern countries, in spite of its lack of natural resources – which, in turn, is what prompted focused investment in human capital to push towards the country's transition into a free market economy.

In view of this endeavor, government figures realized the importance of increasing women's participation in development by implementing a number of national initiatives aimed at supporting and increasing their presence in the labor market – one such initiative was the creation of the committee for wage equality in 2011, by the Ministry of Labor, in partnership with the Jordanian National Committee for Women's Affairs.

With respect to the provision of nurseries, the Ministry of Labor launched a media campaign regarding the application of Article 72 of the 2013 labor law regarding work in the private sector. The Ministry addressed the issue by developing partnerships and seeking

the support of civil society organizations, in addition to launching a campaign whose slogan read: "Towards a women-friendly work environment." Likewise, the Ministry sponsored the launching of the "Stand with Your Teacher" campaign, carried out in support of teachers working in the private sector. The campaign was launched in collaboration with the Teachers' Syndicate, the Social Security Corporation, and a number of civil society organizations.

It is noteworthy that one of the projects included in the national strategy for employment for the 2011-2020 period proved the effectiveness of such programs in employing large numbers of men and women. Accordingly, the Ministry of Labor has launched a number of other such programs, including the Productivity Branches Transfer Project (Satellite), which aimed to create employment opportunities among women in poverty-stricken sections of society, and to provide training and prequalifying programs for telecommunications and IT graduates. The Ministry is likewise currently running

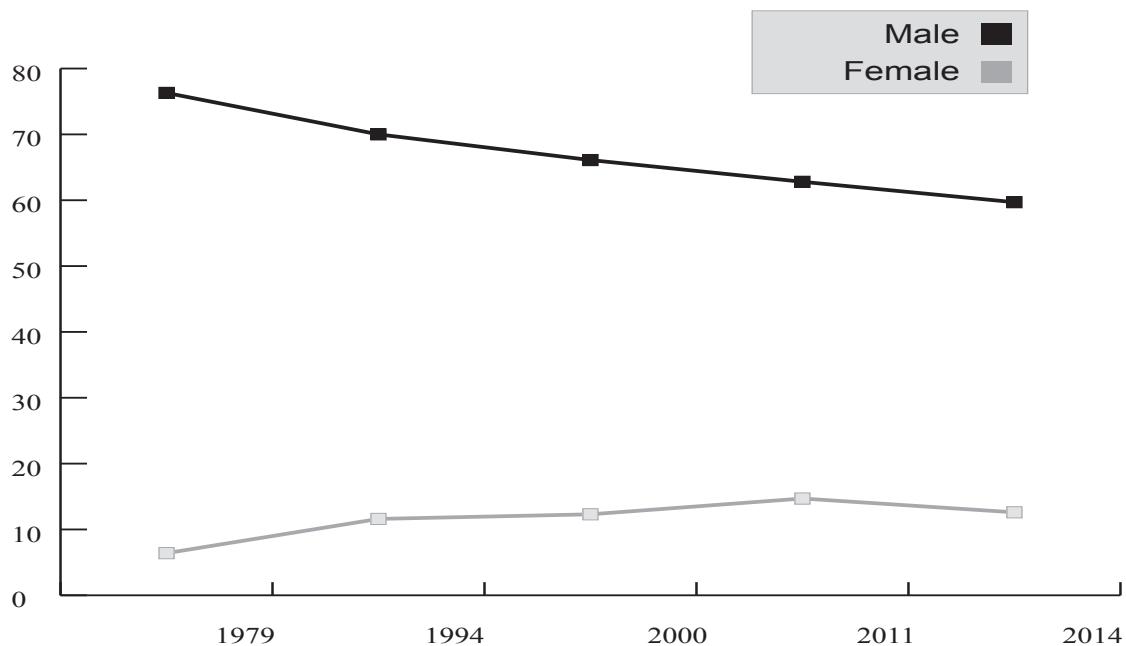
a number of self-employment programs for women in the provinces (Akikur, 2015).

In spite of what was mentioned above regarding the various national initiatives aimed at the economic empowerment of women, the question remains as to how the economic status of Jordanian women and men, and their contribution, may help to achieve the Jordanian vision of transitioning towards a free market economy. In order to provide an answer to this question, an analysis must first be conducted into the reality of women in the labor market and the challenges they face,

which stunt progress in this matter.

Data (charted in Figure 1) provided in the Employment and Unemployment Survey issued by the Department of Statistics in 2014 suggests that the economic activity rates among males were twelve times as high as those among females in 1979 (76.3% to 6.4%), whereas by 2014 the gap had been straightened, with male economic participation rates being only four times as large as those among females.

Figure 1: The relative distribution of economic participation rates according to gender (1979 - 2014)



Political events, economic stagnation, lack of harmony between education outputs and labor market requirements, high poverty and unemployment rates, as well as the preservation of the traditional roles of women in the household and concerning daily child care led to a limited involvement of women in the labor market, compared to that of men. This phenomenon thus requires in-depth study and research.

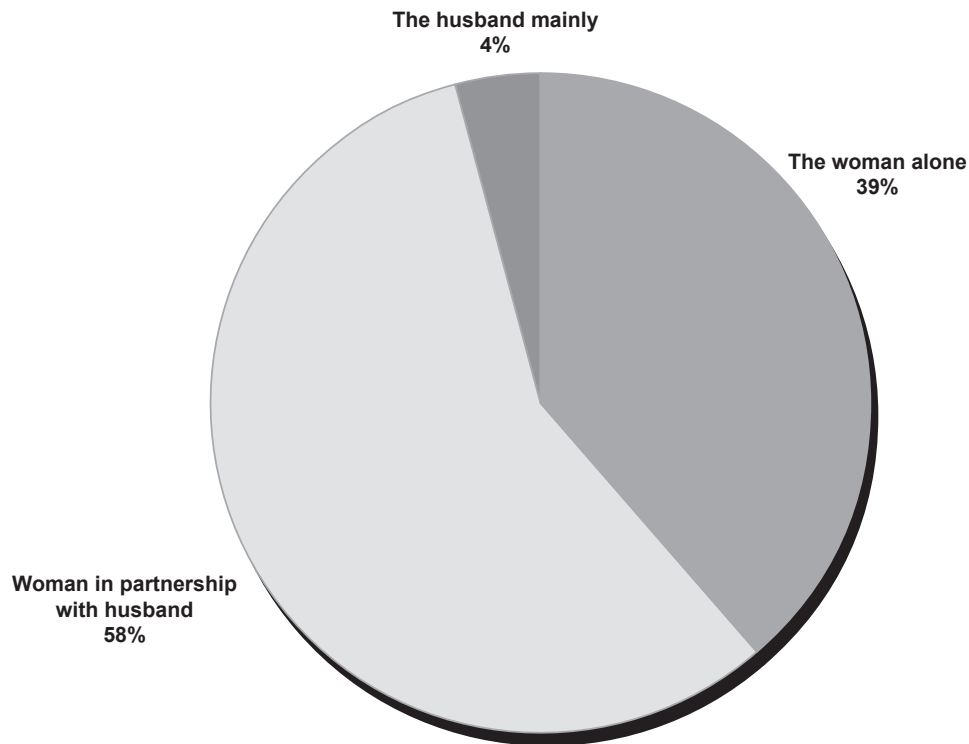
It is worth mentioning that the economic role of Jordanian women does not weigh on the economy as much as that of men. This, however, does not mean that Jordanian women have contributed insignificantly to the labor market, especially in the education sector, where the majority of working women are employed. The education sector attracted approximately 41.8% of the female workforce, whereas the health and social services sectors accounted for about 15.3% of working women. Women's tendency towards these sectors manifested itself in more substantial increases in participation in these fields than those among men.

The results of the Employment and Unemployment Survey between 2012

and 2014, released by the Department of Statistics, showed that over 45% of working women earned wages below 299 JOD per month. This situation has not undergone any substantial changes, in spite of the restructuring of public sector salaries and the increasing of the minimum wage from 150 JOD to 190 JOD in 2012. The latest figures show also that women's possession of property remains largely at a standstill.

In addition, results drawn from the Population and Family Health Survey for 2007 and 2012 (as shown in Figure 2) showed that only 39% of the presently married women whose work produces financial returns are allowed to manage and dispose of their income independently. In other words, only one third of working married women detain control over the product of their work. In the remaining two thirds of cases, either all financial decisions are the sole prerogative of the husband, or the couple manage the woman's earnings together. This certainly sheds some light on the value placed by women in their work, and on their possible willingness to stop working, whether by choice or as a result of external pressure

Figure 2: Proportional distribution of married women aged 15 to 49 who received cash payoff in exchange for their work, according to who decides how the cash is spent



The woman's power of decision was shown to vary according to her level of education. Results pertaining to Population and Family Health in 2014 (as shown in Table 1) pointed to this fact. Women with elementary or lower levels of education were less interested in making autonomous decisions regarding how

their income is spent (32%). In addition, 38% of women in the 5-lower wellbeing index reported deciding mostly autonomously how to spend their income, compared to 47% of working women in the 5-upper wellbeing index.

Table 1: Proportional distribution of married women aged 15 to 49 who receive cash payoff in exchange for their work, according to the person who decides how the cash is spent

Basic characteristics	The woman alone	Jointly with the husband	The husband mainly	Total
Educational level				
Elementary	32.4	57.8	9.8	100.0
Preparatory	53.4	43.5	3.1	100.0
Secondary	44.2	52.6	3.2	100.0
Higher than secondary	37.0	59.7	3.3	100.0
5-Wellbeing index				
Lower	38.4	52.8	8.8	100.0
Second	38.0	58.8	3.2	100.0
Middle	33.5	63.9	2.9	100.0
Fourth	33.3	63.9	2.9	100.0
Upper	47.4	49.8	2.8	100.0
Total	38.8	57.6	3.6	100.0

However, economic circumstances and the rise of living costs may have prompted women to seek employment in order to participate in bearing the family's financial burden, which could once have been borne by a single working adult. In addition, the government policy of public spending cuts, which included wages, carried with it a reduction of the government's contribution to the creation of new jobs. The number of jobs available in the public sector – one favored by female workers and more protective of their rights – was thereby diminished.

Such issues were highlighted by the results of the annual report on newly created jobs conducted by the Department of Statistics. The

study concluded that the number of jobs created by the public sector in 2014 did not exceed 17,158, to 32,777 jobs created by the private sector – 52% of total created jobs in 2014.

This might indicate a rising trend among women, who seem to be increasingly inclined towards engaging in the private sector, in non-traditional activities such as transformative industries, banking, and tourism – something which was once considered unacceptable. If proven accurate, these developments would come hand in hand with the recent changes made to Social Security, which enable it to support part of the costs of maternity leaves, thus encouraging employers in the private sector to hire more women. Such changes,

however, have not yet yielded tangible results, as figures remain largely unchanged.

The following sections will be dedicated to four major economic sectors whose nature commonly conflicts with the traditional conceptions of women’s roles. An analysis will be conducted into women’s participation in these sectors, and the realities they face.

Results obtained from statistical analysis have shown that women face a number of challenges in the aforementioned sectors, from the difficulty in reconciling work and family life, to the wage gap between genders, and the scarcity of opportunities. These are, however, important sectors at the national level and should therefore be made increasingly capable of attracting female workers as an essential human resource for their growth and progress.

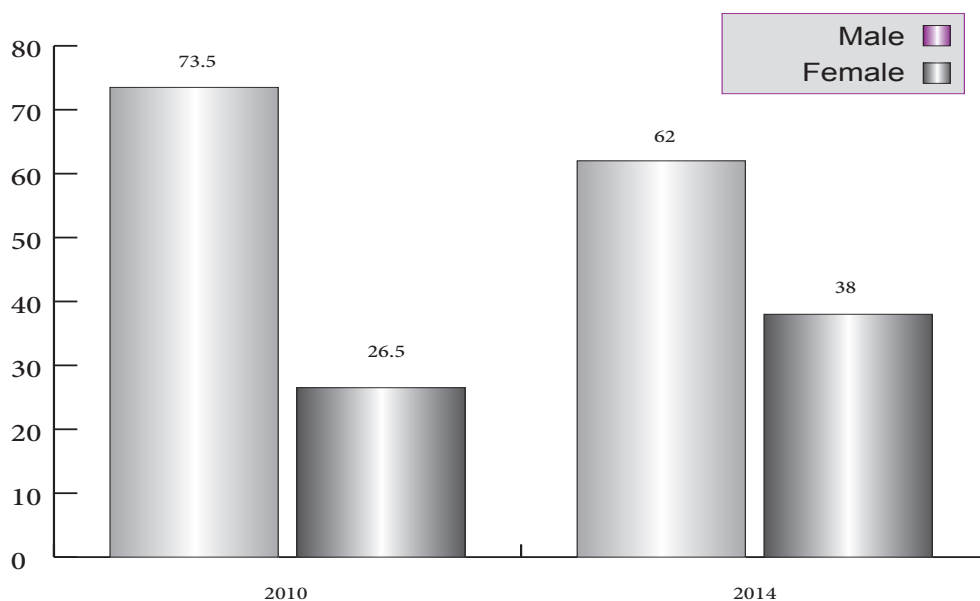
Statistics have also shed light on the scarcity of woman entrepreneurs in these sectors, where most employers are men. This hinders the promotion of greater gender equality and better work conditions for women, which often require challenging the male-dominated culture of the job market.

3.1 Transformative industries

The transformative industries sector achieved a 10.2% growth in 2014, in relation to 2010 fixed prices. Its contribution to GDP, also at fixed market prices, totaled 16.7% in 2014.

Results of the survey conducted into newly created jobs showed that 38% of jobs created in the private transformative industries sector were taken by females – a steep increase from 2010 figures, when this percentage stood at 26.5% (see Figure 1).

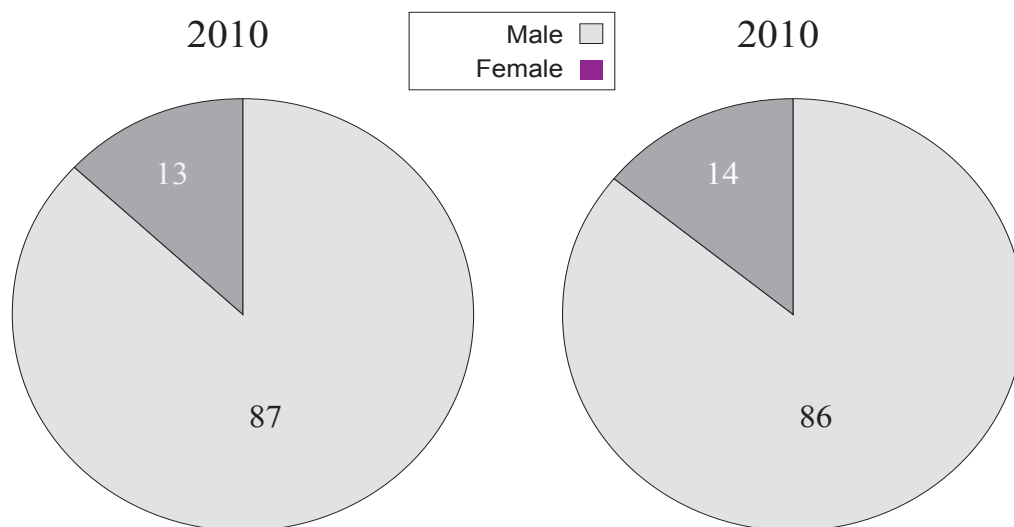
Figure 1: Proportional distribution of workers claiming new job positions in the private sectors field of transformative industries, according to gender (2010 - 2014)



According to the Department of Statistics' annual employment survey, however, the percentage of privately employed females in the transformative industries sector did not

suffer any significant changes, with women making up 14% of the sector's workforce in 2010 and 13% in 2013 (see Figure 2).

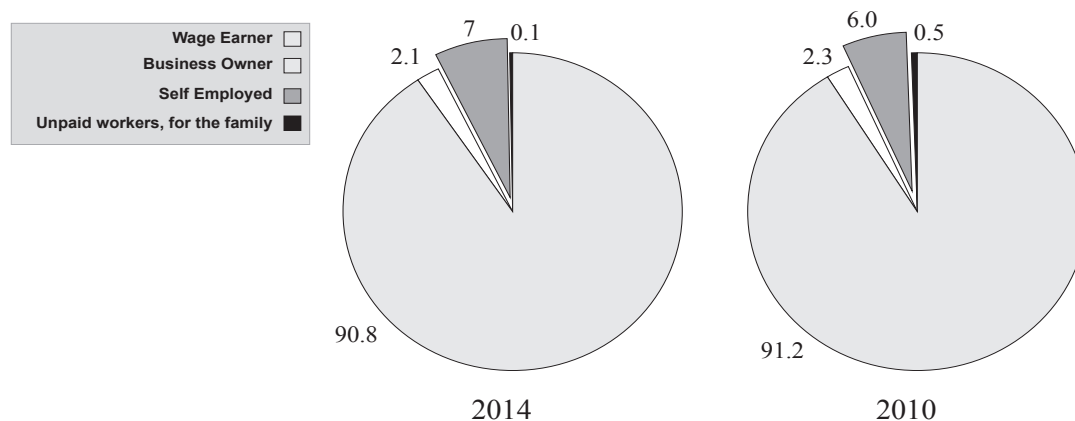
Figure 2: Proportional distribution of workers in the private sector's field of transformative industries, according to gender (2010 – 2013)



Furthermore, results of the Employment and Unemployment Survey carried out by the Department of Statistics have illustrated how the majority of privately employed

females working in transformative industries – roughly 90% – were wage earners in 2010 and 2014 (see Figure 3).

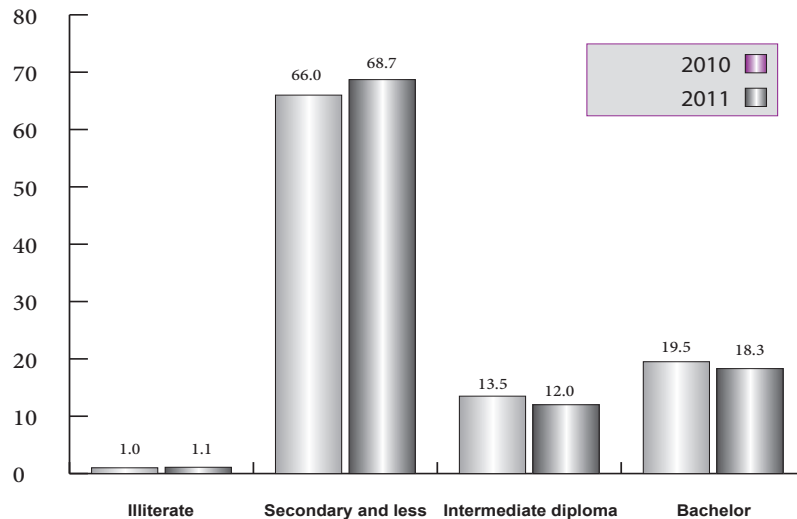
Figure 3: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the transformative industries sector in Jordan according to the position held (2010 – 2014)



In regards to educational levels, the results of the survey revealed that the majority of female workers privately employed in the transformative industries sector held

the equivalent of secondary education and below, with one out of every five holding a university degree (see Figure 4).

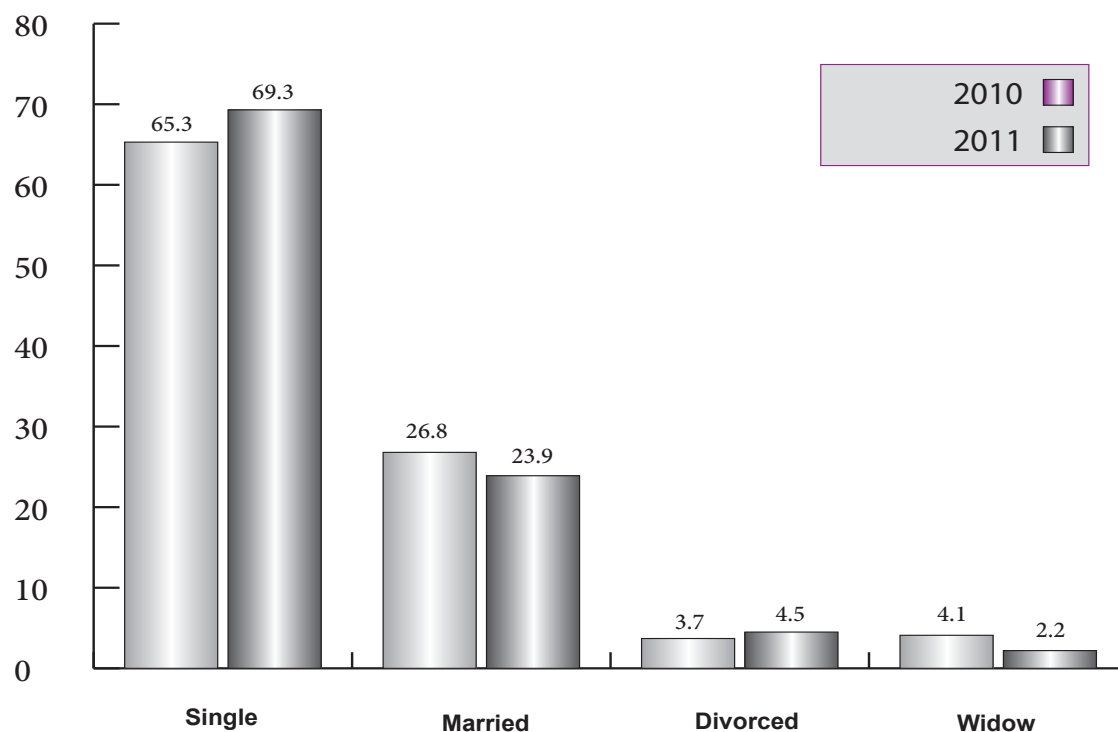
Figure 4: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the transformative industries sector according to level of education (2010 - 2014)



Concerning female workers' marital status, results showed that two out of every three privately employed women in this sector have remained unmarried, whereas a quarter have married (see Figure 5). These figures

may well owe to the fact that work in the transformative industries is remarkably incompatible with family life and obligations, especially in terms of work hours.

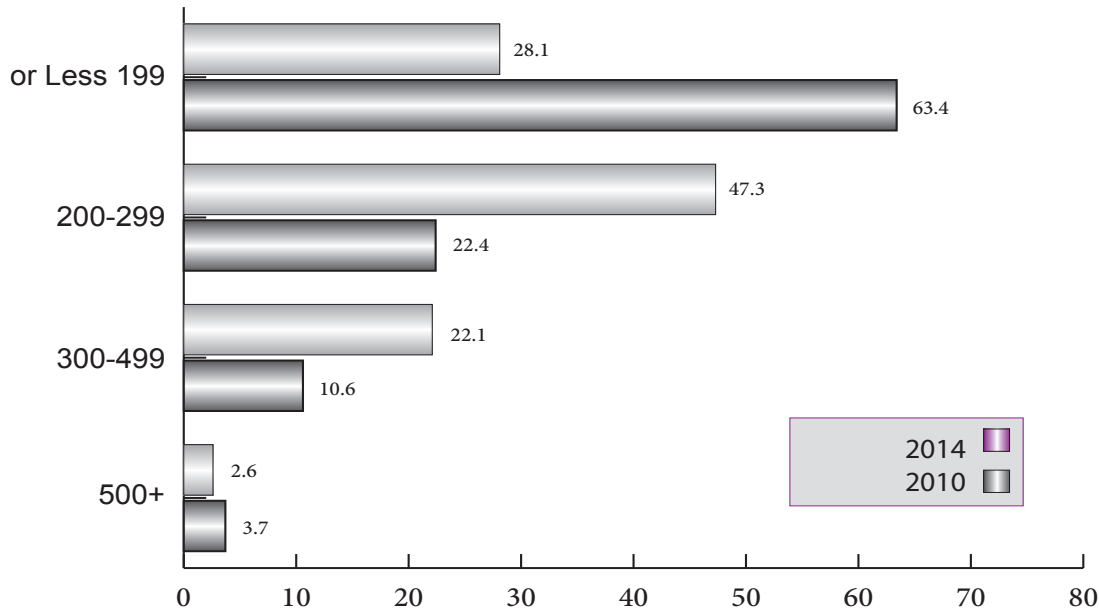
Figure 5: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the transformative industries sector, according to marital status (2010 - 2014)



The same survey also helped to shed light on the monthly incomes of women in this sector, 63.4% of which earned less than 199 JOD a month in 2010, with this percentage having dropped to 28.1% by 2014. The percentage of women earning between 200 and 299 JOD a month, on the other hand, rose from 22.4%

in 2010 to 47.3% in 2014, as illustrated in Figure 6. Finally, the percentage of women earning between 300 and 499 JOD more than doubled during this period. With women's wages in this sector averaging 269 JOD, however, it remains, financially, a rather unattractive option for women seeking work.

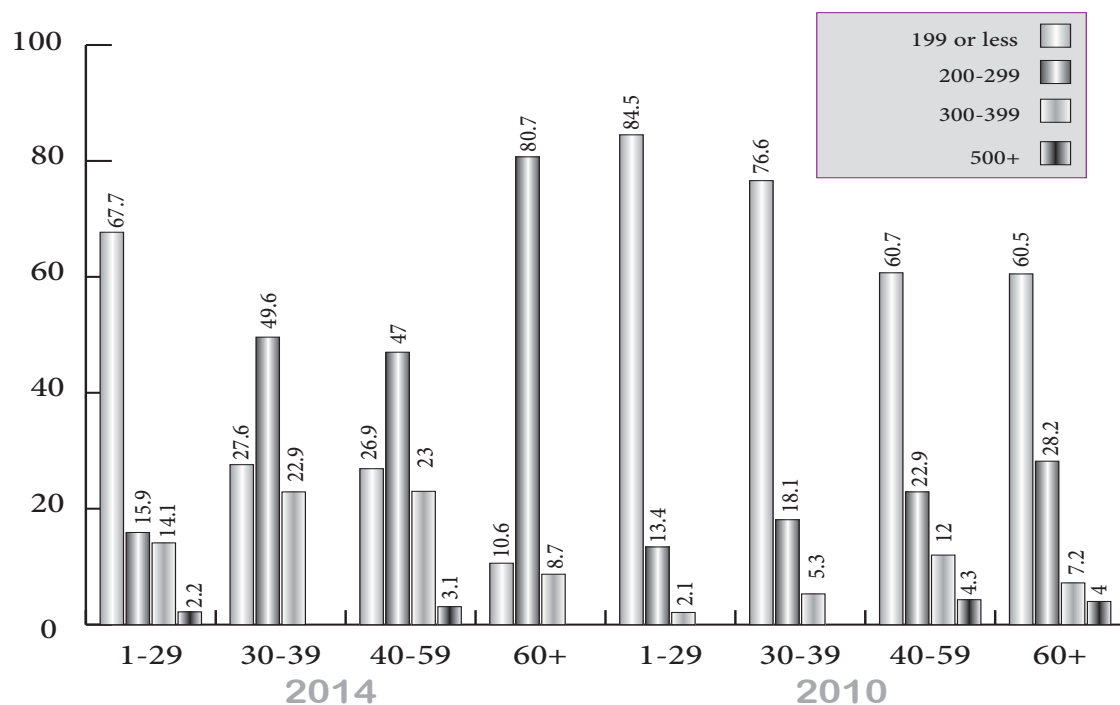
Figure 6: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the transformative industries sector according to income groups (in JOD) (2010 - 2014)



Upon cross-examination of work hours and income, in 2010, it was concluded, as shown in Figure 7, that regardless of the number of actual weekly work hours, most women collected a monthly income of 199 JOD or less. By 2014, results showed that two thirds of women engaged in transformative industries who worked under 30 weekly

hours still collected salaries averaging 199 JOD and less, whereas the majority of those working 30+ hours per week earned between 200 and 299 JOD, including 80.7% of those claiming to work 60 or more weekly hours. These figures strongly indicate that violations of labor law have been committed, namely regarding overtime payment.

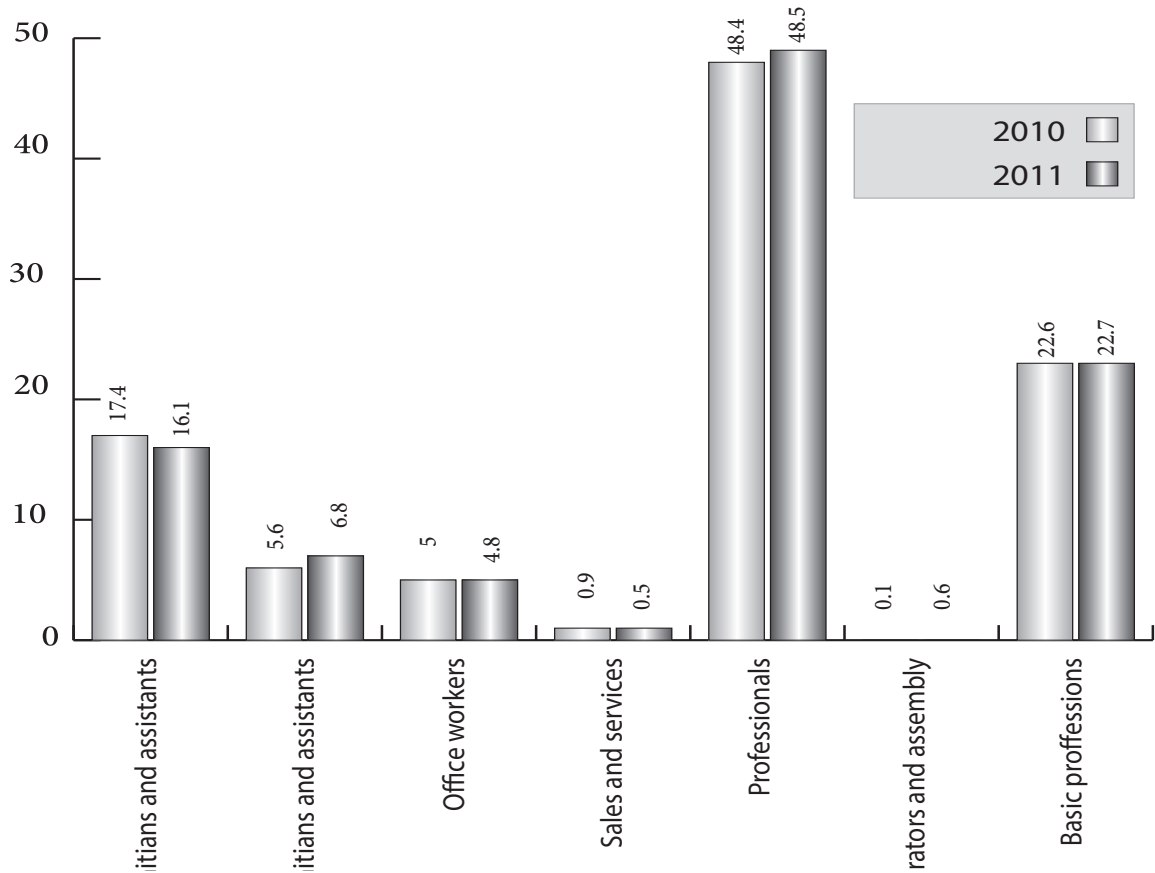
Figure 7: Distribution of privately employed Jordanian women working in the transformative industries sector, according to monthly income and actual weekly working hours (in JOD) (2010 - 2014)



Further data showed that roughly half of female workers engaged in transformative industries were craftswomen, and that one in every five held entry-level positions (see Figure 8). However, seeing as entry-level positions are culturally and socially perceived to be more adequate for women, female workers are often more encourage to engage

in such professions. It should also be noted that only a very small percentage of female workers in the industrial sector work with machinery, in assembly, or in sales. Women's reluctance towards working in production lines further impacts on work environment and the community's perception of female factory workers.

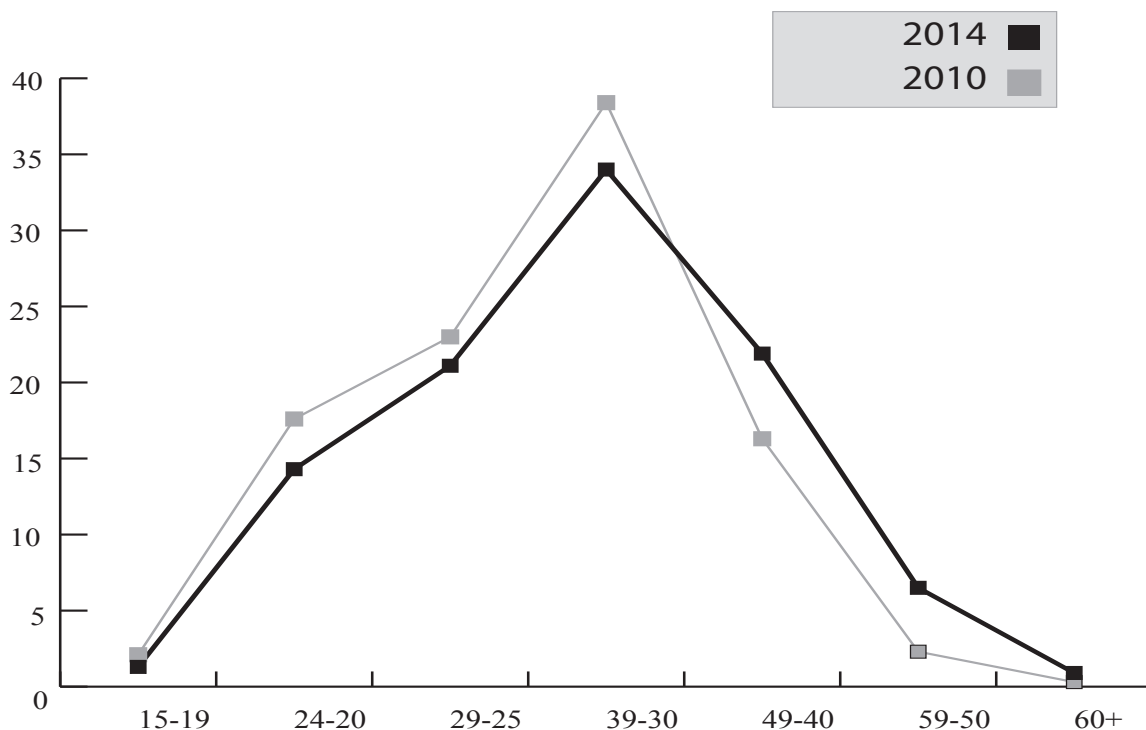
Figure 8: Proportional distribution of privately employed women in the transformative industry sector according to the nature of their work (2010 - 2014)



In regard to age groups, the data represented in Figure 9 showed that one in every three female workers in this sector fell within the 30-39- age group in both years, with roughly

22% of workers being aged between 25 and 29. Strikingly few workers were shown to fall within the 15-19- and 60+ age groups.

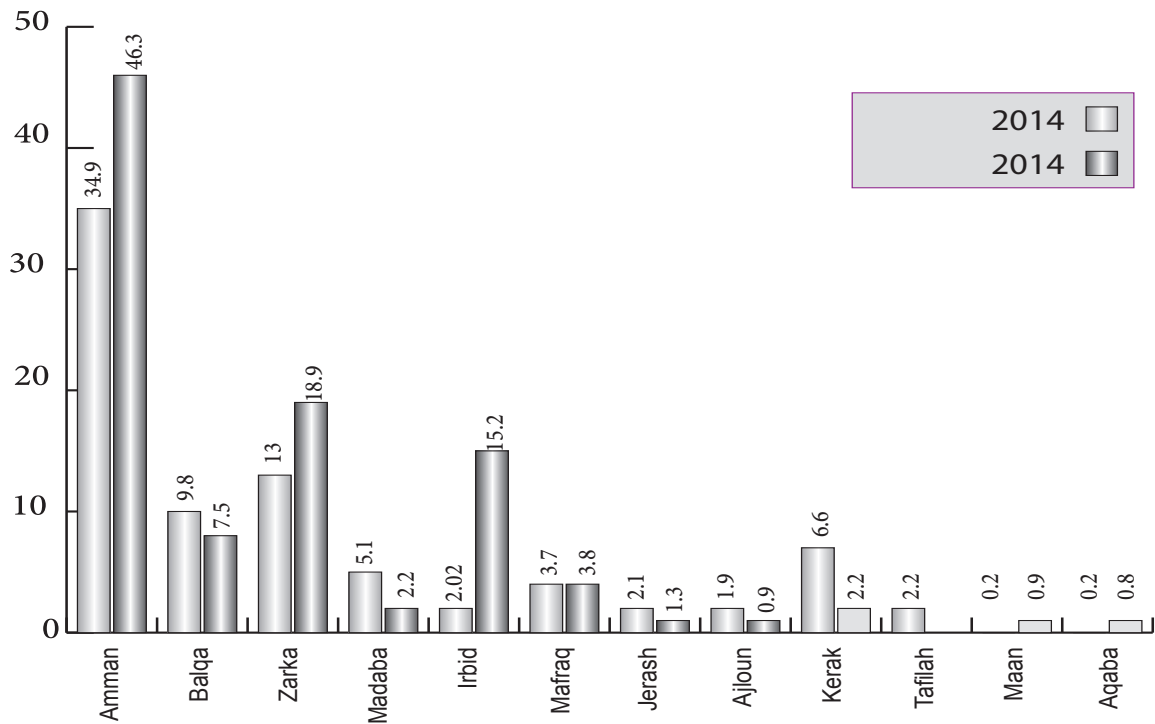
Figure 9: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the transformative industries sector according to age group (2010 - 2014)



In terms of geographical distribution (Figure 10), it was shown that the highest percentage of privately employed female workers were employed in the country's capital, Amman, followed by those employed in Irbid and Zarqa. These figures appear to be linked to the strong presence of industrial infrastructures in the cities' surroundings. A particularly high percentage of female workers was shown to

be employed in the Karak governorate in 2014 – a figure which has more than tripled since 2010. This may be owed to the emergence of new industrial ventures in the highly industrialized city, as well as to the efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Labor towards promoting female employment in the region.

Figure 10: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women working in the transformative industries sector according to geographical area (2010 - 2014)



Gender gap size is an important ringing stone for progress in economic equality, insofar as it reflects the differences between the amounts men and women are paid within the same sector, and often the same profession.

More specifically, a diminishing wage gap between genders is a powerful indicator

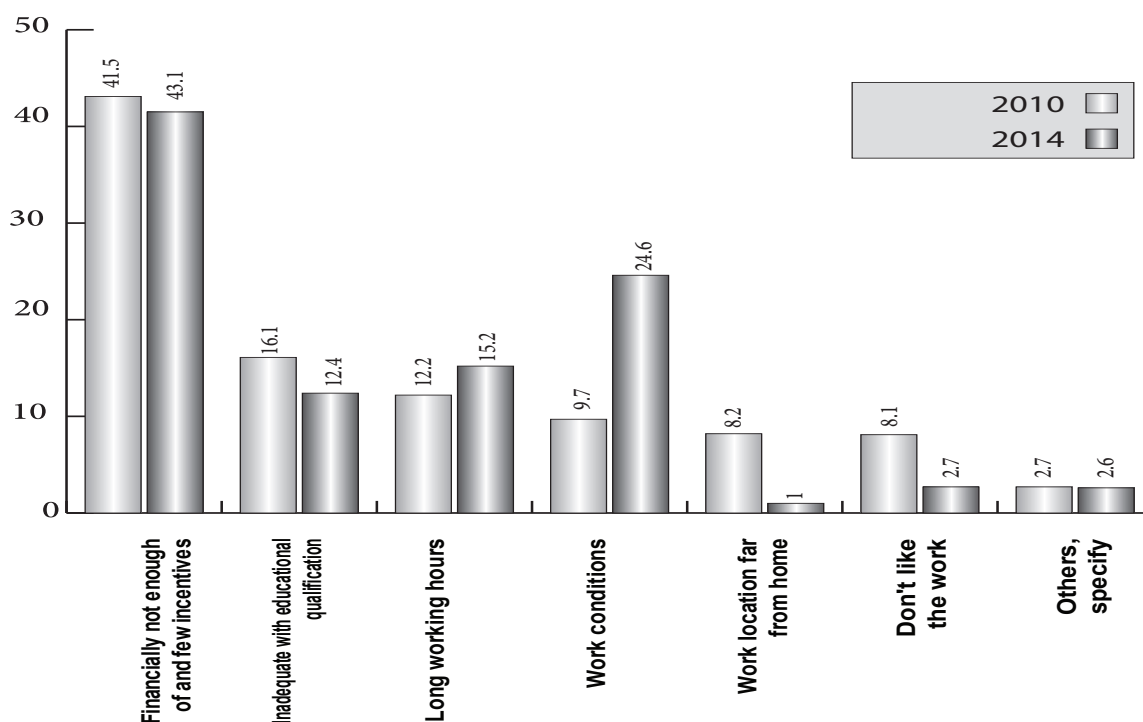
of progress towards economic equality. Now, although this gap may be measured in different ways, the most common method consists in calculating and comparing monthly and hourly wages. In Jordan, figures show that, between 2010 and 2014, this gap significantly decreased.

Table 1: Hourly and monthly wage gap (in JOD) for workers in the transformative industry (2010 - 2013)

Year	Average hourly rate		Average monthly wage		Wage gap	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2013	1.6	1.2	372	269	24	28
2010	1.4	0.9	515	185	59	42

In addition to these figures, it is to be noted that, as shown in Figure 11, the majority of female workers who wish to hold a different job feel this way due to financial insecurity – factories often don't encourage or promote career advancement, thus holding no promises of improved income. Yet, the percentage of

female workers in this sector who quit their jobs due to unsatisfactory working conditions dropped from 25%, in 2010, to 10% in 2014. In contrast, the percentage of female workers quitting their jobs alleging incompatibilities with their qualifications rose from 12.4% to 16.2% within the same period.

Figure 11: Proportional distribution privately employed Jordanian women in the transformative industries sector according to motives for wishing to switch jobs (2010 - 2014)


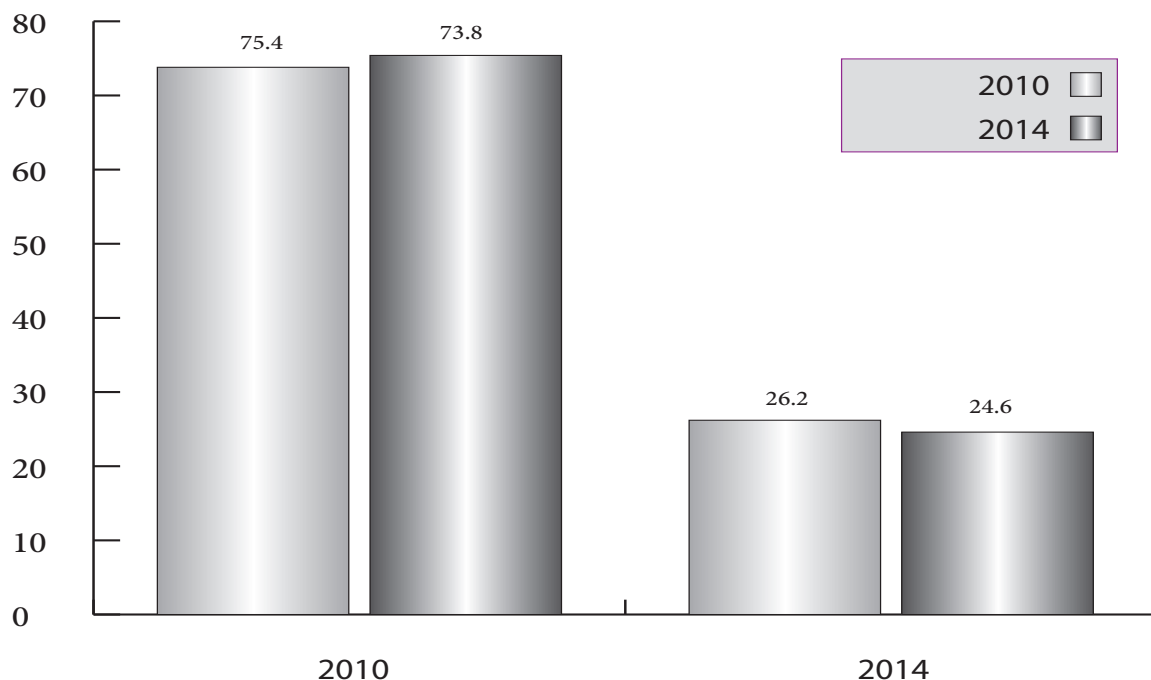
3.2. Finance and insurance

This sector had grown by 23.1% in 2014, in comparison with 2010 fixed prices, with its contributions totaling 10% of GDP.

Results of the survey on newly created jobs

in the showed that, in the private sector, women claimed roughly one quarter of new job placements in financial and insurance activities, with men claiming the remaining three quarters (see Figure 1 below).

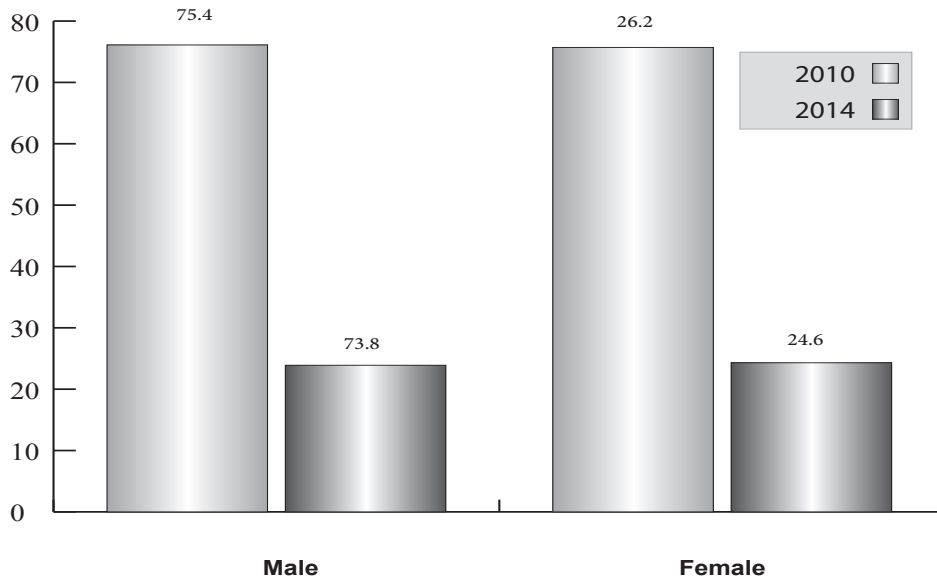
Figure 1: Proportional distribution of workers claiming new job positions in the private sectors field of transformative industries, according to gender (2010 - 2014)



In turn, the employment and unemployment survey showed that the percentage of female workers privately employed in the financial and insurance sectors did not suffer any

significant changes between 2010 and 2014, with one of every four workers in the sector being female (see Figure 2).

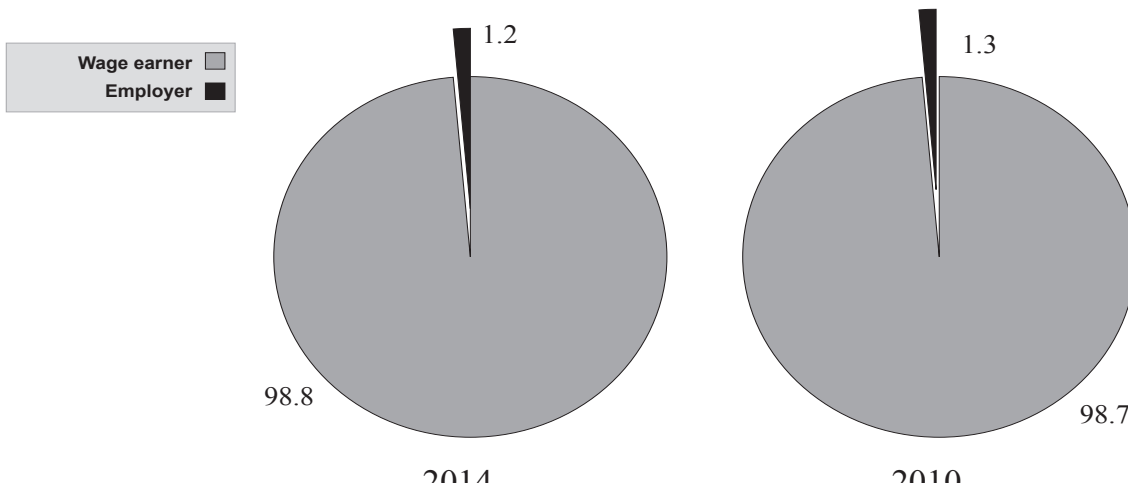
Figure 2: Proportional distribution of workers in the field of finance and insurance in the private sector, according to gender (2010 - 2014)



The same survey showed also that the majority of privately employed females in the finance and insurance services sector were

wage earners – a number which accounted for roughly 99% of the sector's workforce in both years (see Figure 3).

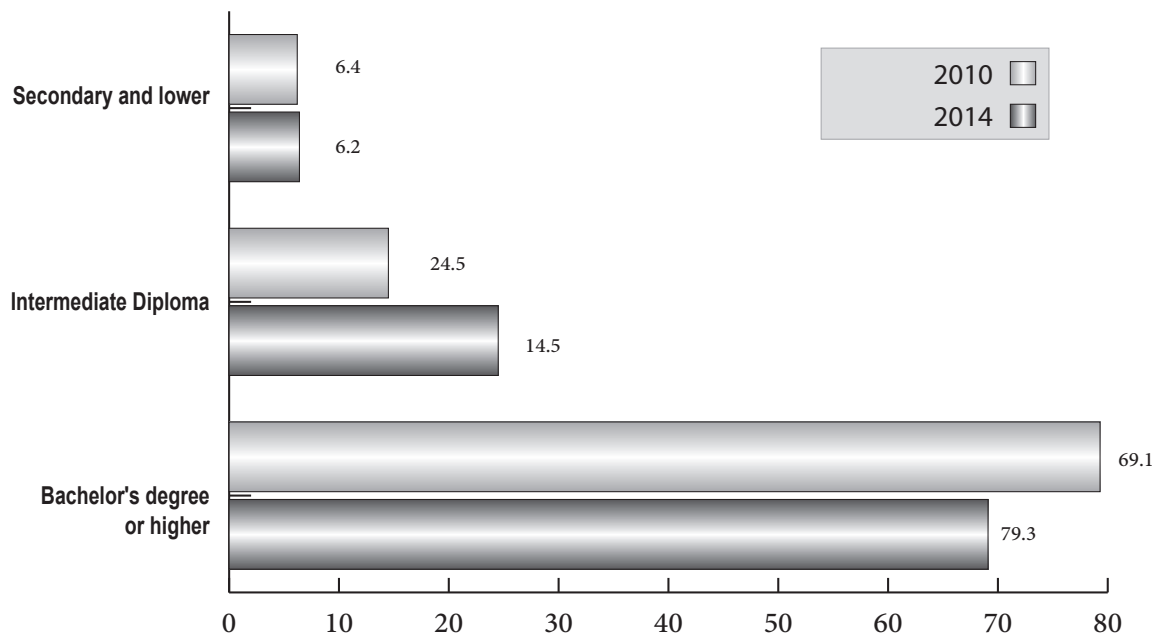
Figure 3: Proportional distribution of created jobs in the private sector financial and insurance activity by work status 2010 - 2014



Regarding workers' levels of education, the survey showed that most privately employed female workers in the finance and insurance sector held a bachelor's degree or higher

(see Figure 4). It is also noteworthy that the percentage of female workers holding intermediate diplomas decreased by 10 percentage points in the 2010- 2014 period.

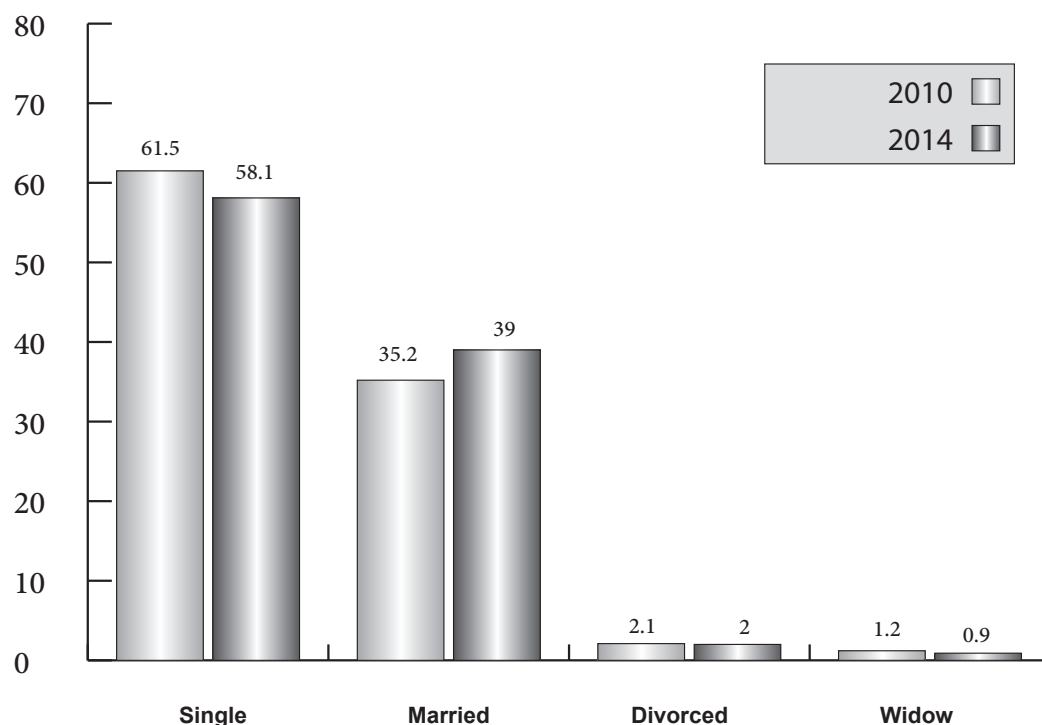
Figure 4: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector according to level of education (2010- 2014)



In terms of marital status, the employment and unemployment survey concluded, as shown in Figure 5, that over half of female

workers in the target sector were single, whereas two fifths were married.

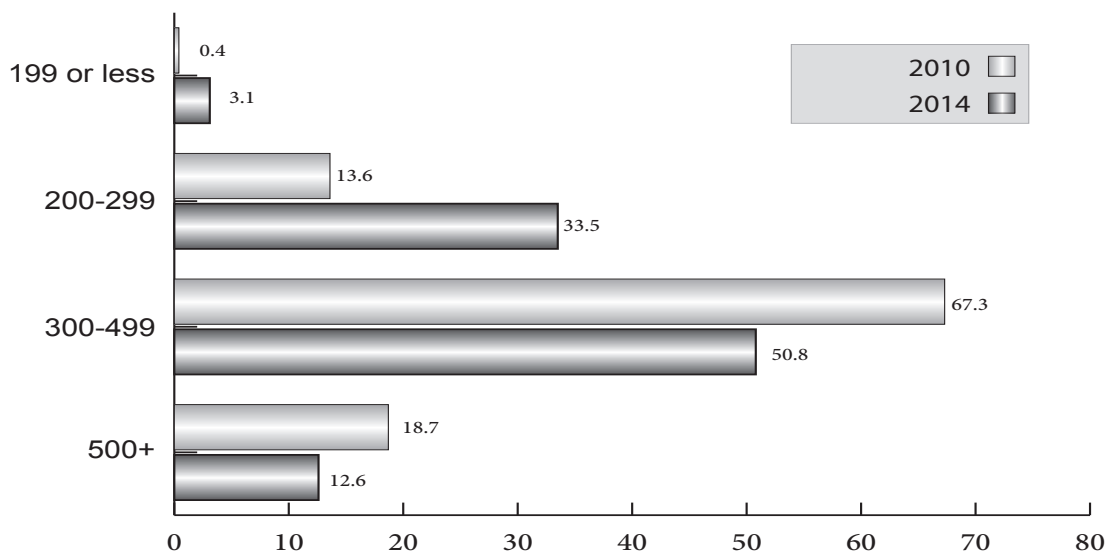
Figure 5: Proportional distribution privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector according to marital status (2010-2014)



The survey's results pointed to substantial variations in monthly income among female workers in the sector, with the percentage of female workers earning less than 199 JOD per month dropping from 3.1% in 2010 to 0.4% in 2014. Tangible change was also shown to have occurred in the number of female workers earning between 200 and

299 JOD, which dropped from 33.5% to 13.6% within the same period. In contrast with these drops, the percentages of female workers earning between 300 and 499 JOD, on the one hand, and over JOD 500, on the other, increased by 17% and 6%, respectively, in the 2010-2014 period (see Figure 6).

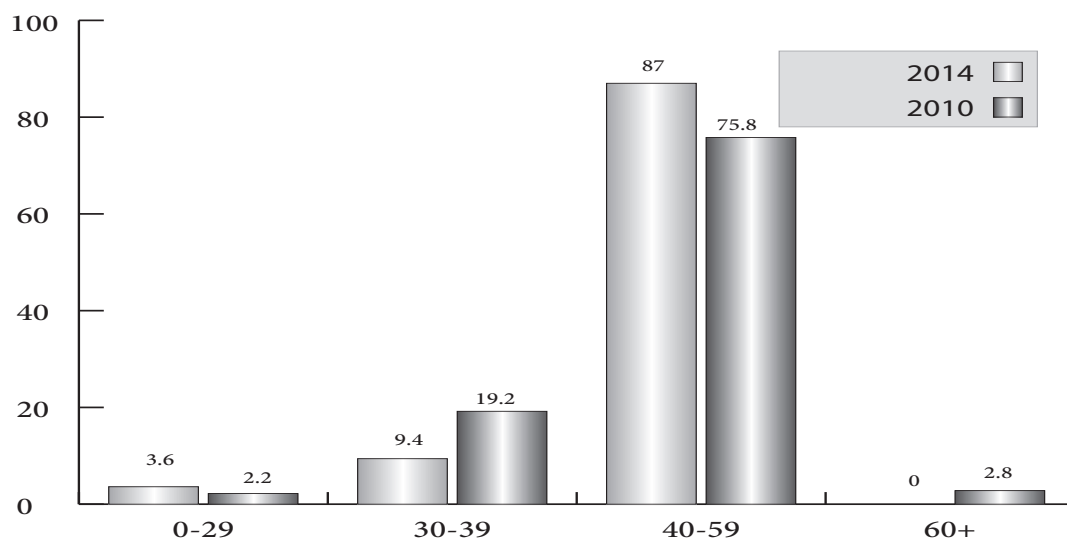
Figure 6: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector according to income (in JOD) (2010 - 2014)



In terms of actual weekly work hours, the survey concluded that the highest percentage of female workers in the sector worked between 40 and 59 weekly hours between

2010 and 2014 (see Figure 7). It is, however, worth mentioning, that in 2014 no women in this sector claimed to work over 60 weekly hours.

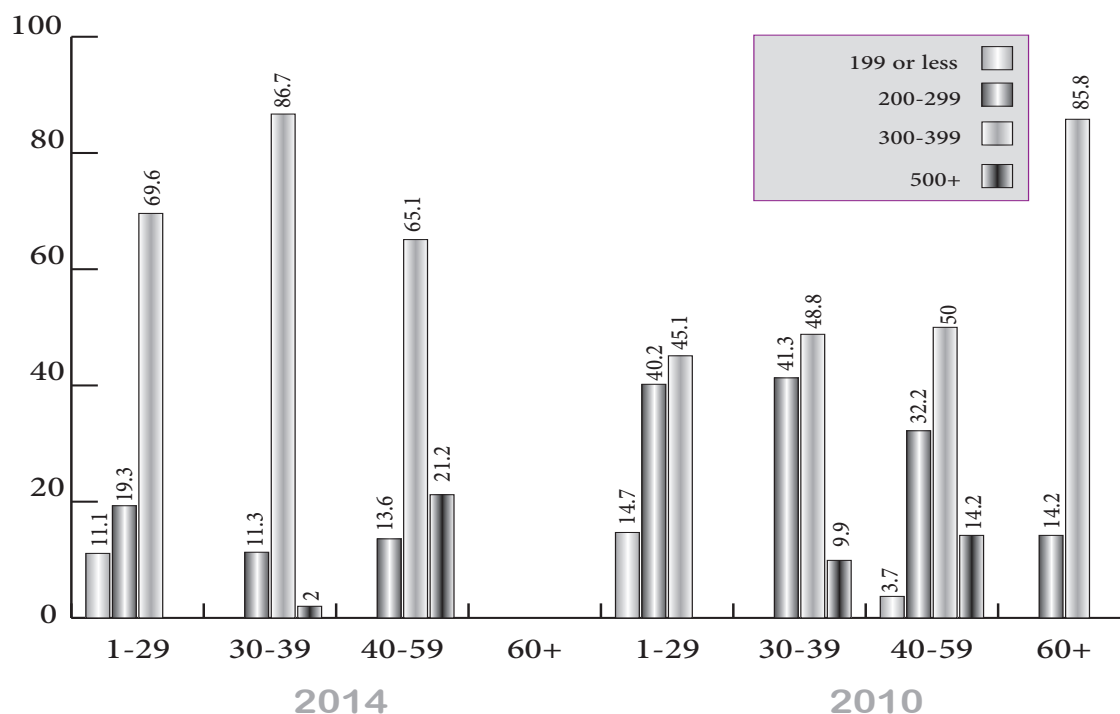
Figure 7: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector according to actual weekly work hours (2010 - 2014)



Upon examination of actual weekly working hours against income groups, as set forth in Figure 8, it is concluded that the majority of

female Jordanian workers earned between 300 and 499 JOD, regardless of their number of weekly work hours.

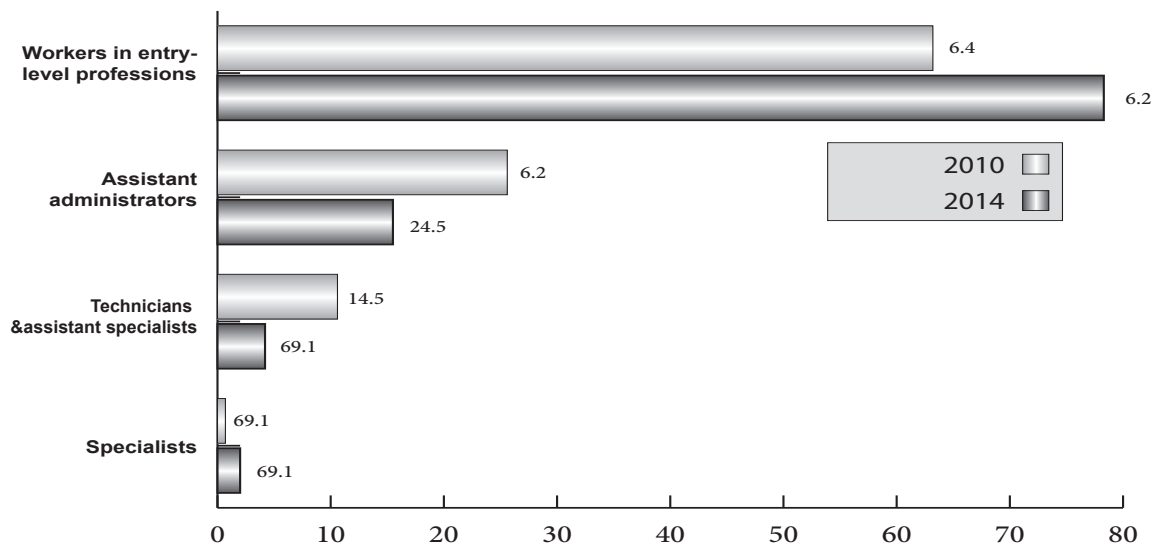
Figure 8: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector according to income groups and weekly work hours (2010 - 2014)



Data shown in Figure 9 points to the fact that over two thirds of privately employed female workers in the financial and insurance sectors are specialists, with lesser percentages consisting of professionals, technicians, and assistant specialists, respectively. It should also be noted that only a very small percentage of workers make up the group labeled “elementary occupations”. Furthermore, the chart reveals that there has been a dramatic

decline in the percentage of women working as assistant administrative staff, as well as technicians and specialists’ assistants. These figures are strong indicators of the sector’s inability to attract certain types of workers, e.g., women, and to encourage them to remain engaged in the field. Therefore, the aforementioned decline may well foreshadow a lack of qualified women in this sector, namely specialists.

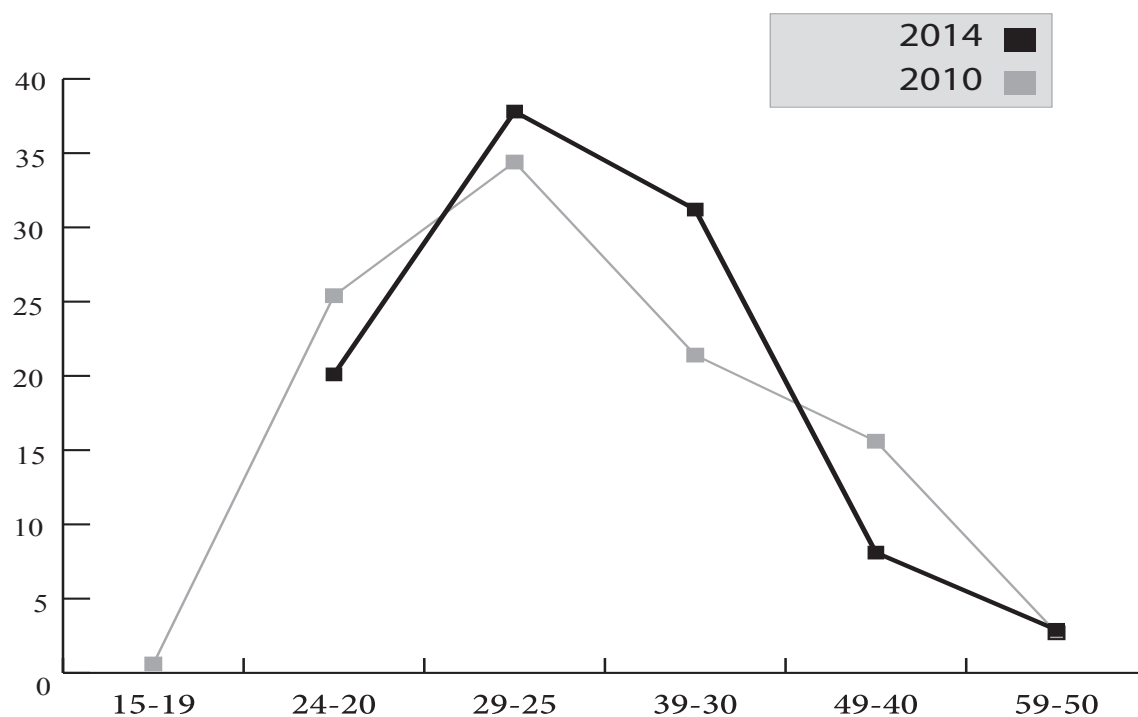
Figure 9: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector, according to job position (2010 - 2014)



Further data, represented in Figure 10, showed that one out of every three privately employed women working in the finance and insurance sector fall within the 25-29- age group. The number of female workers aged over 60 was remarkably low in both years. These figures seem to suggest that women's

levels of economic participation diminish after marriage and dwindle with age, to the extent that one would have been hard pressed to find an expert over 60 in the field, in both years – a phenomenon which is remarkably telling disclosive of women's social realities in Jordan.

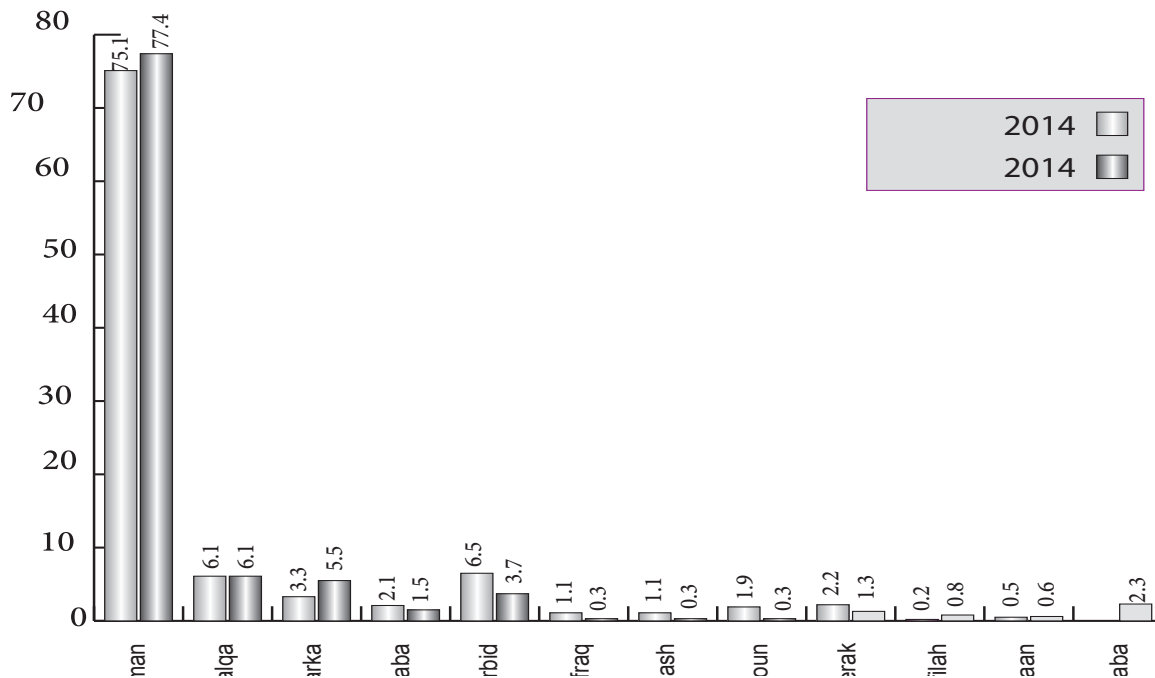
Figure 10: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector according to age group (2010 - 2014)



Regarding geographical distribution, Figure 11 shows that the highest percentage of female workers in this sector reside in the country's capital, Amman, followed by the Balqa governorate. This may owe to the concentration of financial and insurance enterprises in and around the capital, as well

as its proximity to Balqa, with transportation to and from the workplace being more readily available. Furthermore, figures show a steep increase in the number of female workers employed in the sector residing in the Irbid governorate between 2010 and 2014.

Figure 11: Proportional distribution of created jobs in the private sector financial and insurance activity according to location 2010- 2014



Regarding wages, figures listed in Table 1 suggest that the hourly wage gap dropped substantially between 2010 and 2013 –

by 46% – in comparison with the drop in monthly wage gap, estimated at 19%.

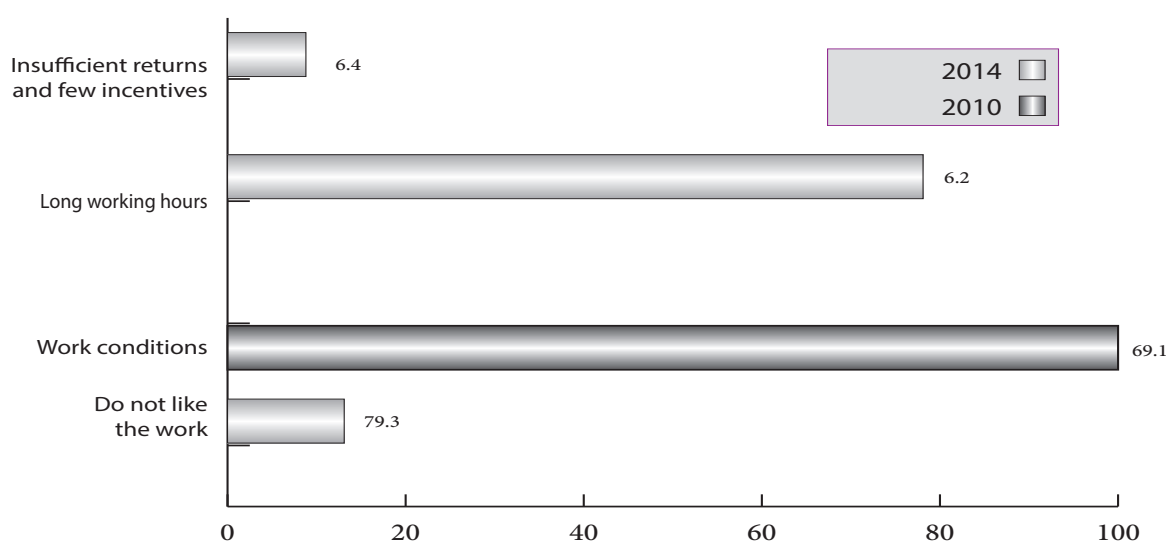
Table 1: The hourly and monthly wage gap (in JOD) among male and female workers in Jordan’s finance and insurance sector (2010 – 2013)

Year	Average hourly rate		Average monthly wage		Wage gap	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2010	5.8	5.1	710	555	17.0	21.8
2013	4.7	5.6	521	466	24.8	26.5

In addition to these figures, it was found that, in 2010, the main reasons for female workers in this sector to consider seeking other forms of employment had to do with work conditions. By 2014, however, the most common motive behind this consideration

had become the number of work hours (see Figure 12). The data is consistent with numerous other reports regarding the impact of the number of work hours on women's ability to remain engaged in the labor market.

Figure 12: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the finance and insurance sector, according to reasons given for seeking a different job (2010 - 2014)



3.3. Information and Telecommunications

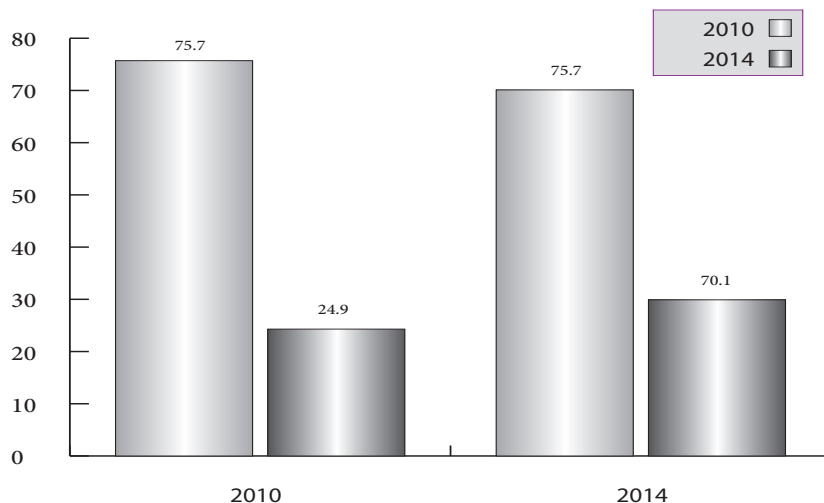
The sector of information and telecommunications achieved a growth rate of 13.6% at fixed prices in 2014, compared to 2010 figures. Its contribution in the GDP stood at 14.4% in 2014.

The survey concerning recently created jobs concluded that 29.9% of newly-employed workers in the information and

telecommunications sector were female – roughly a 6% increase from 2010 figures. Accordingly, the percentage of male workers claiming new job openings dropped from 75.7% in 2010 to 70.1% in 2014, as shown below.

Interestingly, the number of female graduates in computer science is roughly the same as that of women employed in the homonymous sector.

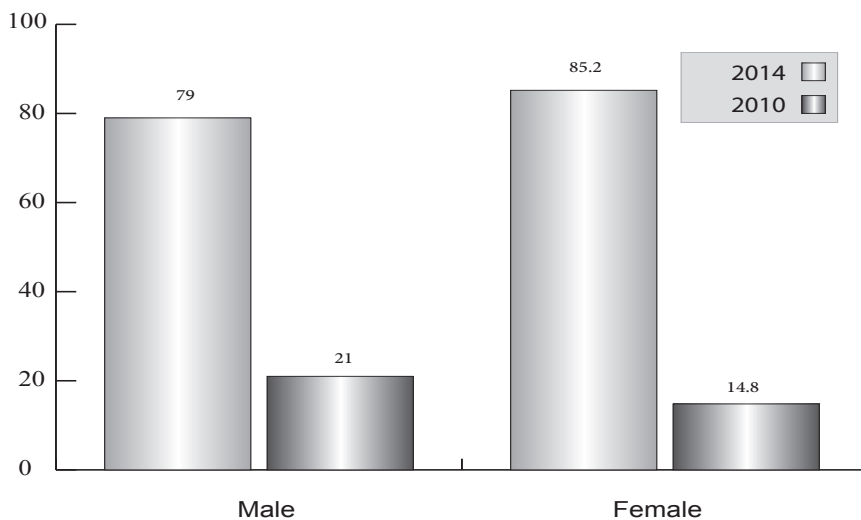
Figure 1: Proportional distribution of workers claiming new job positions in the private sectors field of transformative industries, according to gender (2010 - 2014)



The annual national survey pertaining employment and unemployment registered an increase in the percentage of female workers in this sector – from 15% in 2010 to 21% in 2014 – while the percentage of male workers dropped from 85% to 79% in the same period (see Figure 2). In general, women have been

shown to favor working at well-known or high profile institutions. Therefore, the fact that this is a blooming sector, and, as such, mostly comprised of small and medium businesses, might explain, to some extent, why so few women are to be found therein.

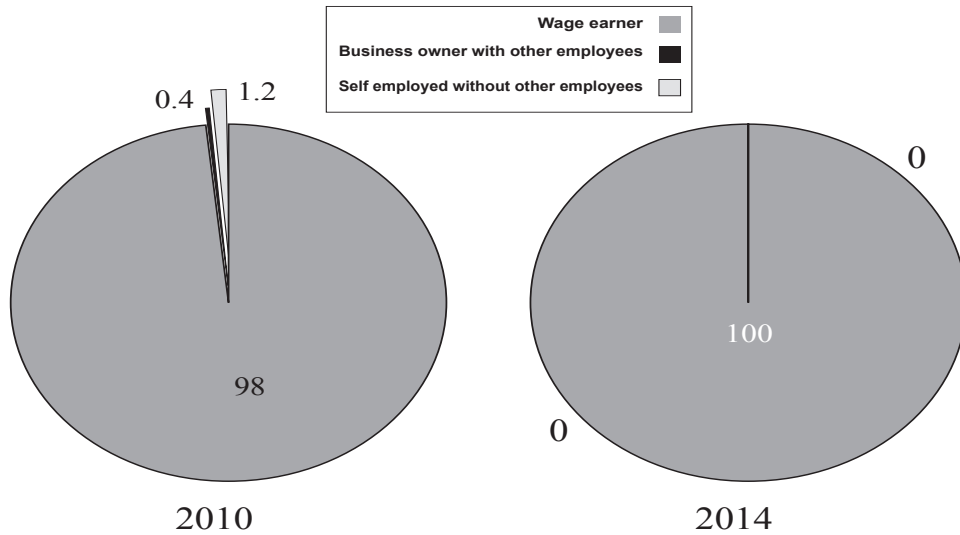
Figure 2: Proportional distribution of privately employed workers in the information and telecommunications sector, according to gender (2010 - 2014)



Results retrieved from the same survey, carried out by the Department of Statistics, showed that 100% of privately employed female workers in the information and

telecommunication sectors considered in the sample were wage earners, as opposed to being business owners, i.e., employers, or self-employed workers (see Figure 3).

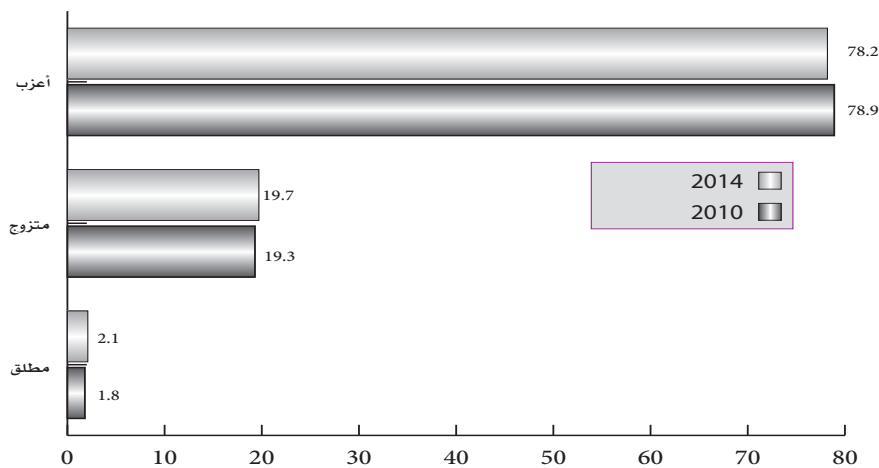
Figure 3: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunications sector according to type of employment (2010 – 2014)



Regarding education, results showed that most female workers in this sector held

bachelor or higher levels of education in both years.

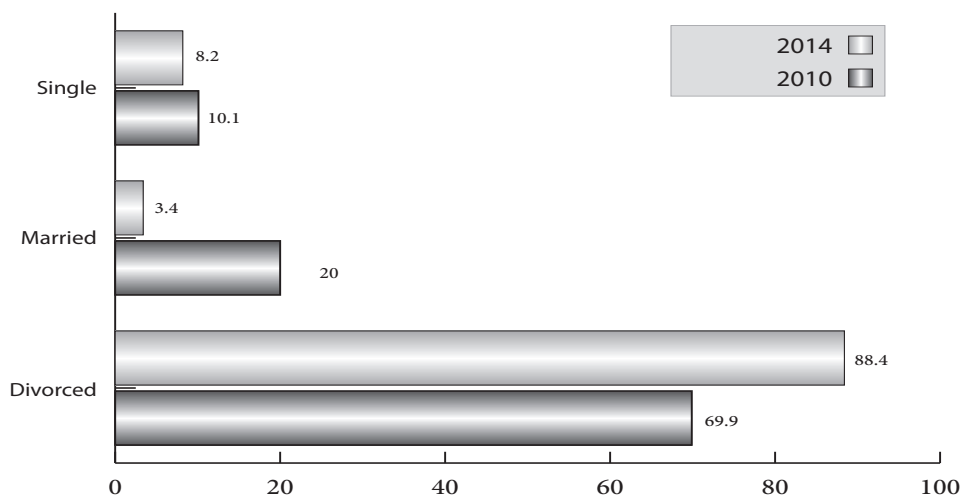
Figure 4: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunications sector, according to level of education (2010 - 2014)



Concerning female workers' marital status, it was shown that approximately 80% were single, whilst married women accounted for about one fifth of the female workforce in this sector in both years. Socially and culturally, this field is more commonly associated with

males, which results in it being less feasible for married women, who often find that the long work hours, the demands career progress entails, as well as the rapidly-changing nature of the sector, conflict with married life.

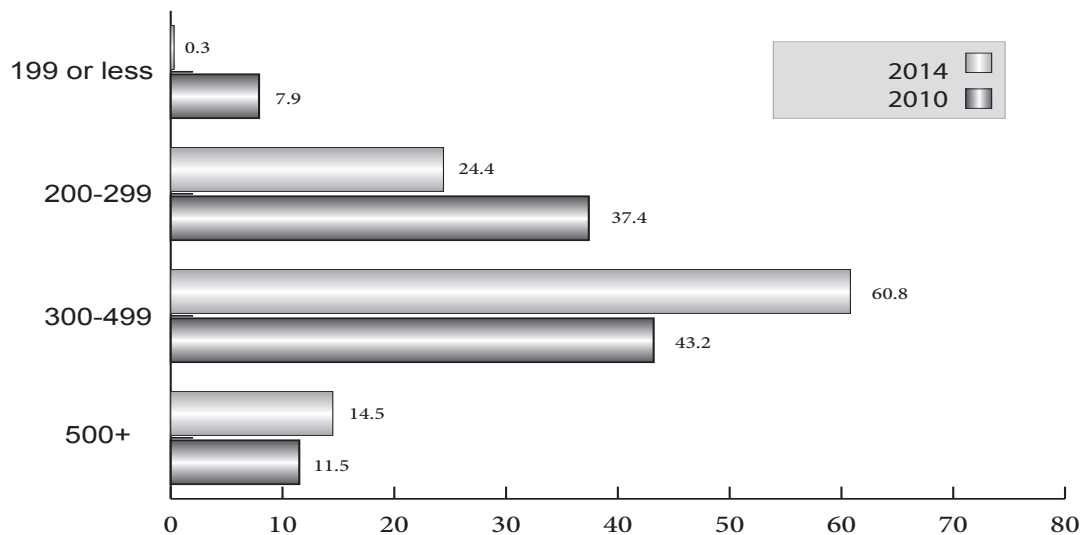
Figure 5: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunications sector, according to marital status (2010 - 2014)



Pertaining wages, the survey concluded that the percentage of female workers earning 199 JOD or less decreased, from about 7.9% in 2010 to a mere 0.3% in 2014. In its turn, the percentage of those earning between 300

and 499 JOD rose from 43.2% to 60.8% in the same period. Nevertheless, the percentage of wage earners collecting between 200 and 299 JOD a month dropped from 37% to 24% between 2010 and 2014.

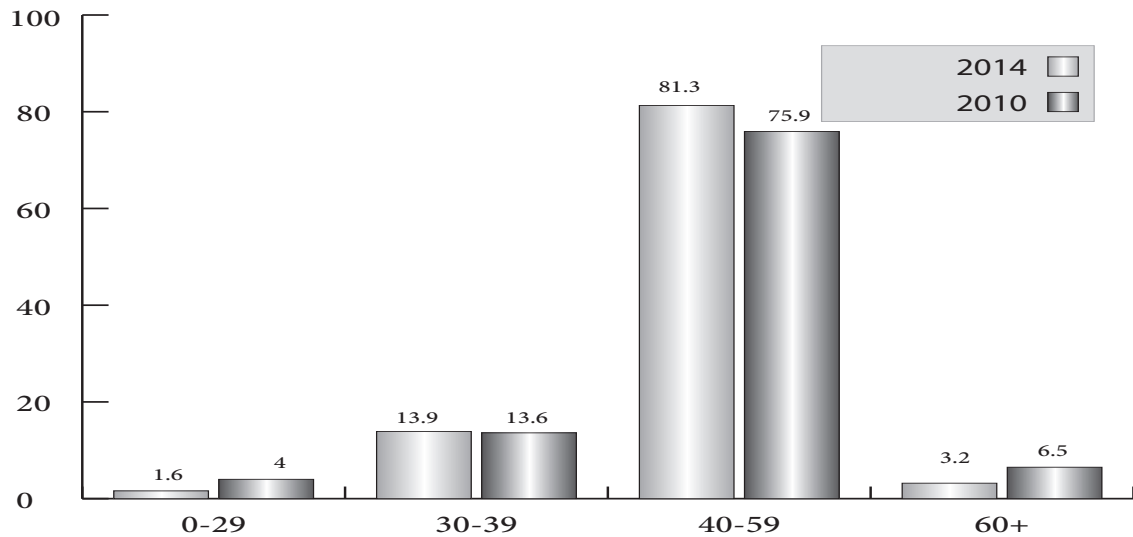
Figure 6: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunications sector according to monthly wages (in JOD) (2010 - 2014)



In regards to real weekly work hours (as shown in Figure 7), the results of the survey suggested that there had been little variation between 2010 and 2014 in this sector. In addition, it is worth noting that the highest percentage of female workers worked between 40 and 59 hours per week

in both 2010 and 2014. The percentage of those working fewer hours did not change significantly in that period, which might suggest that companies working in this sector failed to progress towards the encouragement of part-time work..

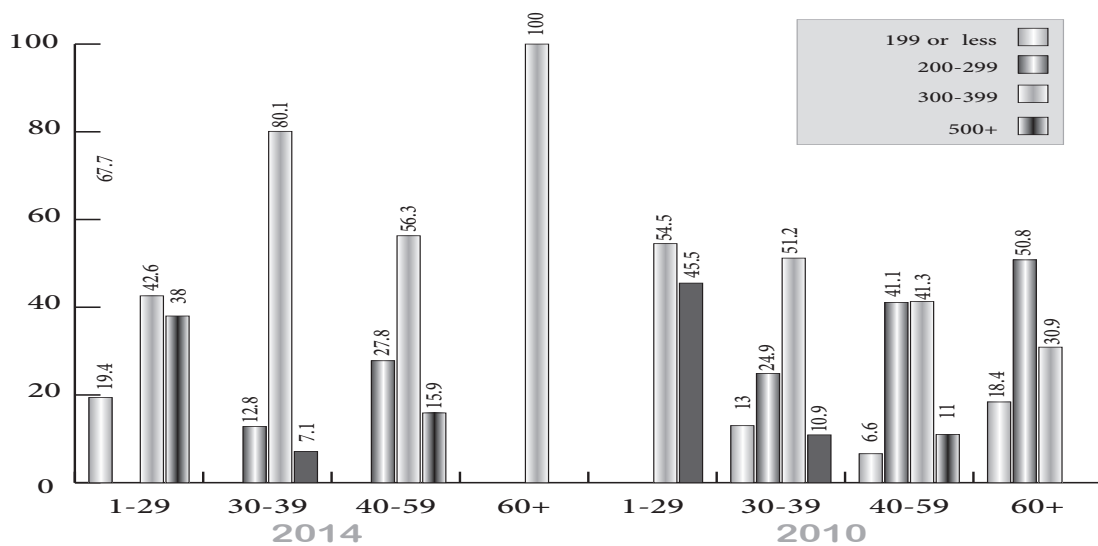
Figure 7: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunications sector according to weekly work hours (2010 - 2014)



Upon cross-examining actual weekly working hours and monthly incomes among Jordanian women, it was noted that,

whichever the weekly hours, the majority collected incomes ranging from 300 to 499 JOD (see Figure 8).

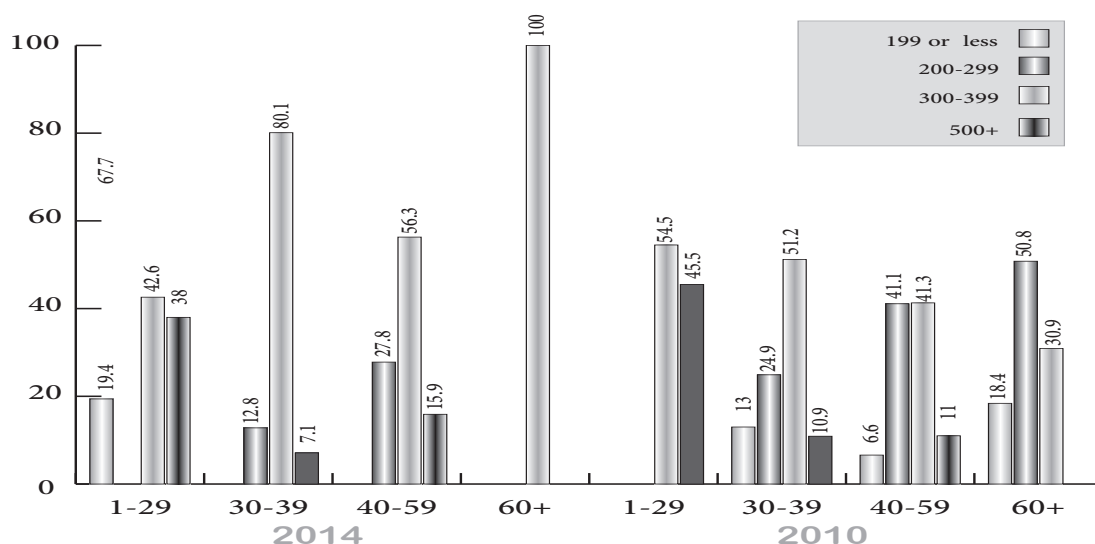
Figure 8: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunications sector according to weekly work hours and monthly wages (in JOD) (2010 - 2014)



Data shown in Figure 9 below indicates that the majority of privately employed female workers in the information and telecommunications sector were specialists. These were followed by technicians and specialists' assistants. The decline in the percentage of specialists may have owed to the decline in accumulated experience in

this sector, due to an outflow of workers which includes those seeking jobs which require little to no previous experience or qualifications. Finally, regarding this subject, it is worth mentioning that the smallest percentages of female workers in this sector, in both years, represented those holding entry-level positions.

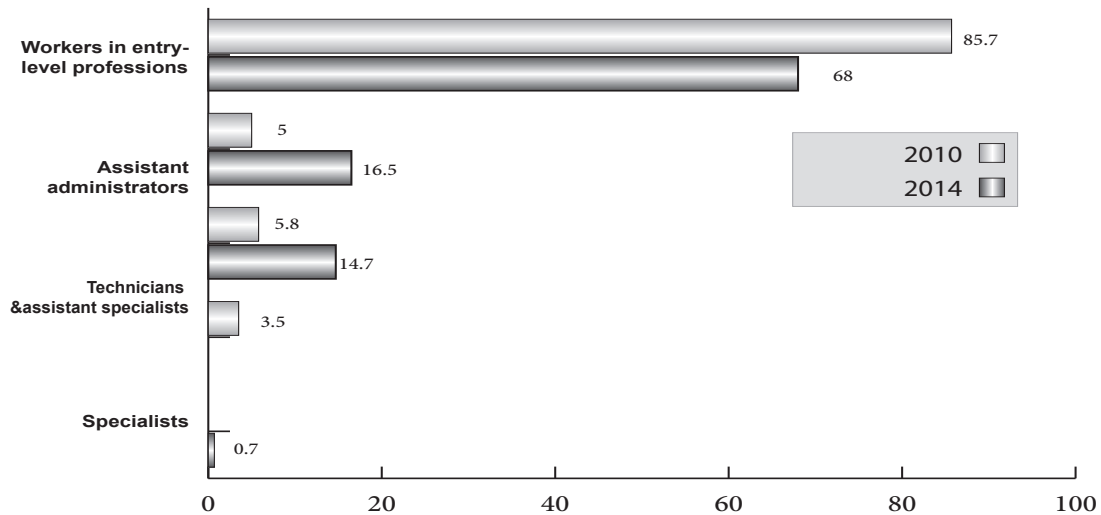
Figure 9: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunications sector, according to job type (2010 - 2014)



Regarding age groups (as shown in Figure 10), it was shown that less than a third of employed female workers in this sector were aged between 25 and 29 in 2010 – a figure which dropped to roughly one in every four

in 2014. Furthermore, results indicated that 25% of female workers engaged in this sector fell within the 30-39 age group, whereas this percentage rose to 36% in 2014.

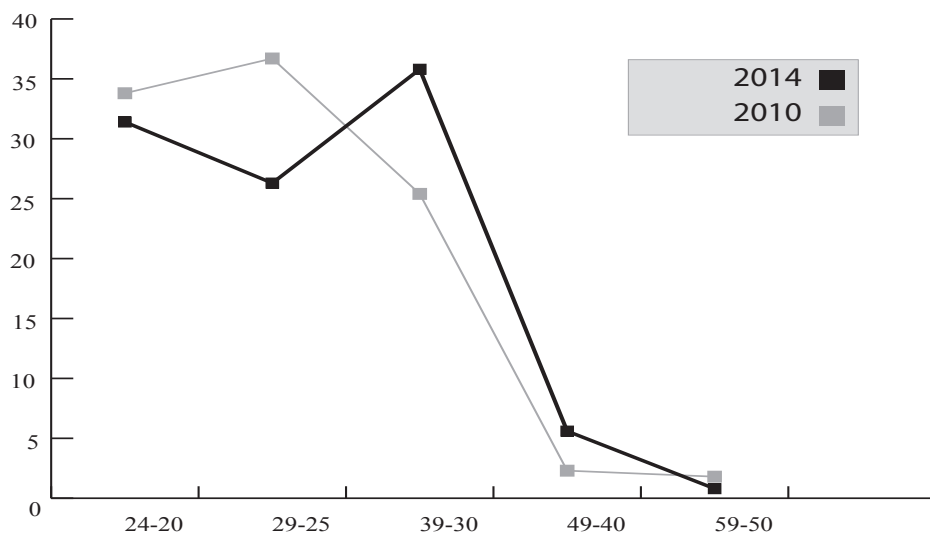
Figure 10: Proportional distribution of women in the Jordanian in the private sector information and communication activity according to age group (2010 - 2014)



When contemplating geographic distribution (see Figure 11), it was concluded that the highest percentage of female workers in the target sector resided in the capital, Amman, followed by the governorates of Balqa and Irbid. Indeed, it has been shown that

virtually no females are privately employed in the information and telecommunications sector in the south of the country, with the exception of Karak, where this percentage does not exceed 1%.

Figure 11: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunication sector according to geographic distribution (2010 - 2014)



Numbers shown in Table 1 demonstrated how both the hourly and wage gaps were in favor of female workers in 2010, whereas males came to hold the privilege by 2013.

This may be owed to a decline in the number of female specialists, seeing as professionals commonly collect more sizeable wages.

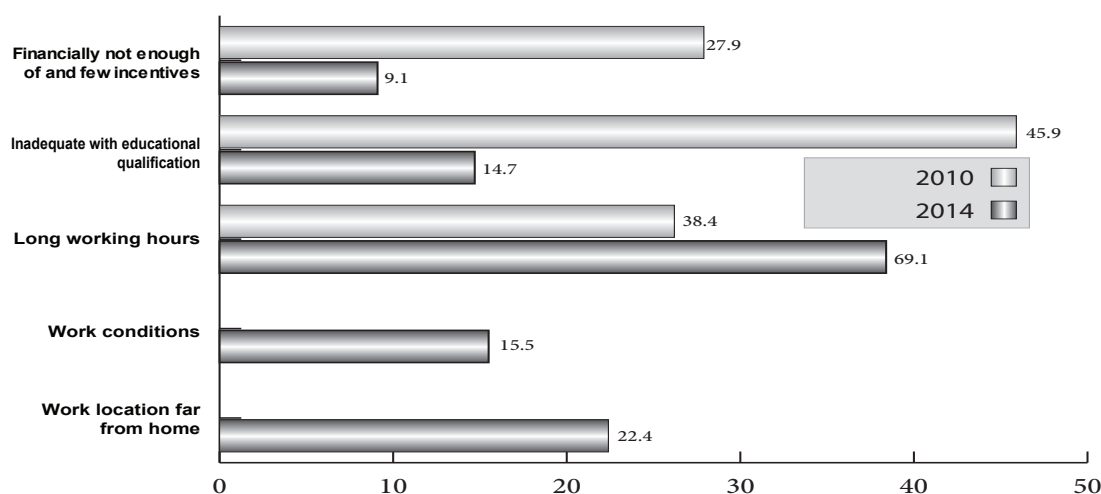
Table 1: Hourly and monthly wage gap between Jordanian male and female workers in the information and telecommunications sector (2010 – 2013)

Year	Average hourly rate		Average monthly wage		Wage gap	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2013	855	725	5.6	3.2	11	15
2010	498	508	2.26	2.55	-2.9	-2.0

According to results shown in Figure 12, in 2010 the majority of privately employed females in this sector who claimed to welcome career changes stated incompatibilities with their qualifications as the main reason for choosing to do so – 38.4%. This figure had dropped to 26.2% by 2014, whereas the

number of such workers claiming financial insecurity rose from 9.1% to 27.9% within the same period. It is also worth mentioning that, in 2010, 9.1% of female workers who were dissatisfied with their current jobs claimed that it was because of the distance between their residence and workplace.

Figure 12: Proportional distribution privately employed Jordanian women in the information and telecommunication sector according to reasons given for wanting to seek opportunities elsewhere (2010 - 2014)



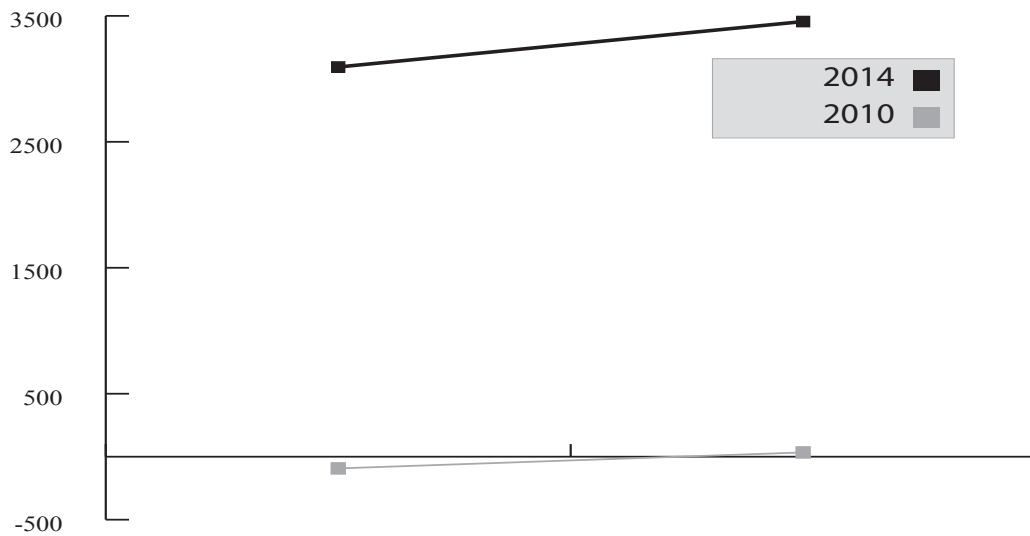
3.4. Tourism

The tourism sector grew by 10.8% in the 2010-2014 period, at fixed market prices. The tourism sector is considered to be among those which suffer the most from an unqualified national workforce, with expatriate workers dominating the sector at the entry-level. Furthermore, tourism is strongest in the central and southern provinces of the Kingdom, where there are more restaurants, hotels, and tourist

attractions to be found. One would expect its geographic concentration to translate into a strong power of workforce mobilization within these areas; in reality, however, this does not seem to be the case.

The annual survey on newly created jobs indicated that new jobs accessible to females did not exceed 34, whereas, in 2010, this figure was actually negative, with more jobs lost than created (see Figure 1).

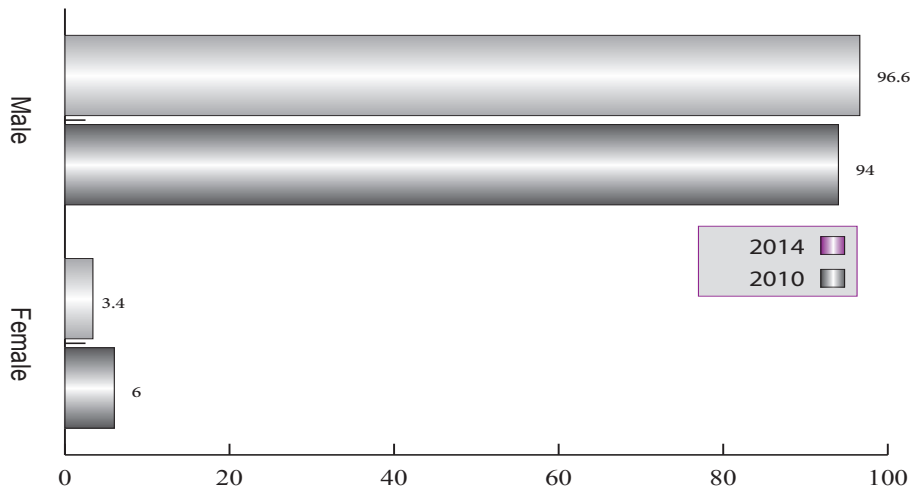
Figure 1: Proportional distribution of workers claiming new job positions in the private sector's field of tourism, according to gender (2010 - 2014)



Furthermore, about 93% of female workers in this sector who left their jobs were unable of finding viable alternatives. This is owed to the political turbulence in the region, which greatly impacted the tourism sector, and female participation in particular.

Regarding employment, the annual report conducted by the Department of Statistics concluded that the percentage of female workers in the tourism sector showed a slight rise, from 3.4% in 2010 to 6% in 2014 (see Figure 2).

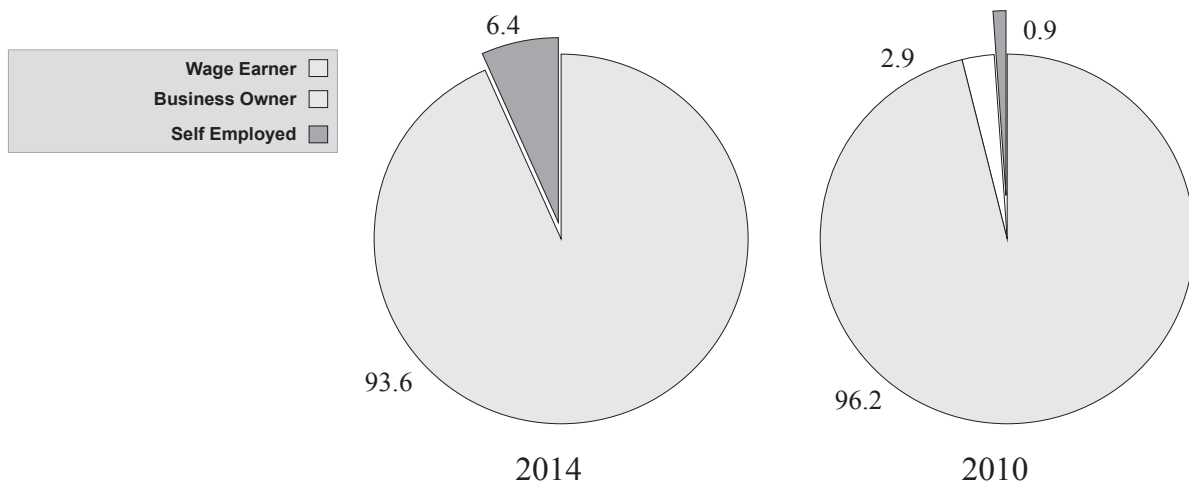
Figure 2: Proportional distribution of Jordanian workers engaged in the tourism sector, according to gender (2010 - 2014)



The same survey also showed that the vast majority of privately employed female workers in this sector in the 2010-2014-period were wage earners – a percentage

exceeding 93%. However, the percentage of self-employed females with no employees in this sector rose from 0.9% to 6.4% within the same timeframe (see Figure 3).

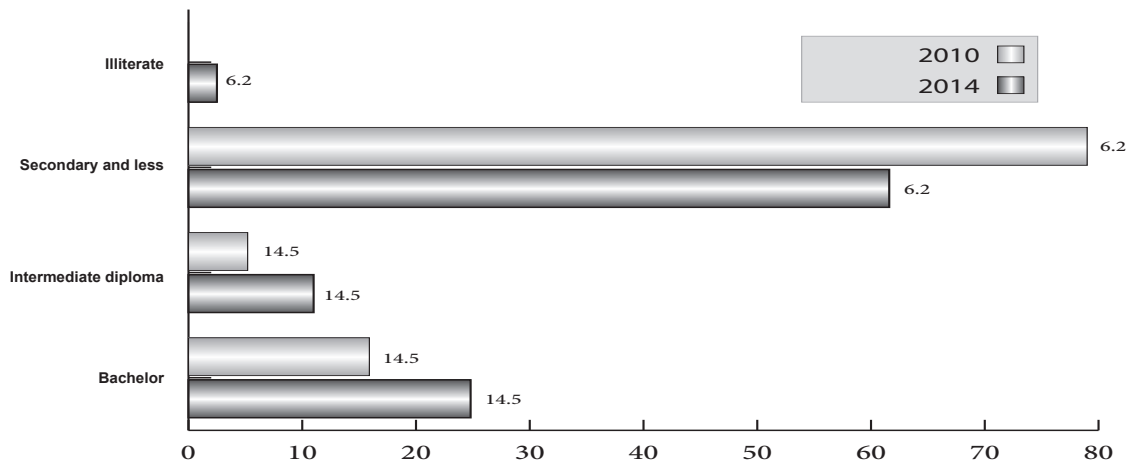
Figure 3: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector according to type of employment (2010 - 2014)



In terms of level of education, the survey’s findings (depicted in Figure 4) were that the majority of privately employed females in this sector had completed secondary-level or

lower forms of education, with one in every four holding a university degree, in 2010, with this figure dropping to one in every six in 2014.

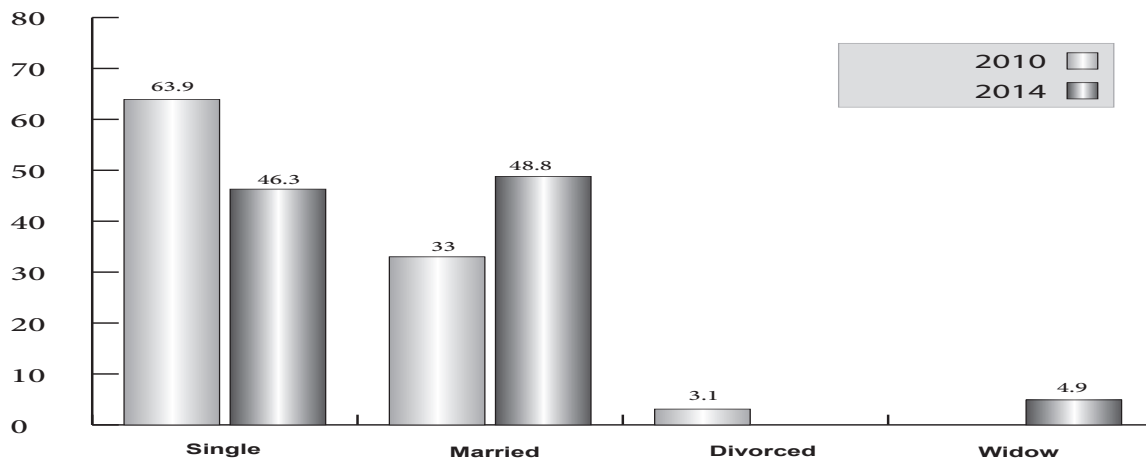
Figure 4: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector, according to level of education (2010 - 2014)



In respect to marital status, it was shown (see Figure 5) that three out of every five female workers were single, or unmarried, in 2014, whereas 2010 figures registered married

workers as making up half of the female workforce. In 2014, this figure dropped to one in every three.

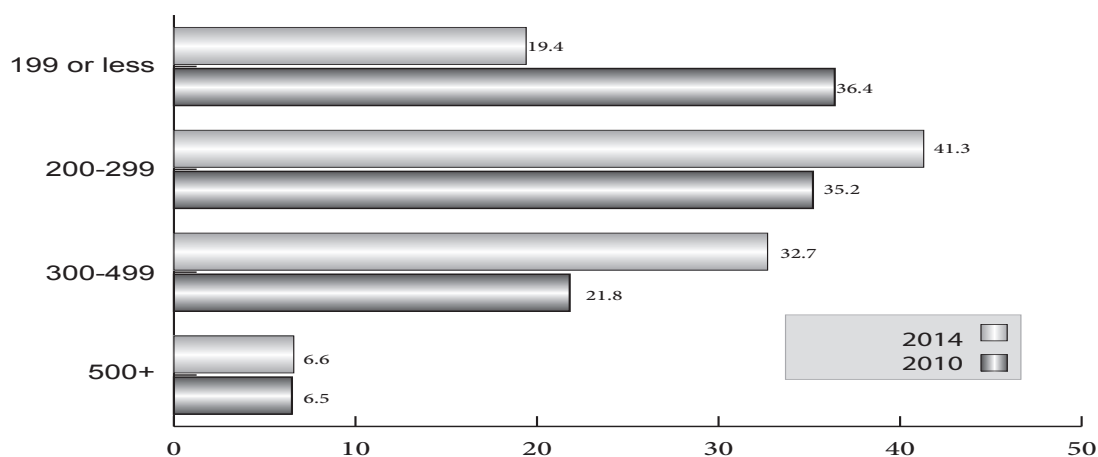
Figure 5: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector, according to marital status (2010 - 2014)



Regarding income, the survey detected substantial fluctuations. Whereas 36.4% of privately employed females in the tourism sector earned less than 199 JOD in 2010, this figure had dropped to 19.4% in 2014. Results also showed, as seen in Figure 6, that the percentage of female workers earning between 200 and 299 JOD rose from 35.2% to 41.3% within the same period. Regarding the 300-499- JOD income group, it reportedly

increased from 21.8% to 32.7% of the sector's female workforce. Strikingly, only a very slight percentage (7%) of female workers earned 500 JOD or more. This may owe to the fact that most women have not worked in the sector long enough to acquire a level of experience that is valuable to employers, or it may suggest that their work is seen as less valuable than that of their male counterparts in the eyes of employers.

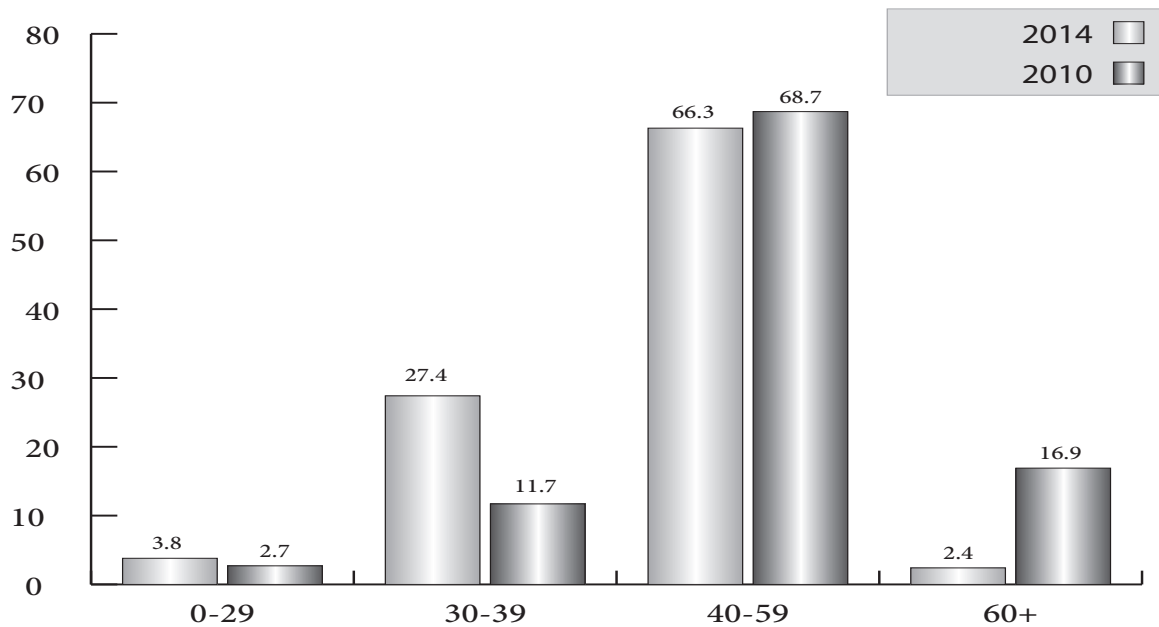
Figure 6: Proportional distribution privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector according to income group (2010 - 2014)



In terms of actual weekly work hours, the survey showed that some changes occurred within the 2010-2014- period. Namely, although the majority of working females in

this group worked between 40 and 59 weekly hours, the percentage of those working over 60 weekly hours dropped significantly, from 16.9% in 2010 to 2.4% in 2014.

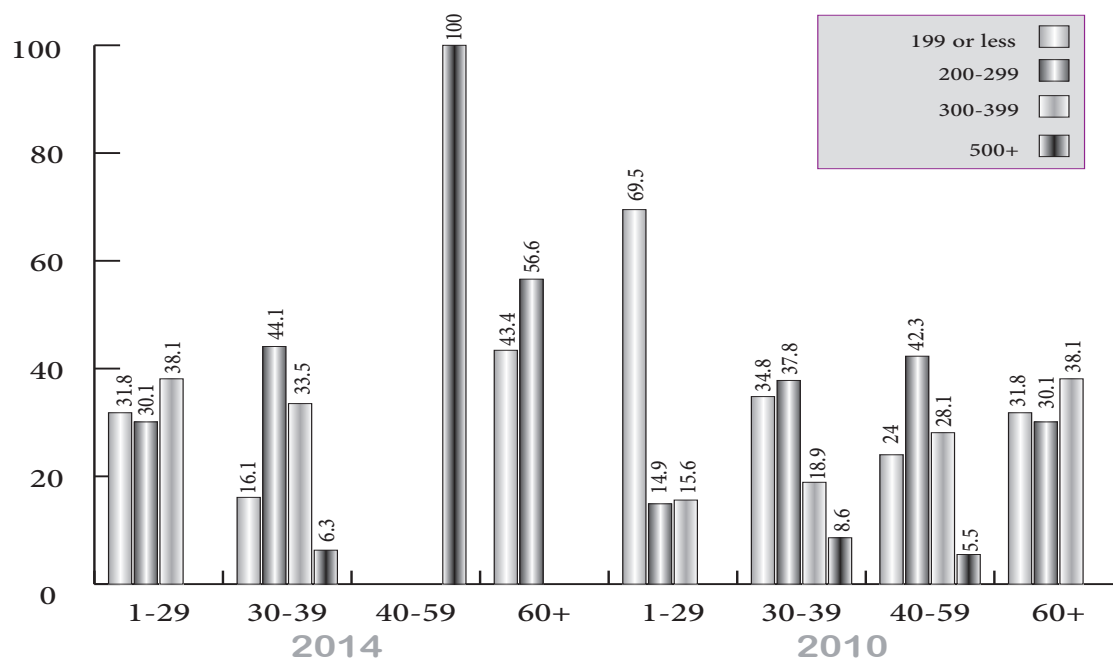
Figure 7: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector according to actual weekly work hours (2010 - 2014)



Upon analyzing weekly working hours within income groups, it was concluded, from data collected in 2010 (see Figure 8), that wages collected by working Jordanian women are inconsistent with their weekly work hours. Figures showed that the majority of women working between 1 and 29 hours per week earned 199 JOD or less a month in this sector, whereas those working 30 to 59 hours earned between 200 and 299 JOD. In addition, those women reported as working 60 or more weekly hours collected incomes between 300 and 499 JOD. These figures, however, might reflect the impact of overtime pay on general income. In short, as of 2010, women seeking higher wages were often forced, by necessity, to work overtime. This may have been owed

to the fact that most businesses in this sector, including restaurants, pay hourly, as opposed to monthly, wages. In contrast, 2014 figures showed that all women working between 40 and 59 weekly hours collected wages over the 500 JOD mark. Regarding those women in this sector working over 60 weekly hours, however, the unsettling conclusion was drawn that more than half collected a monthly pay of 200 to 299 JOD, which is a blatant violation of minimum wage and overtime policy. Women in this sector who were reported as working 30 to 39 weekly hours were shown to earn the same monthly income.

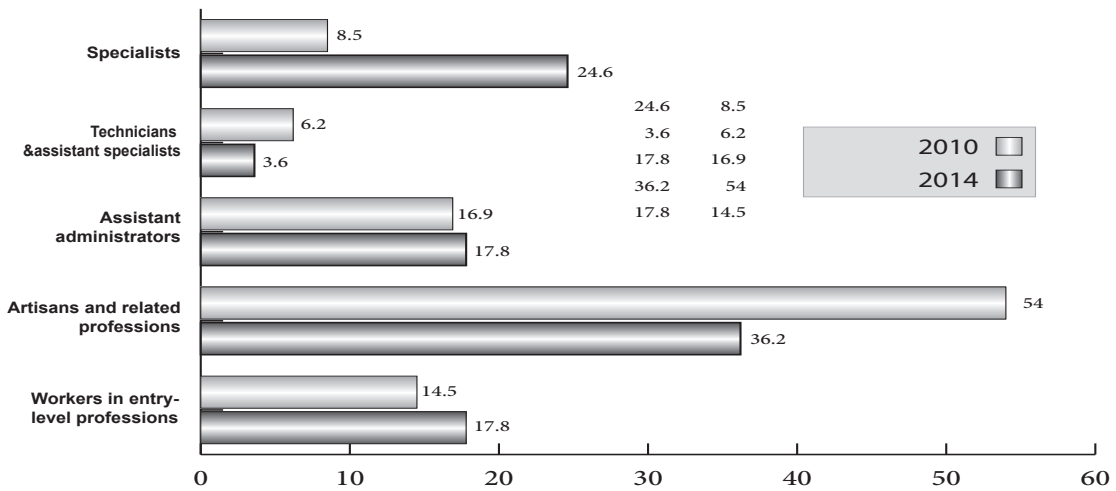
Figure 8: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector, according to weekly work hours and income groups (2010 - 2014)



Data shown in Figure 9 indicates that most female workers employed in this sector worked in sales and other services. Results also point out that one in every six women in tourism are engaged in administrative and entry-level activities. It is also worth noting that the smallest percentage of female workers in this sector, both in 2010 and 2014,

were employed as technicians and specialists. According to studies conducted on the subject, Jordanian women's involvement in such activities is culturally and socially frowned upon, and it is likely that this fact contributes heavily to the lack of women in this sector.

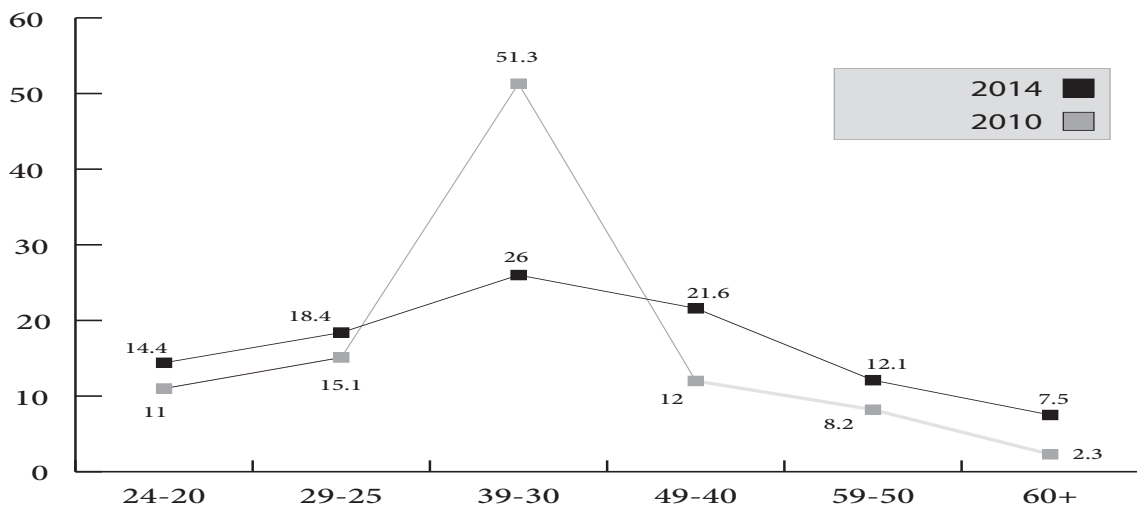
Figure 9: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector, according to job type (2010 - 2014)



The data depicted in Figure 10 shows most privately employed females in the tourism sector to be in their thirties, with one in every five women being aged between 40 and 49 (according to 2014 figures). It is also

worth mentioning that the number of female workers rises and declines according to their age group, which may be owed to the sector's employers' preference for younger men and women.

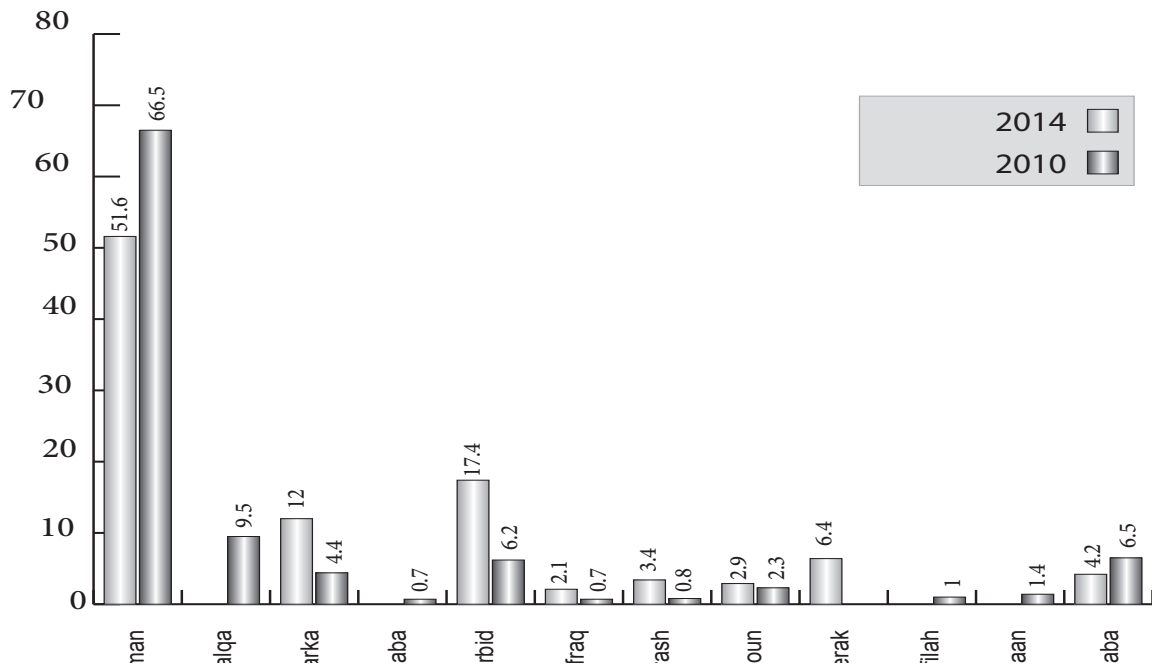
Figure 10: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism sector, according to age group (2010 - 2014)



Concerning geographical distribution (as depicted in Figure 11), it was shown that the highest percentage of privately employed females in the tourism sector, both in 2010 and in 2014, resided in the capital, followed

by Irbid and Zarqa. Results also denoted a striking absence of women in this sector in the Karak governorate in 2010, though this figure rose to 6.4% in 2014.

Figure 11: Proportional distribution of privately employed Jordanian women in the tourism industry according to geographical area (2010 - 2014)



The wage gap, both hourly and monthly, was reported as being in favor of female workers in both years (see Table 2), with average salaries amongst females trumping those

among males. Figures seem to point to the nature and types of work commonly held by women in this sector, where many are reluctant to take entry-level positions.

Table 1: Wage gap between male and female Jordanian workers engaged in the tourism sector (2010 – 2014)

Year	Average hourly rate		Average monthly wage		Wage gap	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2013	319	386	1.3	1.6	-24.0	-21.0
2010	274	332	1.1	1.4	-23.2	-21.2

In addition to what has been said, figures indicated that the vast majority of privately employed females in the tourism sector in 2014 who sought to change their jobs did so alleging lack of compatibility with their qualifications, whereas in 2010 45% had claimed to collect inadequate wages to be their reason.

It is worth noting that the percentage of women unsatisfied with their jobs in 2010 due to long work hours, 10.7%, rose to 14% in 2014. Finally, one in every five women in this sector in 2010 claimed to be unsatisfied with working conditions.

3. The reality of women's economic participation in the private sector: Beyond numbers and indicators

This section of the study will aim to present and discuss results of field research on the reality of women's economic participation in the private sector by providing an in-depth qualitative analysis of the discourses of female workers, employees, employers, and policy makers. The analysis has been divided into different parts, according to the study's various objectives and fundamental inquiries.

First: The economic and political challenges affecting the contribution of Jordanian women to the private labor market

In the course of this investigation into the impact of economic and political change on the engagement of women in the labor market, a few conclusions were arrived at which, together, may adequately outline the

general features of the phenomena at hand. These can be summarized as follows:

A.

In regards to the role of government in promoting gender integration and the economic participation of women, its efforts are perceived to weak and unsatisfactory by the private sector, where government economic policies are broadly perceived to be insufficient in tackling the issue. This is made quite clear by the discourses employed by administrators, investors, and employers in the private sector, which accuse the government of lack of involvement and cooperation in addressing the challenges at hand. Likewise, respondents holding managerial positions in the private sector often spoke as follows: "The government has done very little to address the apparently weak participation of women in the labor market. Its priorities are also notoriously blurry regarding the informal sector, where there is a lack of a continuous governmental

follow-up. It is important that the government take action in addressing this issue, by means of such policies as tax exemptions, and the promotion of easier registration procedures for companies, businesses, and institutions. The lack of adequate follow-up on behalf of the concerned ministries means, furthermore, that accountability is lacking within the private sector, namely in what regards compliance with policy standards.

Likewise, employers did not hide their dissatisfaction with government regarding the lack of clear policies, its inability to promote investment, in general, and investment in employing women, in particular. A bank manager stated: «We have launched an initiative seeking to encourage investment in female labor. It was to be implemented by a woman, and proposed to put female employment over the 25%. We were surprised by the unfortunate amount of obstacles we encountered, posed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, when trying get these small projects licensed – we were even forced to hire a lawyer specialized in women’s rights in order to succeed. When we finally did succeed, we did so in cooperation, not with the government, but with international institutions.»

Many investors, employers, and administrators in this sector are often disillusioned with the government, and find that they acquire a greater deal of support in international organizations, namely in what regards women’s participation and

investment in small businesses.

Many respondents sternly criticized labor law, in particular for its lack of adequate follow-up mechanisms and accountability for non-compliance with a number of official standards regarding female employment in the private sector.

One administrator stated: “One of my relatives, working in the private sector, was arbitrarily dismissed, and no one was able to do anything about it due to the poor follow-up and accountability mechanisms in the law. Labor law lacks the adequate follow-up and monitoring process to ensure justice for workers in the private sector, namely regarding wages.”

Criticism was particularly sharp, and resentment strongly felt, regarding the lack of public investment towards the promotion of female employment in the private sector, with many expressing frustration towards government policies and their lack of support for positive competition. In the words of a bank manager: “We could encourage and facilitate female employment, increasing the percentage of female workers, had we received some tax exemptions from the government in exchange.”

A human resources manager at a major company stated: “The government is not interested in the fact that we are one of the country’s leaders in female employment – 99% of our workforce is national, and over 40% of it is comprised of women. We are the

only company allowing women a monthly paid one-day leave (Women' Day), and we bear their transportation costs to facilitate mobility, seeing as the industrial areas are relatively far from urban centers. We apply a flexible work policy, and women are given priority over morning shifts. In addition, women in the IT department are allowed to finish their work from home. At the same time, there are companies which simply do not employ women, and whose workers are mostly expatriates, and in the end we are all subject to the same treatment. As a result, there is a loss of competitive capacity. Any encouragement on behalf of the government would be welcomed – tax exemptions, electricity bill cuts, even the slightest nod of approval would suffice. Were this to be done, more companies would follow our approach, and unemployment rates among women would plummet, along with general unemployment.”

Several managers and employers in the industrial sector also complained of a lack of coordination between private industries and the public sector: “The industrial sector goes one way, government policies go another. The government has taxed factories with no consideration of how that will impact costs and the lives of consumers – ultimately, factories find no other way of covering costs than to increase prices. What is worse is that the government does not seem invested in supporting national production and, by failing to do so, protects neither citizens nor investors, but is solely concerned with tax collection.”

This apparent lack of harmony and coordination between the public and private sectors is further sustained by the contrasting discourse of government officials. Just as the private sector complains over the lack of a shared vision and goals with the government, public officials put the blame on the private sector, which they accuse of the exploitation of female workers, tax evasion, and non-compliance with minimum wages.

In addition, officials called for civil society organizations, especially those concerned with women's rights, to play a more active role in supporting the government's efforts to empower women economically. Such organizations were accused by some government officials of dispensing criticism at every turn without providing solutions or alternatives in addressing these issues.

In line with the more common rhetoric, one such official stated: “The Ministry alone will not solve the problem, and the solutions offered by some civil society projects, and supported by many parties, provide only limited or temporary solutions to the issue, which often pertain to circumscribed geographical areas. They offer no solutions at the national scale, or ones that address the underlying cultural landscape and the convictions associated therewith. It is for these reasons that figures related to female participation in the labor market are not improving, and may in fact be receding.”

B.

The government's diminishing efforts or narrow-minded approach in tackling this issue are further made clear by the reluctant discourse employed by government officials. The government seems to have reached a standstill pertaining women's participation in the labor market, with some pointing out that it even seems to have given up. To be fair, a revival of the discussion surrounding these matters may be underway, but as of yet no clear visions, objectives, or approaches have been set forth. In fact, in recent remarks regarding female employment, the Jordanian Prime Minister was led to admit to the government's failure in addressing the problem of women's integration into the labor market.

The forms of discourse employed by government officials, which have been analyzed in this study, certainly shed some light on their visions, aspirations, and plans towards tackling this issue. Nevertheless, whichever solutions and proposals are advanced at the early stages fail to develop into concrete experimentation and implementation. Statements like the following, for instance, are common in official circles: "We are still looking into and studying the subject of nurseries;" "we are still pondering the issue of flexible working hours;" "we have formed a committee headed by the Ministry of Labor;" "other entities, such as the Supreme Population Board, should help develop solutions to this problem;" "we

intend to look into the issues related to the employment of women in the private sector;" and so on.

C.

A third rather disclosive element which urges consideration is the official insistence on reform rather than change. Soft approaches have been chosen in tackling gender inequality, as opposed to a stance of resolute defiance of the social paradigm, which resulted proposals which only reflect the traits of a patriarchal society, in terms of a traditional allocation or attribution of roles, personalities, and spaces.

The first project implemented with the goal of addressing the issue of women's low levels of participation in the private labor market aimed at the development of careers in sewing, through coordination with the private sector, which benefited from incentives in establishing clothes factories in peripheral and remote areas. Regarding the promotion of women's involvement in the tourism sector, efforts were limited to supporting the training of women in producing clothes and food to be sold in touristic areas.

The patriarchal paradigm has shone clear through the efforts that have been made to abolish the definition which confines the concept of work to the job site, and to expand the work sphere to the household. In other words, women have been time and time again pulled back to the inner

space, which legitimizes, and is in turn legitimized by, a traditional understanding of the division of labor. This mentality is encapsulated in statements such as: “We found that actual change is difficult, so we are focusing our efforts on strengthening the role of women in traditional and socially acceptable professions. As such, we sought to establish new factories and branches of certain partners in the garment and textile industries in distant and remote regions. We have assisted in employing over 5,000 female workers – this was what we were able to do as a ministry, and not an investment institution. Our vision relies on the principle that, before women’s traditional roles as workers can be revised, jobs must be found for them.”

In striving to encourage private business owners in the textile industry to employ more female workers, the government admits to have provided land, supported training and transportation costs, and contributed to a portion of workers’ wages during the first year. However, the issue of changing mentalities and promoting awareness regarding the female work force is clearly not yet on the list of priorities.

To paraphrase a top government official: “The mission of changing social perspectives on this matter befalls civil society organizations, and is understood to be a priority of theirs, not ours. A major change was achieved in 1996 with the abolition of the legislative provision defining a worker as ‘someone who works at the job site’, which was replaced

with ‘someone who works either at or outside the job site’. This has allowed women to work from their homes, whilst simultaneously performing their household duties, including those pertaining to their children.”

Concerning the tourism sector even less emphasis was placed on the importance of social change, with official rhetoric commonly surrendering to a perceived inevitability of the social paradigm: “In the tourism sector, in view of the difficulty of integrating women into the staff of private hotels, restaurants, and tourist activities, we have sought to support small-scale projects aimed at training women to produce goods that may be sold to tourists near touristic attractions, drawing from the Development and Employment Fund. Many attempts at promoting female employment in hotels and restaurants failed. In addition, we began to face such problems as the rejection of job opportunities among the male workforce, some of which refused to work at places where alcohol was served, for religious motives.

This largely conservative rhetoric was common among respondents, with very few expressing acceptance of the idea of women working in the private tourism sector. More often than not, religious discourse permeated their statements, along with stances pertaining to tradition, social norms, and family values. Now, although the majority of individuals claiming to uphold these views came from modest backgrounds and belong to the lower strata of the social pyramid, a significant

percentage of members of higher classes either argued for, or sympathized with, such perspectives – including employers, officials, and holders of high rank ministerial positions.

This prompts a return to the concept of dominant discourse and its role in molding convictions and behaviors as a source of authority. In other words, its impact on what Foucault termed the “public common sense”. Now, in what concerns Jordanian society, it is clear that this public common sense is more inclined towards traditional and conservative discourse than “modern” values. In fact, studies seem to beckon the conclusion that the prevailing rhetoric in Jordanian society relies heavily on tribal discourse.

This seems to constitute further proof of the failure of Marxism and liberalism in understanding social circumstances alien to the European model. Indeed, they hindered their own ability to commensurate difference in relying on the perceived historical necessity that social evolution was everywhere uniform, and that a “modern” stage was imminent in every conceivable society.

The habit of falling back upon tradition is present in most Arab countries, where it pervades all levels of political and social discourse. These discourses are so pervasive, in fact, and so great an obstacle to social change, that even advocates of social change are susceptible of adopting them, albeit unknowingly. As such, it is hardly surprising that social movements demanding change often rely on the same paternalistic

worldview that they aim to defy, or that they dwindle, or that people from different social strata become increasingly disillusioned with modern discourses.

D.

In addition to the aforementioned scarcity in support for social change, there is a highly-propagated notion that the overall budget is slim. According to one government official: “Our reform plans are supported by studies and figures, and we are not always able to find in our budget the capacity to address certain problems. We, as a ministry, coordinate with the Ministry of Planning in establishing whether any external grants are available. The availability of funds has a major impact on cooperation and joint planning. For instance, when we received external support in carrying out studies on the issue of wages in the private education sector, we discovered unjust disparities between the wages of male and female workers, whereby female workers were unfairly paid less. This is perceived to be a major problem, at a time when the public sector is closing its doors to large numbers of female schoolteachers. Accordingly, we are now carrying out campaigns towards raising awareness among privately employed female schoolteachers regarding their rights, in particular the right to minimum wage. At the same time, we are aware that minimum wage is not an ideal solution. Obviously, married women cannot accept to work jobs where their pay barely covers the costs of

transportation, nurseries, and miscellaneous personal expenses.”

E.

Another feature of official rhetoric regarded the war in Syria and the refugee crisis. As stated by officials from the Ministry of Planning: “Before the Arab Spring, greater attention was given to issues pertaining women’s rights. In the years which followed, however, we faced a steep rise in unemployment among adult males, which has unfortunately diverted our attention from the issue of female employment. Ultimately, we live in a male-dominated society where young men take responsibility for household spending and revenue. Adding to this is the number of jobs claimed by refugees, whether legally or illegally.”

F.

A sixth factor to be considered is the limited role played by those actors in government concerned with gender equality, along with the low levels of cooperation and coordination between the ministries and concerned stakeholders. Ministerial actors concerned with gender issues are often given little authority within their respective ministries in matters pertaining decision-making, whereby their function is mostly limited to coordinating with donors seeking to contribute to the lives and economic

situation of Jordanian women, by passing on whichever information is available on government databases regarding the realities they face.

As stated by the director of the department of gender affairs in one of the ministries: “We drew more than one strategy through the hiring of experts; but these strategies have remained ink on paper, stored in the drawers of oblivion, to the extent that the World Bank sent its latest missions, and produced its latest reports, without consulting with or informing the ministry. We are currently drafting formal letters to address this matter. On the other hand, in spite of women’s committees’ keenness to appear in the media and discuss the issue, on the practical level we haven’t seen any tangible efforts towards coordination in this regard. Likewise, we haven’t witnessed any significant coordination between ministries, which are, after all, supposed to be the main hubs of economic planning. What I see is chaos – lack of planning and coordination between ministries and donors which do not count the lives of actual women among their priorities. This is made clear by the meagerness of the budget allocated to tackling these issues.”

In order to conduct a sociological analysis of these aspects, an approach is needed which does not ignore economic and political factors, as well as their structural impact on both the narrower and broader spheres.

Upon introducing the concept of sociological

imagination, Mills (1959) showed that it is impossible to separate a person's life from the experienced historical context, as well as the surrounding social reality. According to him, to scientifically or sociologically conceive of, or imagine, a phenomenon, means to seek to understand the extent to which personal problems can be seen as social issues. For instance, when considering the case of a woman who failed to reach Parliament, we can very well attribute her failure to certain aspects of her individual life or personality; however, if one is hard-pressed to find a woman within the political sphere, the same phenomenon must be considered as the manifestation of a sociological issue which should be interpreted within a framework of relevant factors and historical circumstances.

As Marx claimed to show, economic phenomena may not be scientifically considered by simply returning to a prevailing economic model, but only in tandem with a consideration of the whole model of production, that is, the economic, political, and cultural structure within which it occurred. Only then can the width of the overlap between these influences be estimated. For all of them shape the social reality of an individual in such a way that all that which is personal, is thereby also political: "personal is political".

Therefore, economics plays a major role in the integration of women into the labor market and their exclusion therefrom. Weak wages, for instance, do not pertain solely to

an individual or to the challenges faced by workers in the private sector; it is an issue which has greatly impacted the population and thus become a public concern, to the extent that it began playing a critical role in the declining of female participation in the labor market. This, in turn, is related to the overall weakness of the state, as well as the economic ailments of the private sector, the relationship between the private and public sectors, and the global economy at large.

Likewise, we may establish a parallel between the country's political situation and the phenomena under study. The war in Syria and its outpour of instability into the region have further exacerbated the problem by damaging trade and tourism, and by exuding wave after wave of refugees into neighboring countries, including Jordan.

Second: The circumstances and reasons driving Jordanian women to become and remain engaged in the private sector labor market

The scarcity of jobs across the public sector was the main trigger behind Jordanian women's exodus into private sector factories. Among the more common statements by female respondents were: "I only had an intermediate diploma and the government was only employing university graduates;" "my number in the queue to enter the public system was over one thousand;" and "there is no demand for my major in the public sector."

Another major motive behind Jordanian women's decision to become engaged in the private sector was the urgent need of a source of income, despite the fact that female factory workers in the northern, southern, and central regions of the Kingdom have expressed unanimous dissatisfaction with the wages they are entitled to, which they deemed to disproportionate in regards to the amount of work demanded of them. Responders' statements included: "I work from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon, with only a very short break in between;" "I collect a pay of one hundred and ninety Jordanian dinars for eight daily hours of work;" "my salary does not cover everyday expenses;" and "the manager does not even allow me to interact with other colleagues on the production line, and doing so may cause over 10 JOD to be deducted from my monthly pay."

When asked why they continued to work under such conditions, and for such low salaries, female workers commonly alleged an urgent need for a source of income: "My father married a second wife, and we now have no one else who'll provide for us;" "my father is disabled and my mother doesn't work;" "my father's income can't cover my brothers' education expenses;" "my parents passed away and I must cover me and my sisters' living expenses, including rent;" and "I work out of need for pocket money."

Moreover, upwards of 95% of the sampled population claimed that they continued to work in order to eventually collect pension

benefits: "I have seven years left to go until I can retire, and I don't want to lose my pension;" "I have no spouse or provider, so I must continue to work, because there will come a time when I will be unable to, and perhaps I will need medical treatment;" "I don't want to have to rely on other people when I become old;" "I don't want to end up homeless;" and so forth.

Very few female workers in this sector who reportedly wished to keep their jobs did so out of feelings of self-satisfaction arising from their work or a desire for recreation and entertainment. Similarly small numbers were registered among women working in tourism, telecommunications, and banking. The number of women claiming such motives remained particularly low outside the Ma'an area, where it was shown that work provided an opportunity for young women to escape the sphere of the household: "I graduated from Ma'an University, and since the only opportunity to leave the house back then was during classes, I realized that my only chance to leave the house again was by working at the factory;" "my father and brothers, in accordance with social norms and practices, would never allow a girl to go out alone without good reason;" "our community upholds morals which commonly require girls to stay home, and those who do not are seen as bad examples and are commonly shunned by the community." Another female respondent, working at a textile factory in Ajloun, stated: "Two fellow workers of mine, who are sisters, were unable to attend

this meeting because they were prevented from doing so by their brother, who deems it unsuitable for a girl to leave the house under most circumstances. In light of this, they opted to work at the factory, seeing as it was the only viable way for them to escape perpetual confinement to the household, and in spite of the fact that they are not free to dispose of their income as they will.”

Concerning this phenomenon, it is worth mentioning that the percentage of female workers whose income was disposed of by a third party did not exceed 25% of respondent factory workers.

In regards to the tourism sector, respondents were largely reported to be satisfied with their work and wishing to remain engaged in the field, given the salaries provided and the satisfaction they took from their work. Simultaneously, though, the attractiveness of this sector did not reflect on the number of women engaged in it, with parents, brothers, and husbands often opposing their involvement in such activities.

Supporting this aversion to women’s involvement in the tourism sector were notions regarding excessive freedom, anarchy, detachment from religion, and lack of ethics and self-control. These notions largely dominate the patriarchal culture, one which is reflected in the following statements: “I graduated from university with a major in tourism and antiquities. When I sat with my father to discuss the possibility of working, he refused outright that I work in restaurants or

hotels, even though it was my specialization and the one sector I was most interesting in working in;” “my fiancé will not allow me to work in such places, mostly due to the required night shifts;” “my daughter graduated with a major in tourism management and is now unemployed. She tried to find suitable work in a textile factory, only to quit due to the work load and the low wages. She is trying hard to find work in her field, but her father doesn’t want her to work in tourism, because allowing her to do so would be to commit a grave sin;” “my brother is a religious man and he himself once refused to work in tourism, because such workplaces are associated with practices which are religiously frowned upon, or ‘haram’, and, for him, it is a sin even to consider it.”

The number of women expressing a desire to work in such professions and businesses, however, is remarkable, with the wishes of their families, as opposed to their own, comprising the main obstacles preventing them from becoming engaged in these fields.

In this regard, postmodernist theory sheds considerable light on the phenomenon of modernity and its impact on non-European cultures – those who pursued some form of modernism or another under the influence of colonialism, postcolonialism, and globalization, under the standard of “development”. Bourdieu, Duvignaud, and Abdelmalek Sayad all conducted major studies into this phenomenon in North Africa, with all of them pointing to one

fundamental truth: that modernity, in all its manifestations, succeeded in dismantling agriculture and 'honor economy'-based societies. And yet, hardly anywhere did it manage to present modernism as an alternative – this is made clear by the failure of countless development projects, as well as by the exacerbation of poverty in its many forms across the developing world.

As much is clear in the light of the contradictory nature of values existing in Jordanian society. A girl who has come to depend on herself financially was not previously required to, but in fact prevented from doing so – this was the responsibility and prerogative of her father, her brother, her uncle, or any other surviving man in her family. Even after this substantial shift in social reality, the predominant culture did not offer the males a choice between undertaking and forfeiting their traditional responsibilities. Accordingly, their female counterparts (daughters, sisters) were likewise thereby prevented from pursuing their freedom beyond the control of their male sponsor, whether that be their father, their brother, or their son.

It can, however, be argued that this system, although it does not yet beget an ideal situation where equality is every citizen's prerogative and justice couldn't be more widely accessible, does seem to present fairer conditions than those experienced by some of the girls and women interviewed in the course of this study, whose fathers, brothers,

uncles, and sons are their sole providers. On the contrary, many males have opted out of their traditional responsibilities towards women, either so forced by poverty, or via the slow imposition of a new system of values, which is remarkably modern in nature. No longer do we often witness divorced women returning to the house of their fathers or brothers, or widows having to be supported by their relatives, or unmarried women and girls living out their lives as dependents of their male family members. Not to mention, of course, considerations regarding privacy and independence, which have become bulwarks of modern culture. To what extent, then, have women been referred to as "parasites" in traditional cultures facing the necessities inherent in modern life?

No information has of yet been provided, in the course of this study, regarding the cultural perception of honor, men's control over women – including where they go and where they work –, and the symbolic importance of greater liberty among women. Female workers have yet to conquer a social status that includes welfare privileges, as well as wages more similar to those collected by their male counterparts. Only then can they enjoy a modicum of political and economic power and freedom.

Most women and girls who were interviewed in the course of this study stated that they weren't allowed a great deal of autonomy. Many claimed that their earnings, over which they had little control to begin with,

did not allow them to exercise many liberties – in particular among women engaged in the tourism sector, the nature of whose work often conflicted with the wishes of their husbands and parents. More often than not, women were prevented from making autonomous decisions regarding their professional future, in spite of their majors and degrees. In fact, many respondents stated that a great deal of men seek to benefit from the earnings of working women whilst preserving their status as mere consorts.

All these factors point to the impact of discursive systems on the individual's self and his actions, insofar as such systems function as conceptual maps which allocate each agent to his or her appropriate place within the holistic worldview of the dominant culture. In light of this, it can be stated that the personal experiences of girls and women in any given society lack a fundamentally individual aspect, in that they too are molded by dominant discourses.

All such interactions between the individual and society at large support the postmodernist theory that the self is formed and revised in accordance with discursive systems which serve to chart the social reality and position the agent (and define his role) therein. It is in this sense that it may be claimed that women's experiences in patriarchal societies are not solely personal, nor solely social, but indeed derive their principles from both spheres.

This view, which was most clearly put forth by Foucault, prompts us to reconsider our views regarding power, which, from his perspective, are not only inextricably linked to the various mechanisms of prevention, control, repression, censorship and deception, but in fact serve as the root causes of our behavior and social realities, which they mold through discourse and language. Such a language, which relies heavily on such dichotomic concepts as lawful and unlawful, permitted and forbidden, pure and soiled, constitutes the groundwork upon which personal knowledge and experience will be articulated, in accordance with the tenets of dominant culture. In fact, this not only influences the attitude of males towards females, but also their discourses and behaviors – that is, those of both men and women – in their daily lives.

One would be hard-pressed to find an explanation for this phenomenon in the liberalist and Marxist traditions, who assumed that all women around the world shared the same condition and fundamental characteristics. These doctrines favored an economic perspective regarding women's roles and potentialities, while likewise striving to define the individual within a framework of scientific necessity, whereby the same traits which defined citizens of the capitalistic West would necessarily be present in other types of culture, disregarding the fundamental differences which are encapsulated in Bourdieu's concept of symbolic cultural capital.

It should be asserted, however, that while high wages do increase the perceived value of a given line of work, this cannot be considered as being the only factor influencing the level of social appraisal. Indeed, there are many lines of work which, while certainly carrying the benefit of high wages, are not commonly attributed proportional relevance at the level of social perception – including such jobs as airline and hotel staff. Such views are all but absent among the lower strata of the social pyramid.

Nevertheless, in striving to gauge the impact these issues have in the banking sector and among the upper – corporate – strata of the telecommunications sector, one would be hard pressed to find individuals who are dissatisfied with their current jobs, or who wish to become engaged in different sectors. One respondent, for instance, stated that: “Working in banking is feasible in terms of pay, bonuses, and interest-free loans. We benefit from appropriate working hours and a safe and woman-friendly work environment.” Others stated: “Work policy is regulated by clear laws;” “telecommunications and banking companies are accepting and welcoming of social and cultural diversity, as per the sectors’ necessities;” “the workplace is open to the public and there is no reason to suspect that women are subject to abuse;” “[we] benefit from decent wages and are able to contract interest-free loans. In addition, most banks and related companies are based in the city, so most commutes aren’t that long;” “most employees are middle- and upper-

middle class, and well educated, which means that the reputation of working women isn’t as big a concern as it is in the industry and tourism sectors.”

42% of employees in the surveyed bank were women, while in the telecommunications company that was approached, roughly one third of employees were women. The difference in these percentages, according to respondents, is owed to the nature of the work in both cases, since women are thought to value office work over such activities as maintenance and installation of equipment.

Third: Reasons why Jordanian women choose to remain in given sectors or withdraw therefrom

While looking into the reasons which draw female workers away from the industry and tourism sectors, particular attention was given to the nature of their work. It was concluded that their reasons for leaving the sector had often to do with available work conditions.

In analyzing this phenomenon, and the nature of their work in particular, it was observed that most factories paid minimum wages, unlike other parts of the private sector, such as education. Many workers reported a lack of motivation for remaining engaged in the sector, with some claiming outright that they’d prefer to work elsewhere. Almost all of these reported facing problems and challenges similar to those enunciated so far. While most respondents criticized the inadequacy of wages in the industrial sector,

others pointed to the negative connotations associated with working in tourism, underlining that both lines of work are subject to varying moral codes. In other words, whilst factory work is commonly associated with derogation, poverty, low wages, and exploitation, working in tourism – namely, hotels and restaurants – was perceived to imply a distancing from traditional values associated with honor, morality, and religion, though it carried greater benefits in terms of pay, rewards, and opportunities.

Some female workers in the industrial sector stated thus: “I’m thinking of quitting due my job due to low remuneration and exhaustion;” “our work routine is plain, repetitive, and does not foster creativity or innovation;” “my commute is long and I’m extremely tired when I get back home, so I practically don’t interact with the community;” “I’ve managed to save very little after 23 years of service – my savings don’t exceed five thousand dinars;” “there are precious little opportunities regarding raises and promotions on the production lines;” “people don’t respect our work; if I were a teacher, I’m sure people would respect me more;” “health insurance doesn’t include dental or obstetrics, which constitute the medical attention I need the most;” and “I work like a machine, and yet I’m not allowed to use my cell phone or chat with my colleagues on the production line, and our breaks are less than an hour long.”

In regards to the tourism sector, the situation

was different. In fact, a great number of women and girls had chosen this line of work in spite of their families’ wishes. Keep in mind that, as was mentioned before, 90% of decisions pertaining female employment in Jordan are seen as constituting the prerogative of the woman’s husband or family, rather than the woman herself.

These factors certainly do not diminish some girls and women’s own reservations towards interacting with males in the workplace – particularly in tourism-related activities. Other such concerns include spending nights away from home and the impact of such practices on their reputation within the local community, which is susceptible of hindering their chances of finding a husband.

In addition, an assistant human resources manager at a hotel claimed that, in spite of her satisfaction with her work and wages, her parents remained reticent towards the nature of her work. She was openly willing to work as a schoolteacher, but claimed that it was hard to get into the field and that she took up work in the tourism sector after having been unable to secure a job in education. She claimed to favor the education sector’s working hours and long vacations which, in her view, enabled married women to spend more time with their families. In fact, some female workers engaged in the hotel industry claimed to be dissatisfied with the number of work hours, as well as with the possibility of being reassigned to a different region without prior mutual agreement, and the difficulty in

obtaining adequate, justified leaves.

In the hotel industry, the average percentage of female workers did not exceed 15%. In fact, most women in this sector commonly occupied administrative positions, with only very small percentages of women being engaged in kitchen, room, and dining services. In addition, women were found to mostly work morning shifts, with those working in administration being largely subjected to the hours and shifts chosen by human resources managers.

In factories, likewise, the higher percentages of working females were shown to be employed in middle management positions – that is, secretarial and office staff –, with the highest number exceeding 46% of total workers. This figure dropped to one in every ten among senior position holders, and did not exceed 2% on the production lines.

Female workers on the production lines, which constituted the majority of such workers only fifteen years ago, suggest that the government is uninvolved in female employment. It has been claimed that employers are reluctant to employ women due to their alleged tendency towards quitting their jobs once married, their rejection of working evening shifts, and their demands of maternity leaves. These factors, however, are juxtaposed to the greater ability, skill, and productivity of female workers in comparison to their male counterparts, as admitted by employers.

This, of course, does not mean that other of

the aforementioned sectors did not witness an exodus of female workers as well. Some such workers engaged in the banking sector, though admittedly few, were reportedly dissatisfied with the number of working hours, which sometimes stretched into four o'clock in the evening. Others expressed concern with the nature of their work, since usury – the practice of lending at unfairly high interest rates – is forbidden under Islamic law. One worker claimed: “I can't make enough time to dedicate to my home and my children; we often work as late as five or six o'clock finishing accounts inventory, without overtime payment; and I give part of my salary to the poor as penance for working in a bank. I don't think I will continue my work here. Perhaps in the future I will seek a job in Islamic banking.”

It can be said that a great number of issues motivating women to withdraw from certain sectors are gender-related. In particular, their traditional social roles have largely remained unchanged. Although many number have succeeded in acquiring higher levels of education, entering the labor market, and even outperforming their male counterparts in numbers, achievements, and commitment, traditional views concerning their roles and potentialities remain an issue.

The desire to go back to dedicating themselves to their perceived household duties was particularly prevalent in sectors like tourism and transformative industries. In fact, some perceived the increased

participation of Arab women in the labor market as a great ruse, seeing as those women who did become workers seldom found a man willing to regard them as equal contributors to the family and household. As such, they often found themselves divided between their modern roles as breadwinners, and the social perceptions as per which they were foremost regarded as housewives and mothers.

In other words, the status of women did not improve with their new position towards the labor market. Working women did not receive adequate returns for their efforts, in terms of greater freedom and power over their bodies, or even control over their earnings, as happened in the West. Simultaneously, they lost the privilege to dedicate themselves solely to the household without taking on any such additional burdens.

These developments, furthermore, were witnessed in parallel with an exacerbation of poverty and diminishing wages, causing a decrease in the number of women choosing to leave the household or challenge social conventions. Situations of poverty are still seen to intensify in tandem with conservative discourses calling for a revival of traditional systems and uncompromising religious values. Under such circumstances, not only are women discouraged from pursuing workers' lives, but often they themselves become proponents of such disempowering discourses. Marginalization begets resistance, which is to be understood here as resistance towards modern discourses.

It is true that poverty, as claimed by Marxists, pushes women into the workforce. However, when accompanied by the dominance of a traditional, conservative rhetoric, cultural, not economic, laws, prevail, and women are drawn back into the fold. In truth, women inclined to remain workers under such conditions will often face grave consequences for their choice.

The liberalist school of thought gave great attention to material capital, while neglecting what Bourdieu (1999) referred to as symbolic capital, and its role in shaping people's behavior, convictions, and representations. Furthermore, these schools completely overlooked the possibility that a Western-bred notion of development would meet with resistance within non-Western societies, as well as the contradictions which necessarily arise between the openness to modern, liberal values, on the one hand, and the weight of traditional and social mores, on the other; not to mention, of course, the conflict instilled within the individual himself between the many disparate beliefs and convictions he might thereby harbor.

The postmodernist school emphasized the uniqueness of the realities experienced by women in different cultures, stressing the importance of shedding more light on daily, lived realities, as opposed to the vague, petrous theories that liberals and Marxists alike sought to proclaim as all-encompassing truths. In doing this, postmodernist theorists allowed for the development of policies

more capable of nurturing real partnerships among cultures; ones less likely to simply reinforce patriarchal control over women's bodies and work (Parpart, 1993).

Fourth: Types of work sought and avoided by women, and underlying reasons

As the decision of some women to integrate the workforce is still widely controversial in some circles, it is somewhat ironic that the question often follows as to the types of work they prefer, or consider to be "appropriate". Teaching, for instance, is not a widely preferred option, with some respondents referring to it as being "boring". Working in education in the private sector does not pay particularly well, with wages often being outright unfair, and the hours long. And yet, it is a particularly sought-after profession, seeing as it is deemed appropriate for women. A recent study by the Ministry of Labor concluded that 27% of female teachers in the private sector earn less than the minimum wage.

Many women expressed a desire to engage in lines of work other than education, though feeling subject to societal appreciations regarding what types of work are "decent", "dignified", or "appropriate" for women – namely tourism – in spite of the high quality of salaries offered in such sectors. On this note, figures from the General Statistics Department for 2014 showed that women working between 40 and 59 weekly hours

in tourism all earn a monthly wage of 500+ JOD (Department of Statistics, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2014).

It is, however, important not to fall into generalizations. When referring to general trends, what is meant is the dominant discourse which permeates vast segments of the population. It should be noted that female employment rose by 2.3% between 2014 and 2015, when figures stood at 20.7% and 22.5% [sic] respectively. This shows that the steeply rising unemployment rates, along with the economic factor, still haven't prompted significant action towards changing public attitudes and tendencies (Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2015).

This study has sought to steer away from overly referring to societal layers, categories, and hierarchies, in an attempt to avoid providing too much of a vertical perspective of society. Jordanian society, like that of other Arab countries, is not necessarily subject to clear-cut class divisions as can be found within European and American societies. Ownership of capital does not always mean that one belongs to a class where modern, liberal values predominate. Symbolic capital still plays a major role in a number of issues, often overlooked by some researchers who still fall prey to orientalism. Hence the importance of relying on postmodernist approaches as a means of accounting for certain cultural and sociologic peculiarities and structures which the liberal and Marxist schools may not have succeeded in interpreting.

Fifth: Factors that promote or hinder the development of women's skills and professional capabilities

The problem with wages ranked high on the list of factors promoting or hindering the work of women, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Some statements regarding this subject included: "My wages are not enough to cover personal expenses;" "if I happen to get married, I will quit work because I will not be earning enough to cover daily expenses, transportation costs, or nurseries." Women working administrative and higher-ranking jobs in the same sector, however, expressed reasonable levels of satisfaction with the wages they earned. Some such workers nevertheless expressed the same concerns regarding marriage as those working in the production line. The consensus was that if women were given a special allowance for nursery expenses, some of the problems faced by working mothers might thereby be solved, especially considering that many businesses and institutions are unable to open nurseries at the workplace.

Another possibility which was considered to encourage the work of women in the private sector was the idea of part-time work and of flexible work hours. Female workers expressed great interest in these options, since they would allow for greater reconciliation between their work lives and what were perceived to be their household "duties" as wives or mothers, or of caring

for old or sick parents. Some stated: "I am having trouble reconciling my work with my duties towards my husband and children at home, with my husband already accusing me of falling short on my obligations as a mother and wife;" "I am not married, and yet I find no time for myself, for socializing, to care for my sick mother, or to maintain the house. I couldn't live without Facebook and other social media;" "I am dissatisfied with my sons' performance at school, but I get home so exhausted that I can't help them with their homework;" "If I could work from ten to three, for example, I would be able to perform all of my duties easily."

All female workers in the tourism and industrial sectors agreed that the availability of morning shifts was the main factor drawing them to those lines of work, in addition to their family's partial tolerance of their doing so.

In terms of schedule flexibility, the factors emphasized were not only the possibility of part-time work and less work hours, but vacation was also seen as a great factor of attraction. The most satisfied female workers were those involved in the banking sector, where the rules allow women to take unpaid leaves, in addition to annual leave, for reasons pertaining to their families and children, while retaining the right to return to work afterwards.

This, of course, is related to the choice between work and domestic life. Although still present, the desire to quit work in favor of domestic

obligations was weaker among workers in the banking and telecommunications sectors. The fact that women are often forced to make this choice might explain the small number of women that hold higher-ranking positions in all sectors.

The results once more demonstrate the pervasiveness of a traditional discourse which fosters division of labor according to perceived gender roles. Indeed, several respondents claimed that it was a woman's job to care for her husband and children, as well as sick parents, and to perform other household duties. Regarding the return of a waning paradigm whereby women were allowed to focus solely on performing such duties while their husbands worked, not many were convinced that it would happen.

Finally, there was the issue of promotions, incentives, and rewards. Respondents from the industrial sector were particularly dissatisfied: "I've been working on the production line for the past twenty years, in the same profession, with the same routine, and I have no hopes of moving up the hierarchy. Working with machines has made a machine of me;" "I'm offered no incentives. After twenty years of hard work my salary has gone from 50 to 300 JOD at an average increase of no more than ten JOD annually." In contrast, such complaints were not voiced among women working in banking and telecommunication, where there was a great deal of satisfaction towards incentives, promotions, and rewards.

Sixth: Women's hopes of establishing independent businesses

Answers varied substantially among respondents regarding the establishment of private or independent businesses. Naturally, those workers who were shown to be satisfied with their wages and work environment tended to be more inclined towards remaining employed by third parties rather than take a risk by starting their own business instead. Respondents in the telecommunications and banking sectors stated as follows: "Private businesses are risky. Regular jobs are safer, and involve less problems;" "I cannot imagine having to pay debts in the event that my business doesn't take off. I could end up in prison. This, for me, is a terrifying prospect."

Those working in places such as factories and hotels, however, were more welcoming of the idea of starting their own businesses, provided that appropriate financing, training, and consulting services were available: "Yes, I welcome and encourage the idea of starting private businesses, provided that they are both respectable and financially feasible;" "My husband often suggests that I start a business producing pickles and other foods from home;" "I like independence and control over my working hours; that is, to be my own woman;" "I would be excited to start my own business venture if the necessary support was available and if the project carried reasonable chances of success."

Seventh: General trends among employers and coworkers regarding women's engagement in the private sector

From what was said by managers, employers, and officials, there does not seem to be much discrimination towards the employment of women in factories, hotels, banks, and other such businesses. In fact, most seemed to welcome the idea of hiring women, especially in the banking and telecommunications sectors. Nevertheless, upon reviewing respondents' answers on this matter, it was found that they still perpetuated the same dominant patriarchal discourse that they themselves blamed as the main obstacle to the professional development of female workers. Some answers were as follows: "I don't accept that any woman takes on a role that wouldn't be comfortable with my sister, my daughter, or my wife taking. Ultimately, we are a conservative society and a woman's honor comes before their work. Working night shifts, in my opinion, is dishonorable, and unsuitable for women;" "I always give my female workers priority over morning shifts, in spite of complaints by their male coworkers;" "I work to protect working women and safeguard their reputations. As such, I exempt female administrators from attending evening meetings and I don't assign them jobs which require travelling – especially to mothers – since I know that, even if socials customs and tradition don't dissuade them, their duties towards their families and children certainly will."

Such rhetoric is loaded with paternalist symbolism, which only intensified among workers in the lower hierarchical strata, and those from more modest backgrounds. This was especially notorious among factory workers: "Work is for men, not women. Women are sacred and should not go out unless absolutely necessary;" "Mixed work environments are a dangerous notion. Protecting the honor of women is necessary to protect the honor of all;" "Every job a woman takes is one less opportunity for men;" "Men are legitimately responsible for making a living; women are not;" "Women should only hold appropriate jobs, such as school teachers and obstetricians, which are necessary in order to prevent women having to expose themselves to male physicians;" "Even if there was only one woman in the world, I wouldn't marry her if she worked in a mixed work environment; in addition, women working with machinery or in a predominantly male work environment lose their femininity;" "I wouldn't allow my daughters or sisters to go to university because mixed environments are forbidden in my religion; young men, however, need to acquire the necessary qualifications to make a living;" "I'd have a problem with my manager being a woman. Women shouldn't be in charge. In addition, I am against mixed work environments."

Ten out of thirteen members of workers who participated in the focused groups agreed with these views; three of them, however, shyly disagreed, claiming that although they

avored separate work environments, they wouldn't mind working or studying in mixed environments, and would not prevent their wives, sisters, or daughters, from doing so either.

Eighth: Major challenges faced by businesses in employing women

Despite employers' general satisfaction towards female workers in terms of discipline, loyalty, productivity, compliance with the rules, and negotiation skills, many mentioned a number of downsides in hiring female workers. According to one business owner: "They often quit after all the money and effort has been put into their training. They leave on short notice, leaving their position open, and we have to start over from scratch."

Similarly, some employers complained on the subject of leaves: "When a female worker goes on maternity leave, to accompany her husband on a trip, or the like, the employer is forced, on the one hand, to find a replacement, and, on the other, to find someone who'll accept temporary employment. In addition, many of these jobs require training, and training carries costs. Finally, there's the issue of nursery costs, breastfeeding hours, and other downsides which can be avoided by simply employing male workers."

Lastly, some employers stated that being in charge of workers means sometimes having to be stern, perhaps even mildly aggressive,

when admonishing your subordinates, in order to ensure order and compliance. This, in their eyes, becomes a problem when women are involved, since they would not be comfortable dealing with women in a similar way.

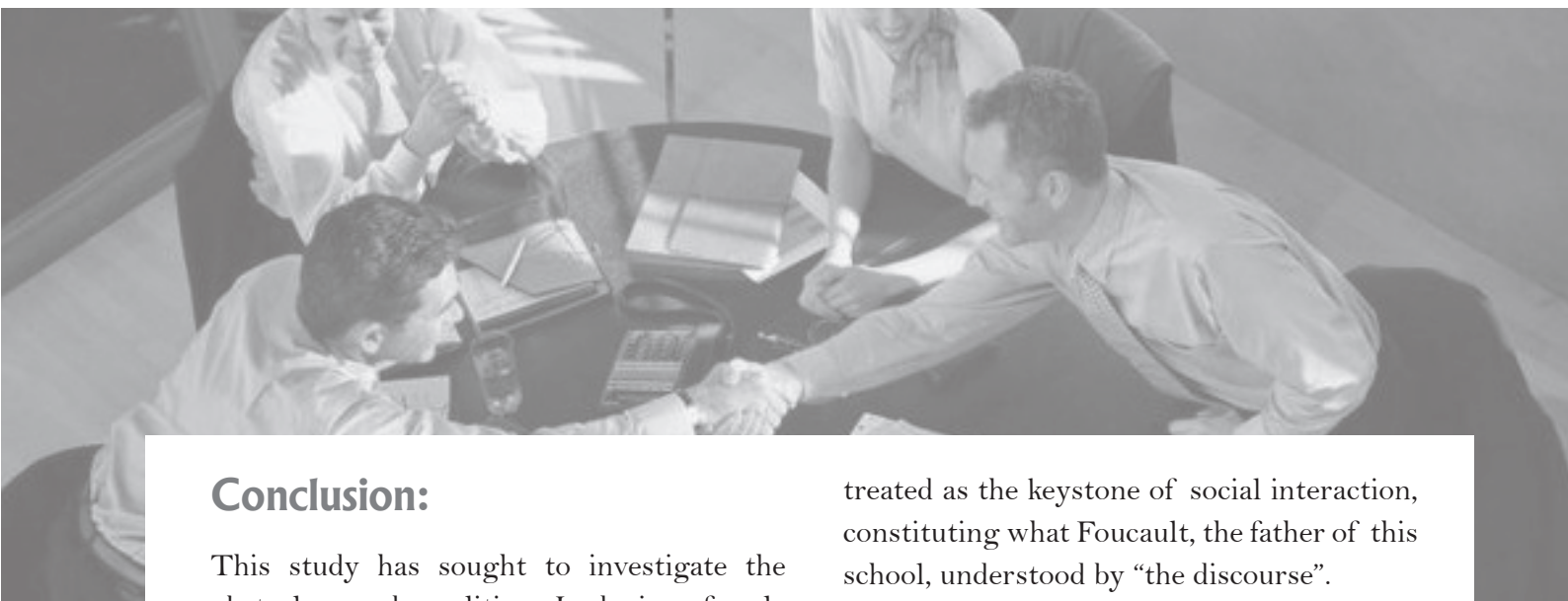
Ninth: Impact of the revision of Jordanian labor laws on female employment in the private sector, according to employers

Not many respondents provided concrete answers to this question, with some statements simply consisting of: "We work within the law;" or "All our work is legal." Some, however, comment on recent amendments to labor laws, which addressed the issue of harassment: "It is pertinent, but hard to apply." Another criticized the changes in the law, especially the part stating that 'should the employer or his representative commit harassment, he will be punished accordingly'. Others pointed out that harassment is a complex issue and that there always needs to be proof. In fact, in matters pertaining to harassment, some women begin to realize that they are fighting a losing battle. Lastly, while the law provides for the implementation of rules allowing for flexible working hours, in practice businesses will be exempted from implementing the policy should it not suit their business model.

Tenth: Exploring the skills that a woman must acquire in order to be valued in the labor market, from the perspective of employers

Employers almost unanimously stated that women are more diligent in improving their skills and expertise than men are. Some female applicants, they said, were rejected because their qualifications were incompatible with the position, or because they were overqualified and the employers were unable to provide salaries which reflected their experience and level of education.

Most employers admitted that many professional skills, as well as experience, are acquired on the job and through training courses whose costs are covered by the employer. Thus, some prefer that female applicants already possess a strong list of basic skills, such as computer literacy, a reasonable knowledge of the English language, as well as typewriting and communication skills.



Conclusion:

This study has sought to investigate the obstacles and realities Jordanian female workers face in the private sector by identifying, and describing the nature of, the underlying sociological and anthropological factors behind these women's eagerness to engage and remain in the banking, tourism, information technology, and transformative industry sectors, or lack thereof.

To achieve this, a postmodernist feminist approach was adopted in the interpretation of the social phenomena that pertain to the issues under scrutiny, due to the researcher's confidence in the ability of this school to provide the necessary tools to analyze, dismantle, and interpret these realities. From a methodological point of view, the selected approach proceeds by first dismantling the phenomenon in order to subsequently identify and examine its core components – practices, rhetorical patterns, and representations. In the postmodernist tradition, language and symbolic systems are

treated as the keystone of social interaction, constituting what Foucault, the father of this school, understood by “the discourse”.

One of the major conclusions arrived at during the course of this study has been that women in Jordanian society, in spite of their interiorization of modern mechanisms and dynamics, as witnessed in their engagement in new fields of education and employment, are still notoriously absent from a number of other spheres – namely the four economic sectors addressed in this study, i.e., banking, tourism, information technology, and the transformative industry.

The results of this study are further substantiated by those of several past inquiries into the subject of modernity and its cultural impact on non-European nations or those who underwent modernization under the influence of globalization or colonialism, in addition to those Third World countries which willingly sought to become modernized, in the post-colonial period, via the path of “development”. Authors such

as Bourdieu, Duvignaud, and Abdelmalek Sayad, all conducted extremely relevant studies on these realities in North Africa. Such studies arrived at convergent conclusions, all pointing to one, now commonly accepted, reality: that modernity, whether during or after the colonialist period, succeeded in dismantling many aspects of the traditional cultures of mostly agricultural societies – based, that is, to employ a term favored by these authors, on “honor economies”. However, upon dismantling the preceding paradigm, modernism was unsuccessful in establishing itself as a viable alternative – a fact that is made most notorious by the cases of failed development projects, as well as by the disastrous exacerbation and expansion of poverty within those communities.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that in some instances where the modernist alternative proved inviable, this was owed to a confused state of contradictory values lived by the local communities – one suggested by many lines of discourse employed by respondents in this study. Most notably, at a given moment, men began to forfeit many of their responsibilities towards women – traditionally conceived of as dependents of their male counterparts – in consonance with modern values such as freedom of decision and the emancipation of women. Thereby, in many cases it began to be demanded of women that they contribute to the family income, i.e., through work. This dilemma was expressed by many of the female respondents, who noted that men in their society wished to benefit from their

earnings, all the while conserving in them the status of “consorts” and dependents.

The uniqueness of the manifold realities lived by women in different cultural contexts is emphasized by postmodernists in their stated need to shed more light on the actuality of lived, everyday experience, as opposed to the petrous theories of liberalism and Marxism. Only this, they insist, will allow for the development of policies capable of achieving palpable development and empowerment of female workers, as opposed to those that merely seem to amplify patriarchal control over their bodies and labor.

This situation is fueled by the predicament of poverty, and the lack of incentives offered by the private sector, where low wages hardly encourage women to break away from, and challenge, conventional systems. Everywhere, the intensification of poverty is parallel to that of traditional, conservative discourse, whereby heritage and religion are – often radically – exalted. Naturally, such discourses do not encourage the emancipation of women, but instead demand from them submission, obedience, and the preservation of the traditional status quo – and many women might, and in fact do feel inclined, to foster these perspectives. Marginalization often begets resistance – resistance, that is, to many aspects of modernity, through the employment of conservative discourses.

It is made clear by the prevalence of an overbearing gender-based division of labor that this paradigm has undergone very little

change over time. Despite more and more women seeking education and economic involvement through labor, their traditional roles have remained largely the same. The various aspects of these roles, furthermore, were referred to as “duties” by female respondents. A state of conflict is hereby outlined, where the clash between the roles imposed by tradition and those offered by modernity becomes such a heavy burden to bear that many a woman eventually opts for the domestic life of the dependent. This, as we have seen, owes to the fact that women who chose to engage in economic participation and contribution to the household seldom found that their sharing of that burden had been reflected in a change in their roles in the family. This situation was most notorious in the industrial and tourism sectors, and to a lesser extent in the banking sector.

The results, however, were remarkably different when this phenomenon was analyzed at the level of female respondents holding leadership positions across the tourism and hospitality sectors, or involved in financial or telecommunications companies and banks where working conditions are commonly described as “reasonable” and even “respectable”.

It should be noted, though, that such discourses tend to be most heavily spread amongst women belonging to groups more open to modern values – those possessing a higher degree of education, and those belonging the middle and upper-middle

classes. Its presence dwindles, and in fact practically disappears, the further we move towards the lower, i.e., poorer and less educated, strata of the social pyramid.

Although this study has largely been theoretically rooted in postmodernism as its favored tool of interpretation and analysis, there are other pertinent approaches to the phenomenon under study, such as Mills’ materialistic or monetary interpretation. While addressing the concept of sociological imagination (Mills, 1959), Mills demonstrated that we cannot consider the personal life of an individual as something detached from the context of experienced history and the surrounding social reality. According to Mills, the scientific or sociological imagination of any phenomenon involves an effort to understand the extent to which one may consider personal issues as being also, in a way, public and social. From this, we can understand the scope of influence that all these factors have in the creation of one’s sociopolitical reality, in that all that which belongs to the personal sphere becomes simultaneously political in nature: “personal is political.”

The economic factor has played a very significant role in influencing the degree of women’s participation in the labor market. Far from being an obstacle found only in a small number of individual cases, or of constituting the predicament of a minority, the reality of women’s low wages in the private sector has become a public, and indeed

social, concern, with great impact on the phenomenon of female unemployment and women's reluctance to engage in the labor market.

The political context may likewise shed some light on this phenomenon. This study has shown that the dynamics established between the concerned executive bodies of government and the private sector is characterized by a chronic disharmony, rather than cooperation. In fact, the private sector has expressed dissatisfaction at the government's level of commitment and performance, to the extent that many even consider international organizations to be more engaged in promoting women's employment than the government itself. In particular, these admonishments targeted government agencies' unwillingness to make certain investments that have had proven positive impact on women's employment. In short, the private sector has voiced frustration towards a government perceived to be unsupportive of positive competition.

Lastly, the situation is of course worsened by the current regional upheaval stemming from the Syrian war, which by negatively affecting trade and tourism, as well as through the overflow of refugees into neighboring countries, including Jordan, has further strained the country's economy.

The outcomes of the statistical and qualitative analyses carried out have shown that Jordanian women face a number of challenges in the sectors under study. These challenges

are closely related to the economic necessity of work, as well as the wage gap between genders, and the difficulties in balancing work life with such domestic circumstances as marriage and children. Nevertheless, these important national sectors are deemed able to attract and employ woman workers, and in fact regard them as a valuable human resource in promoting their own growth and advancement.

Statistics and interviews show the scarcity of female entrepreneurs. Most employers, therefore, are men. Furthermore, since the predominant businesses are small and medium-sized, employers often do not follow employment policies which account for issues such as gender equality and woman-friendly work environments. Instead, they typically reflect a male-dominated culture in aspects of human resources management such as hiring and promotions.

A prevailing gender-based division of work is then notorious in the sectors under study, and has undergone little change over time. It begs reiteration that in spite of women increasingly seeking higher education, and taking on traditionally male roles, their traditional status has largely remained unchanged, with female respondents ceaselessly referring to their traditional roles as "duties".

One factor, however, seems to serve as the underlying link connecting workers', employers', and officials' outlooks on women's labor, and that is the prevalent social discourse

regarding women in general. Jordanians' perception of women naturally weighs heavily on what options and opportunities are available to women – which are adequate and in consonance with their social roles – and this, of course, affects women's access to given sectors, positions, and workplaces. This is not to say that government officials, the private sector, and the community don't see the low participation of women in economic life as an issue – it is certainly regarded by many as a problem which needs to be addressed. In terms of legislation, however, and of community action and involvement, women are not yet seriously regarded as true partners in economic development.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without adequate equality of rights, duties, and opportunities among men and women – each must be required, and allowed, to assume a contributive role compatible with the endeavor of building an economy and society capable of benefiting from a diverse array of talents and capabilities. This cannot be achieved while efforts towards increasing the economic participation of women remain encased in the purely discursive, theoretical sphere. In addition, framing the question in terms of what can be considered acceptable or be made available to women in the absence of a man effectively undermines the very enterprise that is to be undertaken through an at best implicit bias. Only insofar as the issue is seen as having necessarily to depart from women's freedom of choice as a principle can advancements be made towards

their full involvement as major players in the labor market, and in the economy at large.

In view of the conclusions arrived at in the course of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made in what concerns further approaches to this issue:

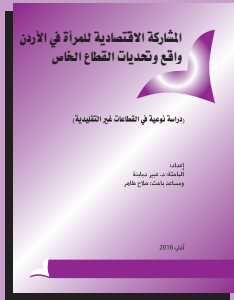
- Conduct further qualitative-focused researches in order to better explore the underlying cultural and societal causes of the phenomenon;
- Dedicate greater attention to the rhetorical manifestation of the culture and social mentality, seeing as, as has been shown, it is one of the key obstacles to women's progressive integration to the labor market. Efforts must include, without being limited to, analysis of educational curricula, media content, as well as official, academic, and religious discourse;
- Urge the government to promote incentive policies in those sectors which provide affordable opportunities for working women, in order to create an atmosphere of competitiveness favorable to the employment of female workers;
- Conduct more qualitative studies on the idea of part-time and flexible work, and its viability as an alternative;
- Take the necessary measures to provide safe working environments for women in all branches of the private sector, and push for the development of a legal framework that ensures vigilance

- over issues such as work hours, unpaid overtime, holidays, and rest hours;
- Set up an effective system of supervising wage fairness and the work conditions of foreign workers and refugees;
 - Promote better understanding of labor laws among unemployed female graduates and those seeking employment;
 - Facilitate small investments by providing the necessary conditions to encourage the establishment of small businesses;
 - Develop university admission policies that suit the needs and requirements of the market;
 - Involve women in drawing policies and plans for economic development and reform;
 - Work on a comprehensive plan to address the problem of low participation of women in the labor market, and proceed with plans to combat the situations of poverty and unemployment behind women's avoidance of the private sector;
 - Work within a comprehensive national plan to exert efforts to empower women economically and among all relevant authorities, whether they be government agencies, or civil and international organizations;
 - Strengthen the role of trade unions in matters pertaining labor issues, and endorse the protection of due labor rights for all male and female workers;
 - Promote community awareness of the importance of female workers' rights and duties, and progressively strengthen the negotiating capacity of female workers.

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