

The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the Employment of Women in the Private Sector in Jordan

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the employment of women in the private sector in Jordan. 50 women working in the private sector were interviewed. Based on the interviews and the observations for those women, it was found that half of the women working in the private sector either lost their jobs or their salaries were cut into half. That negatively affected the living conditions of those women.

Keywords: The Coronavirus pandemic, working women

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Introduction

Since suffering from the Coronavirus pandemic, many societies realized that they can't recovery from this pandemic nor return to the conditions that were before this pandemic. Thus, they must develop themselves and set plans for recovery. Such plans must be based on making reforms in the aim of fostering a comprehensive economic growth. However, in the light of the changes that the world has been going through since the spread of the Coronavirus, the economic and social repercussions started to affect the world on global and national levels.

Several precautionary measures were taken to handle the Coronavirus pandemic. They include isolation, quarantine, social distancing measures, travel ban, and full closure of all public institutions. They negatively affected the economic status of all countries. They led to facing a global stagnation. They have a negative impact on the whole world in social and economic aspects. In short, any global crisis including the COVID 19 crisis has negative impacts. However, the severity of such impacts vary from one country to another due to the variation in terms of their socio-economic status.

Women have a distinguished role in the development of human societies. The advancement of nations can be measured based on the attention granted to women. Attention to women-related issues is considered a fundamental issue. It is considered important when addressing social and human-related issues. Much attention has been granted to women-related issues by organizations, civil institutions, specialists, educators, and the ones making reforms. That applies despite the fact that the materialistic and spiritual orientations of those people differ. People in all societies today believe that women are still negatively affected by the stereotypical ideas promoted about them. Such stereotypical ideas restrict women's role in society. They oppress women and enforce patriarchal power on women.

The socio-economic conditions of several countries were significantly affected by the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19). This pandemic led to having political crises. It negatively affected the fragile economic and political systems in countries. That is because this pandemic threatened the job security of millions of people. It is because this pandemic led to a rise in the poverty levels (The World Bank, 2020). To be more specific, this pandemic led to having 2.5 million individuals – including women- worldwide losing their jobs. That's attributed to the negative financial impacts of this pandemic on all types of organizations and sectors.

In addition, this pandemic negatively affected the global economic growth. It negatively affected the global power market. It negatively affected the demand on several products and services worldwide, such as: the demand tourism services and air flights (Jeelali, 2021). It negatively affected the profits of commercial banks due to the suspension of several banking operations and closure of stock markets (Ismail, 2023). In several countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, social protection institutions played a major role in addressing the negative impacts of this pandemic on people.

As for Jordan, it is a country that suffers from the scarcity of resources. It suffers from food insecurity. It suffers from the scarcity of the sources of energy, economic crisis, and refugee crisis. It suffer from the inability to deliver effective public services to all people in society. It suffers from economic and financial burdens. Despite such challenges, the Jordanian public institutions were capable during this pandemic to deliver urgent financial aids to people. Such aids were delivered through special programs. Despite the delivery of such aids, concerns have been increasing about having an increase in the gap between the social strata in the Jordanian society since the emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic. That's because a great number of workers and families rely on daily wages. Concerns have been increasing about having those workers and families becoming poor, because

many people of them don't have a social security number (Jawad, 2020).

Statement of the Problem:

The Jordanian society went through several changes and transformations in all the economic, social, political and cultural areas. Such changes and transformations affected several aspects of life in the Jordanian society. Despite the gains acquired by Jordanian women in terms of education and employment, there are debates about women employment in Jordan. For instance, some people believe that women employment in Jordan enabled women to improve their status, whereas others believe that women employment in Jordan led to increasing the burdens imposed on women. The latter ones believe that women must be kept under the control of a husband, brother or even a male boss at work. Having such views serve as a constant threat for the status of women in family and society. In addition, there are social factors that hinder women from improving their status in society. Despite such views, women today are empowered due to the socialization methods, education, and media. However, the Coronavirus pandemic negatively affected all categories of people in societies including women. That's because this pandemic negatively affected the global economic growth, trade, and global labour market. To be more specific, this pandemic led to having 2.5 million individuals – including women- worldwide losing their jobs. That's attributed to the negative impacts of this pandemic on all the sectors. Such loss of jobs is attributed to the shift from buying things face to face into buying things online due the fear of getting infected (Jeelali, 2021). Hence, the present study aimed to explore the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the employment of women in the private sector in Jordan.

The Significance of the Study (theoretical significance)

The significance of the present study lies in enriching the relevant theoretical literature. For instance, this study offers an economic vision. This visions takes into consideration the socio-economic changes that occurred to women's status in society.

The Significance of the Study (practical significance)

The present study aimed to examine the recent societal transformations and their implications on the status of women at the workplace.

The Study's Questions:

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

- Q.1. What is the stand of employers on having women employed in the Jordanian private sector during the Coronavirus pandemic?
- Q.2. What is the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the unemployment rate among the females in Jordan?

Definition of Terms

Coronavirus pandemic: It is a pandemic that involves the spread of a viral disease worldwide. The symptoms of this virus range from minor to severe symptoms.

Employment of women: It refers to having single, married, divorced, or widowed women working in the educational, health, or administration fields. Such women may be working in the private or public sector in exchange for a monthly wage.

Privates sector: It refers to all the institutions and companies that are being run by the state.

Theoretical framework and previous studies

Employment:

There are various definitions for the term (employment). Some people believe that everyone is obliged to work regardless of his gender. However, others believe the employment is a right enjoyed by all men and women. Employment can be defined as an activity that allows one to be productive, generate wealth and make a civilization. It requires exerting a cognitive or physical effort by one to meet his moral and financial needs.

As for Women employment, some people believe that it's a right enjoyed by women, provided that women work with meeting certain conditions and enjoying equal opportunities with men (Alsharqawi, 2003).

Women employment

It is a natural right and others consider it as women's sacred duty. It leads to raising production in society. It leads to improving the welfare of the members of families in society. Employment for women isn't just a regular economic activity for getting an income. In fact, it is an existentialist activity that develop their personalities in cognitive, social and cultural aspects (Abu Melhem, 2017).

Employment is an important necessity for women. It's related to various aspects of women's lives, such as: economic, social and developmental aspects. The significance of women employment manifests in developing

society and fostering the development of the civilization. Women employment allows women to contribute to making achievements in society throughout various stages of history. It allows women to develop their personalities, senses, intellectual capabilities, and social relationships. It is one of the women's needs. Meeting such a need shall develop women's personalities which shall lead to developing societies. However, women employment must be regulated by laws, legislations to ensure the protection of women's rights.

Women employment in the private sector

Employment is one of the important economic and administrative concepts. It reflects the level of economic activity in society. It reflects the effectiveness of the utilization of the economic resources in the aim of getting a revenue or a better service. It reflects the efficiency in utilizing the elements of products. Such elements include: employment, capital, machines, raw materials, equipment, and etc.. (Stainer, 1997).

The importance of employment manifests in raising production, and turning resources into products and services that are needed by people in society. The production level of an employee can be measured through identifying the amount of products/services he offers each unit of time (e.g. hours) (Fabricant, 1959). It is a measure for identifying the amount of inputs needed to get a specific amount of outputs (El Sharkawy, 2003).

The importance of the present study lies in addressing vital issue that's related to the Jordanian working woman. Through this study, the researcher sheds a light on the employment of women in the economic sectors. Such an employment contributes to fostering economic growth. The drop in the number of working women negatively affects economy and cause numerous economic problems (Bartholomew et al., 2021). The working women suffer from problems in achieving a balance between handling family duties and work-related duties. Hence, they are always exerting effort to achieve this balance. That makes those women experience feelings of anxiety and regret. It makes those women experience a conflict throughout all their lives. Those women contribute to fostering development. They handle many burdens at workplace (Al-Sharqawi 2003).

Factors that forced women to get a job:

The most controversial issue in the contemporary age is represented in women employment. In this regard, women employment is considered today one of the rights of women. It became one of women's need due to the nature of the socio-economic transformations. However, taking the decision to work by a woman is a step associated with several disadvantages. Despite the attention granted to women employment, the duties of women in many traditional societies are still represented in doing household chores, and children duties (Abu Melhem, 2018).

Some studies suggest that one of the most important motives that drove women to go out to work is the economic need. To illustrate more, women today face financial difficulties due to the high living costs and the need to improve their living conditions. They also need to improve the living conditions of their family members (Al-Batanieh, Athamna, 2016).

The most important economic motives and reasons that forced women to join the labour market are listed below:

- The need to raise the overall family income to improve the living conditions of the family members.
- The absence of a breadwinner in the family. It may be attributed to going through divorce, or the death, or illness of the head of the family. That forces women to search for a job. Women may search for a job to support their mothers or elderly fathers financially.
- Having a husband who's unemployed.
- The high living costs in society and the changing patterns of consumer behavior in society due to the technical and technological development to create multiple technologies and service means forced women to work. In addition, having many luxuries things turning into basic commodities at home forced women to work. The high prices of products, goods and services forced women to work.
- The need of women to enjoy economic independence. Such independence shall make women enjoy a sense of security and feel satisfied psychologically. It shall enable women to meet their needs and refrain from relying on their husbands. It shall make women enjoy a high level of self-fulfillment.

Based on the aforementioned information , it becomes clear the importance of the economic motives for women's work outside the home and to support the husband in the standard of living, raise the family's income and improve the economic situation (Abu Melhem, 2018).

Social motives:

Women began to participate in the economic, social and political arenas, and this is evident in the educational and social fields, so they went out to educational institutions, health care and other different sectors.

- Psychological motives and self-realization contributed to encouraging women to leave the house and search for work to occupy the time of poverty and self-realization.

Women Employment and the Coronavirus pandemic

Therefore, women still face challenges in the labor market in the private sector. Such challenges include: the high unemployment rate and the low economic participation. The severity of such challenges include after facing the Coronavirus pandemic. The rate of economic activity of Jordanian women is 14.9%, which is very low. There has been an increase in the unemployment rate due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the negative effects of this pandemic. This pandemic negatively affected several economic sectors. It led to having more than 100 thousand male and female workers lose their jobs. Thus, it negatively affected more than 400 thousand others. It led to having a contraction in the Jordanian economy. It led to a decline in the amount of wages. It led to having a state of imbalance between the number of job opportunities and the demand on them. The number of job opportunities available for women in the private sector decreased significantly due to the pandemic. The social roles of women became more significant during the pandemic. They include: women's role as mothers. They include: the role of women in taking care of children and doing household chores. Such roles serve as psychological and physical burdens on working women. Thus, working women exert major amount of effort in doing their jobs at workplace and doing their social roles at home. The number of Jordanian families headed by a woman has reached more than a quarter of a million families as added through the report of the General Statistics (2021).

It should be noted that this pandemic hindered many employers worldwide to fulfill the contractual obligations assigned to them under the employment contract. Hence, many employers were forced to terminate the employment contracts of many employees including female employees. During the pandemic other employers were forced to suspend the implementation of such contracts for a specific period of time till becoming capable of implementing them. Such a suspension negatively affected the income of many female employees worldwide. During the pandemic, other employers were forced to cut down the salaries of many employees, including female employees due to the drop in profits (Albab, 2022).

In this regard, Kristal, and Yaish (2022) add that the Coronavirus pandemic increased the severity of the gender inequality problem. That's because the consequences of the economic downturn following the coronavirus pandemic are harsher on women. Such consequences are represented in having a drop in the income of working women and having an increase in the number of unemployed women in society (Kristal, and Yaish, 2022). The same is suggested by Alon et al. (2020). The latter researchers add that many women during the lockdown lost their jobs and many women had to pay additional costs for childcare needs during the pandemic. They also added that the single working mothers faced additional difficulty in carrying out the childcare duties. Facing the latter additional difficulty made it more difficult for many single working mothers to work from home during the pandemic (Alon et al., 2020).

Augustus (2021) adds that this pandemic negatively affected working women. That is because working from home became more difficult for mothers due to the additional childcare duties and having more cleaning and meal preparation chores. Such additional duties and chores discourage many mothers from working during the pandemic. They negatively affected the productivity of the working mothers when doing work-related tasks. Having lower productivity at workplace led to a reduction in the income of many working mothers during the pandemic. Such a drop in income increased the gender inequality problem in many societies (Augustus, 2021).

Mustafa et al. (2021) add that this pandemic negatively affected the female entrepreneurs. That is because this pandemic led to a drop in the volume of business sales. Thus, this crisis led to a drop in the income of female entrepreneurs. This pandemic negatively affected the career of many women and their ability to retain a job, because it negatively affected their mental wellbeing and lifestyle (Mustafa et al., 2021).

Goldin (2022) adds that most of the women who suffered from the consequences of this pandemic are mothers and caregivers. She adds that many women working in restaurants, hospitality, retail, and beauty salons saw the organization they work at closing due to the negative economic impact of this pandemic. This pandemic also increased the childcare time to be dedicated by mothers. That made it difficult for working mothers to handle work-related tasks and childcare related tasks at the same time (Goldin, 2022).

Amber et al. (2021) add that the categories affected the most by this pandemic are represented in the women with children and the women who lost their jobs. That's because this pandemic led to having an increased mental load on women which made women stressed. The latter researchers add that women lost their jobs during this pandemic, because many business organizations were forced to close their business organizations due to the drop in profit (Amber et al., 2021).

Previous studies

Batayneh, and Athamneh (2016) aimed to measure the productivity of women in the Jordanian labor market at the macroeconomic level. They also aimed to measure such productivity at the sectoral level (agriculture, industry, tools, and workers). They targeted the period (1970-2012) and several economic sectors. It was found that women's productivity is low in all the targeted sectors, except for the service sector. The percentage of women's productivity in the public sector is 0.83. This value was the same at the level of the economy and the industrial sector. Although there is a difference between the percentage of working men and the percentage of working women, those percentages have been increasing on macroeconomic and sectoral levels.

Abu Melhem (2017) aimed to shed a light on the phenomenon of having Jordanian women working and the social dimensions of this phenomenon from the perspective of those women in Jerash, Jordan. He used the social survey method. He selected a sample of working women in Jerash. The population consists of all the women working in Jerash in the public sector and registered in the Civil Service Bureau. It consists from (3740) working women based on the data obtained in July, 2015. The sample consists of (86) working women in Jerash, Jordan. Those women were divided equally between the public and private sectors. They were chosen through the purposive random method in order to achieve the objective of the study. It was found that there are statistically significant differences - at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) - between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to (age, place of residence, marital status, destination and type of work). In addition, it was found that there isn't any statistically significant difference - at the significance level. (0.05)- between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to the respondents' (academic qualification).

Al-Rasheed and Abu Dawla (2000) aimed to explore the attitudes of women towards the obstacles hindering them from getting promoted at workplace in the private sector. They targeted all the administrative levels. They used a survey. The survey forms were passed to a random sample consisting from 511 female employees. Those employees were chosen from various administrative levels. The survey targets five (5) areas. Each area is covered by six (6) items. Those areas reflect the type of obstacles. They are: (the social field, vocational and knowledge-related rehabilitation, the institutional field & poor support by the senior management, inequality at workplace, and the psychological and physical field). The respondents believe that the first four obstacles hinder them from getting promoted at workplace. They didn't believe that the psychological and physical obstacles hinder them from getting promoted at workplace. The latter researchers recommend showing more attention to education in society in order to promote positive attitudes in society towards women's employment and ambition. They recommend conducting more studies about the role and employment of women.

Marei (2001) aimed to identify the obstacles that hinder the Jordanian women from getting promoted and holding decision making and top leadership positions. They used a survey. The survey forms were passed to several working women in the business organization in Madenet Sahab Alsenah'ayah and Madenet Alhasan Alsenah'ayah. The sample consists from 116 working women. It was found that there isn't any significant difference between men and women in terms of the academic qualifications and competencies needed to hold top administrative positions. It was found that the most important obstacles hindering women from getting promoted are represented in the stereotypical images about women. Such images include: perceiving women as individuals who aren't competent enough to hold such positions. Such obstacles include: organizational obstacles, like having poor top administration, discrimination against women, and offering women less opportunities than men for training and qualifying them.

Methodology

Requirements of the field investigation

The aforementioned theoretical framework sheds a light on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on women employment in the private sector in Jordan. In the light of this framework, the present study is a study that adopts the descriptive analytical approach. It adopts this approach to explore the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on women employment in the private sector.

The Study's approach

The social survey-based approach was adopted in this study in order to meet the intended goals of this study.

Data collection methods

In order for the researcher to achieve the intended goals, accurate data must be collected. The researcher used several data collection methods. Such methods include: interview and survey. Those two methods are used in social studies. In addition, the researcher used the simple observation and observation through participation method. He also relied on people delivering data to him.

Age:

Table (1): The distribution of the respondents in accordance with age

No.	Age range	No.	Percentage
1	25 – 18	10	20%
2	32 -26	15	%30
3	40 -33	13	%26
4	47 - 41	12	%24
	Overall	50	%100

Age is considered one of the important and independent variables in any study. That's because age reflects the nature of the respondents' answers. To illustrate more, answers of young female workers differ from old ones. That's because age affects the maturity level of one. Based on the above table, 20% of the respondents' ages range between 18-25 years. Furthermore, 30% of the respondents' ages range between (26 – 32) years. To add more, 26% of the respondents' ages range between 33-40 years. In addition, 24% of the respondents' ages range between 41 -47 years. Based on those percentages, most of the respondents are young.

Occupation:

Table (2) The distribution of the respondents in accordance with occupation

No.	Occupations	Number	Percentage
1	Secretary	8	%16
2	Sewing workers	17	%34
3	Female Cleaners	12	%24
4	writer	4	%8
5	Device Drivers	9	%18
	Overall	50	%100

Profession is one of the important factors affecting respondents' answers. That's because profession affects one's income. Based on the above table, 16% of the respondents work as secretaries. 34% of the respondents work as sewing workers. 24% of the respondents work as female cleaners. 8% of the respondents work as writers. 18% of the respondents work as device operators.

Table (3) The distribution of the respondents in accordance with academic qualification

No.	Qualifications	No.	Percentage
1	BA degree	8	%16
2	Diploma degree	6	%12
3	Secondary school certificate	10	%20
4	Less than a secondary school certificate	26	%52
	Overall	50	%100

Academic qualification affects the respondents' answers. That is because one's academic qualification affects his income. Based on the above table, 16% of the respondents hold BA degree. 12% of the respondents hold a diploma degree. 20% of the respondents hold a secondary school certificate. 52% of the respondents hold less than a secondary school certificate.

Results and Discussion

The first question

Q.1. What is the stand of employers on having women employed in the Jordanian private sector during the Coronavirus pandemic?

To answer the first question, interviews were conducted with female workers working in the Jordanian private sector. Those interviewees added that the pandemic negatively affected the employment status of women more than men. They added that this pandemic has several negative impacts on working women. For instance, many employers were forced to reduce the number of the certificate during the pandemic. Thus, many working women were fired. In addition, many working women suffer from cutting their wages into half due to this pandemic.

The second question:

Q.2. What is the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the unemployment rate among the females in Jordan?

The economic recession resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic led to a rise in the unemployment rates among women. Based on the general statistical data on females, the unemployment rate during the second quarter of 2020 is 24.4%. That means that the unemployment rate increased by 1.4%. Such values are in agreement with the expectations of experts in economy. Such expectations suggest that there will be a rise in unemployment and poverty rates among women in Jordan. They suggest that many women shall quit working voluntarily after shifting from the fact-to-face education into the online education. That's because those women shall be forced to stay for longer period of time at home to take care of their children and supervise the way their children learn.

In addition, this pandemic led to increasing the unemployment rate among the females in Jordan. That's because many companies in Jordan were forced to reduce the number of their staff. Hence, such companies fired many women.

Conclusion

- During the pandemic, many families suffered from poor economic conditions. That led to suffering from violence, deviation and family problems.
- The number of unemployed women increased during the pandemic. That led to increasing the suffering of the families that are financially supported by one women only. The pandemic increasing the childcare chores of mothers.
- This pandemic led to an increase in the number of the families that suffer from violence by the husband. It led to an increase in committing the acts of violence in families

Recommendations

The researcher recommends:

- Offering more attention and support by the Jordanian government for working women.
- Providing financial aids to poor people in society by community and charitable institutions.
- Conducting more studies about the impacts of this pandemic on women in Jordan

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