

# Iranian Women's University Education and its Consequences for their Occupational Status in the Society (Case Studies of Female Graduates of the Islamic Azad University, Khoramabad Branch)

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**Abstract.** In any society, the main production factor is manpower, that is, the human source that has been continuously emphasized quantitatively and qualitatively by economists. Women, a stratum receiving less attention as manpower, need more education appropriate to the requirements of our society. As a country that pays attention to women's training and education, Iran has provided women with abundant facilities for their education. However, there are still many obstacles for Iranian female graduates, some of which have been addressed in this study.

The present study has adopted a sociological approach to the investigative measurement of Khoramabad Islamic Azad University female graduates. The data has been gathered through a questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.85. For data analysis SPSS software was employed. The sample size was estimated on the basis of Cochran test, and through the multi-stage sampling of population, the sample was determined. Based on research questions, we formed our hypotheses. Results showed significant relations among the main variables. Accordingly, it was demonstrated that women have had a few achievements throughout their higher education in Khoramabad Branch of the Islamic Azad University, although there are still some obstacles.

**Keywords:** Female employees, Islamic Azad University Khoramabad Branch, Economic Indices, University graduates

## 1. Introduction

Manpower is considered as one of the most important and most effective factors of development in any society [1]. Clearly, gender should not be taken into consideration as a discriminating factor. Theorists of development believe that development is not possible without the participation of women [2]. The status of women and the widespread presence of female employees in the social arena of contemporary world have increased the importance of higher education for the creation of the female expertise force. In the 21st century, the era of knowledge and information, ignoring the women is indeed a deviation from the road to comprehensive and durable development [3]. One of the important indexes for the assessment of development is the number of university graduates in a country, as it promotes the individual as well as social capabilities [4].

Higher education, as one of the significant phenomenon, and as a determining organization in Iranian society, carries a significant burden of promoting educational responsibility which force ahead politics, economics, social, and cultural issues in society [5]. As a developing country, Iran takes full advantage of the manpower graduating from universities. However, the Iranian women face numerous difficulties in the way of their progress. The establishment of Islamic Azad University brought about a positive development

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in small cities, because it focused on absorbing local students, and there was a growth of females who graduated from the university. Consequently, women managed to take part in various workplaces of small towns including Khoramabad. The present study, however, has focused only on the Islamic Azad University, Khoramabad Branch (IAUKB).

This branch is situated in Lorestan Province, south-west of Iran. Khoramabad Branch is one of the important higher education centres in west part of Iran. IAUKB has affected the occupational structure in Lorestan Province, especially in Khoramabad, the capital of Lorestan Province, because it houses the biggest branch of the Islamic Azad University. Especially it boosted the female occupational opportunity in Khoramabad.

In the present study, we have focused on the efficacy of the establishment of Islamic Azad University on women's employment. This study is significant because Lorestan Province, according to current statistical figures (unemployment rate is %56.11), has the lowest status in Iran concerning the rate of women's economic participation which is the highest rate in Iran [6].

## **2. History of Women's Participation in the Iranian Labor Market**

Since Iranian women have long been continuously active in the economic arenas. In the modern sense of employment, however, their economic activity in the labor market does not have a long history. It seems that Iranian women began to take part in the labor market during the Ghajar Dynasty. In 1940, when the literacy rate was rising, and the number of college students increased, female employees began to increase.

### **2.1. Women working before revaluation**

During the reigns of Reza Shah and his son, however, women did not have an optimal status in terms of employment, although Pahlavi Dynasty seemed to underscore the social activities of women. According to the official census taken in 1955, 1966, and 1976, female employees were %9.7, %13.26, and %13.77, respectively [7].

After the victory of Islamic Revolution, given the increased university graduates due to the growth of universities in Iran, the rate of female participation was expected to increase. However, this did not happen. The official statistics showed that only %11 of women found their ways into the social labor market, and this condition did not change significantly during 1986-1996 [8].

### **2.2. Women after revolution**

In Iran, women's labor market experienced a lot of fluctuations after the revolution. Despite the outlook of some other countries in substituting man-labor with women in a wide range of economic activities during war, this process couldn't succeed. However the statistics reveals a decreasing trend within woman-labor. The decreasing trend of fertility starting from 1966 and continuing up to 1976, namely the census of population in 1989, there was a deviation which led to the increase of fertility. From 1986 onwards, an increasing trend of population growth began. For this reason, female employees dwindled to a small number, because, according to research findings, there is a negative correlation between the birth rate and the female employment rate. According to the census of population and houses in 1986, the total fertility rate was seven children for each woman, which showed a considerable increase, as compared to corresponding census taken in 1976. In this period, the intensity of variation in urban areas was much higher than that in rural areas [9].

The decrease, of course, does not mean that there was no change in the structure of Iranian female employees. Before the revolution, most Female employees were not university graduates, but after the revolution, the female employees were mostly educated professionals. The presence of women in the higher education courses changed the contribution of educated females to the employment market, increasing it from %4.7 in the years before the revolution to %11.5 in 1986, while the contribution of men increased from %2.7 to %3.8 in the same period." [10]

The above structural change is due to the spread of education through the establishment of new universities after the revolution. In the years following the revolution, girls showed interest in higher education because their parents encouraged them to go to university.

Most female employees in Iran have jobs traditionally considered as appropriate to family tasks. The greatest participation of women, in The governmental sector, is in the ministry of education (%69.7), and the ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education (%14.43), indicating that Iranian women are mostly teachers and nurses, two jobs traditionally held to be 'womanly' domestic occupations, while the participation of women in other Ministries ranges between %0.02 (Foreign Affairs) and %4.9 (Finance and Economic Affairs)[11] .Clearly, it is not enough to look at only the statistical Figures in order to have a full understanding of female employment. The important point about the women's presence in the professional market is the manner and the quality of their presence in terms of their status and their conditions.

### 3. The Sampling

The population in the present study consists of the graduates of IAUKB. This population includes every female graduate of this branch from 1985 (date of establishment) to 2011 (current year), as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the Graduates of Islamic Azad University, Khoramabad Branch in Different Colleges.

| college                   | males | females | total |
|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Literature And Humanities | 4475  | 4388    | 8863  |
| Basic Science             | 609   | 1064    | 1673  |
| Law And Political Science | 1660  | 588     | 2248  |
| Technical Engineering     | 2425  | 736     | 3161  |
| Agriculture               | 700   | 468     | 1168  |
| Total                     | 9860  | 7244    | 17104 |

Based on statistics released by the Administration of Graduation Affairs in this university, 7244 females have graduated from this branch up to 2011. When the files of graduates were surveyed, we noticed that about 2200 files of females didn't have any addresses, or they had illegible addresses. 1500 files belonged to graduates who were not from the province. We found out that nearly 3500 female graduates were living in khoramabad city. Therefore, we estimated the population to be 4000. In order to determine the sample size, we used the Cochran test with an error estimation of %5.

The sample size for this study was determined to be approximately 200 people.

### 4. Questions of the Study

- A. What economic advantages IAUKB bear for its female graduates?
- B. What is the relation between studying in university in creating managerial occupations for female graduates?
- C. What was the effect of IAUKB in promoting to better job positions among female graduates?
- D. How encouraging is studying in IAUKB for female to continue their higher educations?

### 5. Finding and Discussion

Regarding the above questions, the present study was administered with 200 respondents. Results were classified and analyzed. The statistical results are as followed:

#### 5.1. Composition of age

As for the age of population ranges from the greatest frequency with 26-30 year-old, and the smallest frequency with to 20-25 year-old (%4.5) and 45- year-old or older students (%5). In other words, %79.5 of the population under study is between 26 and 40 years old, indicating that the population under study is young.

## **5.2. Education status**

As for the degrees, the greatest frequency belongs to holders of the bachelor's and master's degrees. Only 19 respondents (%9.5) had associate's degrees. Holders of PhDs were only 12 people among the respondents, that is, the smallest frequency, which is %6. Respondents holding Bachelor and Master Degree comprised %84.5 of population. More than half of respondents had bachelor's degrees (%52).

Graduates of IAUBK continued studies in postgraduate courses in this branch or other universities. Findings show that %35.5 of graduates continued their studies for higher degrees in IAUKB. %28.5 of graduates continued their studies in other branches. %64 of all graduates of IAUKB pursued their studies to higher education. %29 of graduates managed to continue their studies in the National universities. 4 graduates continued their higher studies in foreign universities outside Iran. They comprise only %3 of our universe under study.

## **5.3. Occupational status**

Most of the population under study is presently employed. The non- employed women in the present study are one-fourth of the population of this study.

%25.5 of the total respondents was not employed in any organization or department during data collection phase. %74.5 of respondents was employed in the private sector or a public organization, with a fixed monthly or annual income.

Out of 200 respondents, 149 were employees. 52 of them were contractual employees, and 48 were temporary employees, and 28 were official clerks.

Only 6 people had part-time jobs. %55.7 of respondents said that they had served as managers during their careers. 66 respondents said that they had never had any management positions whatsoever.

## **5.4. Managerial position**

Respondents who had served as managers hierarchically had the smallest executive power more of a supervisor kind. Only %24 of respondents were among the top management hierarchy in their office, while 44 people (%53) were low managers. This indicates that women are not able to push their ways into the relatively high managerial position.

The length of management period for those respondents who served as managers, about %73.5, were one year or less, and only %3.5 of them were managers for more than three years. %14.5 of respondents had served as managers for two years, and %8.5 of them remained as managers for three years.

96 graduates of IAUKB gained promotions in their jobs. By ' promotion ' we mean any progress or forward movement in the job in relation to the university education. %64.4 of those who had a job before going to university found a better position after graduation. Out of 149 respondents who already had a job, 53 said that graduation at IAUKB did not affect their occupational positions.

## **5.5. Other experience**

The effect of studying in this university on the social life of a female graduate can be evaluated in terms of her attitude to life. Based on our evaluations, we found out that female graduates had a positive outlook on the effects of studying in the IAUKB on their social status. %89 of respondents said that IAUKB had a very positive effect on their social status. Only %2.5 of respondents said that IAUKB did not improve their social conditions.

Graduates did not agree that studying in IAUKB contributed to their organizational promotion. Only %27.5 of respondents believed that education in that university affected their organizational promotion. With the calculation of the second scale which included %12.5 of respondents, we can conclude that %40 of respondents agreed that their promotions were due to their education. With the calculation of scale 3, 4, and

5 which assessed the graduate' opinions about the effects, we can conclude that almost %60 of respondents believed that studying in IAUKB did not contribute to their job promotions. In other words, they believed that university did not help them to obtain a management position.

Another question asked in the research was about the effects of education at IAUKB on the improvement of life quality.

After we analyzed the responses to the question, we concluded that the respondents thought that it had positive effects. %36 of respondents said that the effects were 'completely positive', and %25.5 of them evaluated the effects of education in the university as ' positive '. On the other hand, %37.5 of respondents assessed it as 'no effective' or 'not very effective'. Therefore, %61.5 of respondents said that education at IAUKB had a positive effect on the improvement of their life quality.

## 6. Conclusion

Results of the present study indicate the optimal effects of education at IAUKB on the occupational status of women in this city. Our overall appraisal shows that the outlooks of female graduates on education in this branch are positive, although there are some different evaluations.

Female graduates of IAUKB think that education at this branch has positive effects on their social status. In other words, they believe that studying in this branch promotes their social status, because they have managed to obtain better job opportunities, and that they have had an upward mobility in an overall process.

In the present study, our assumption that education in this university branch will lead to a management position was not verified. The only choice emphasized in this study but not verified was the effect of studying in this university on landing managerial positions. In fact, female graduates believe that their higher education does not contribute to any managerial promotion in their jobs. Descriptive findings in the present study show that female graduates of IAUKB rarely had a top managerial position. Moreover, women remained in their low managerial positions for a short time. Therefore, we have to acknowledge that Khoramabad Azad University does not have any effects on the management positions for educated women.

Apart from the management problem, which is a function of the sociocultural conditions in this country, we can assume a positive role for women educating from the IAUKB as reflected in the improved quality and quality of female employment in Iran. Efficiency of higher education as required for labor market needed to be added to the system.

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