



**AFGHAN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
THROUGH LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION:
AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS
Master's Degree Thesis**

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PARTICIPATION: AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

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ÖZET

AFGAN KADINLARIN İŞ GÜCÜNE KATILIMIYLA YÜKSELİŞİ: BİR EKONOMİK ANALİZ

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Ekonomik büyümeyi etkileyen birçok faktör vardır. Ancak bu faktörler, sosyo-ekonomik sebeplerden ötürü, her ülke için eşit oranda mevcut değildir. Afganistan gibi uzun yıllar savaş ile mücadele eden ülkelerde ekonomik kalkınmanın ertelenmesi görülmektedir. Bu araştırma kadınların iş gücüne katılımı ile kadınların güçlendirilmesi (FLFP) ve Afganistan'daki ekonomik kalkınmayı araştırmaktadır. Kadınların iş gücüne katılımının güçlendirilmesi ülkenin GDP (Gayri Safi Milli Hasıla) ile ölçülmektedir. Bunu başarabilmek için birim kök sınamaları ve regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Bu araştırmada Kadınların güçlenmesi ile ekonomik büyüme arasındaki ilişki, kadınların işgücüne katılımı kanalıyla analiz edilmek istenmiştir. Araştırmada zaman serisi regresyon analizi 2002 ile 2018 yılları arasındaki veriler için tercih edilmiştir. Sonuçlara göre ekonomik kalkınma ile kadınların işgücüne katılımı değişkenleri arasında anlamlı ve negatif bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Ancak, FLFP ile geriye kalan değişkenler birlikte ekonomik büyüme ile kadınların işgücü katılımı arasında U şeklinde bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir. Afganistan gibi ülkelerde ülkenin ve kendi refahları için kadınların toplumda daha etkin rol oynamaları teşvik edilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan, kadın, güçlenme, iş gücü, katılım, ekonomik kalkınma, ekonomik büyüme

ABSTRACT

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There are many factors which can lead to economic growth. However, these factors may not be equally available for all countries especially due to socio-economic issues. Countries such as Afghanistan, which has gone through decades of war, continue to experience delays in economic growth. This research thesis examines women empowerment through female labour force participation (FLFP) and economic growth in Afghanistan. Female empowerment through labour force participation is measured with GDP of the country through unit root tests and a regression analysis is performed. This research thus analyses the long-term relationship between economic growth and women empowerment and contribution through equal means and channels, mainly women labor force participation. The research employs a time series regression data for the period 2002 – 2018. The results show a significant negative relationship between economic growth and women empowerment through the female labour force participation variable. However, FLFP with the remaining variables support the U-shaped hypothesis for women empowerment and economic growth. In a country such as Afghanistan, women should be encouraged to play significant roles in society for the well-being of themselves and the country as a whole.

Keywords: Afghanistan, women, female, empowerment, labour force, participation, economic development, economic growth.



To My Parents

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STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND RULES

I hereby truthfully declare that this thesis is an original work prepared by me; that I have behaved in accordance with the scientific ethical principles and rules throughout the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis and presentation of my work; that I have cited the sources of all the data and information that could be obtained within the course of this study, and included these sources in the references section; and that this study has been scanned for plagiarism with “scientific plagiarism detection program” used by Anadolu University, and that “it does not have any plagiarism” whatsoever. I also declare that, if a case contrary to my declaration is detected in my work at any time, I hereby express my consent to all the ethical and legal consequences that are involved.

Farida SALEEM



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANPDF	:	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework
AWC	:	Afghan Women's Council
AWEC	:	Afghan Women's Education Centre
AWN	:	Afghan Women's Network
AWRC	:	Afghan Women's Resource Centre
AWWD	:	Afghan Women's Welfare Development
FLFP	:	Female Labour Force Participation
FP	:	Female Population
FR	:	Fertility Rate
LEAB	:	Life Expectancy at Birth
NAPWA	:	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	:	Small to Medium Enterprises
WEE-NPP	:	Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Program

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

My thesis is about Afghan women empowerment and economic growth in Afghanistan. This topic is a new yet highly researched topic, since the theme of Afghan women taking part in the society is still developing. Afghan women face quite a few challenges when it comes to taking part in the society, but despite this, they continue to challenge the norms. “Afghanistan is ranked as having one of the widest gaps in gender equality indicators associated with the workforce, including factors like legal restrictions on women’s work outside the home, lesser pay for equal work in the market, parental leave policies and childcare support” (Taylor, 2017, p. 6). Around the world, female labour force participation rates differ widely - 74% in Kazakhstan, 53% in Indonesia and Malaysia, 42% in the UAE, 33% in Turkey, 26% in Pakistan and 21% in Saudi Arabia - but are growing faster for women than for men in nearly all Muslim-majority economies (Zahidi, 2018). Currently, it can also be said that there is a rise in Afghan women seeking jobs and working full time. Afghan women are also getting more involved in other aspects of society. “While education, legal rights, political participation, and physical security are important pieces of the gender equality puzzle in Afghanistan, economic empowerment of women should be the top priority as it is the most effective and culturally sensitive way to improve women’s rights in the long-term” (Odell, 2016, p. 1). Economic empowerment would mean that women had bypassed the previous barriers towards their participation in the society and economy. It would also be an example for the more traditional and culture sensitive parts of the country to see that women empowerment can only be of benefit to a country, and therefore encourage education and equality not only in some parts of the country but for women all over the country. Indeed, over the decade, the country has seen progress in women empowerment, and this is in part due to the many aid

organizations working for Afghan women and establishing policy changes. As of 2012, women represented 27 percent of the seats in the lower house of Parliament, and in 2010 parliamentary elections, 40 percent of voters were women (Odell, 2016). In fact, Afghan women could vote in 1919, and by 1960, Afghan women had equal rights through the new constitution. However, after the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan experienced a massive decline in social and economic aspects. These declines especially affected Afghan women. Through aid organizations and governmental support, Afghan women were able to regain their empowerment. However, till this day, there are still issues with Afghan women's rights and the fight for equality continues. This is particularly true when it comes to regional differences in advocating for women rights; women in Kabul have a higher level of freedom compared to women in Kunduz. Cultural, social and economic differences continue to play a role in the level of empowerment for Afghan women.

Chapter One of this thesis continues with the Statement of the Problem, a Brief History on Afghanistan, Women in Society, and includes the Literature Review. The remaining part of this thesis is Chapter Two (Theoretical Framework) and Chapter Three (Methodological Analysis, Results and Conclusion).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This research will focus on women empowerment and economic growth in Afghanistan. This area is important particularly in examining how women empowerment in the society has led to the economic growth after decades of war. It is also important for examining how the society has slowly but surely changed particularly for women. The significance of this study is to help us better understand those factors and Afghan women empowerment which can lead to economic growth in Afghanistan so that we may know as a society how to keep this economic growth and how to benefit from this in a more sufficient way.

In the sphere of development economics, women's empowerment is classified as the process through which women obtain the capability to make strategic life choices in a framework where this ability was previously denied to them (Kabeer, 1999). “Women’s economic empowerment includes women’s ability to participate equally in existing markets; their access to and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives and bodies; and increased voice, agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions” (UNWomen). It is thus not surprising that gender equality is among the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, as it is a pathway for empowerment. Gender equality is one way that women empowerment can lead to economic contribution and development. When equality between genders are recognized, the pathway for equality in workplace and social life are known and established in the society therefore narrowing the gender gap and empowering women. Women’s increased role in the society through the labor force participation further strengthens the economy. The likely economic gains of gender equality can be especially high in quickly aging societies, where enhancing women’s labour force participation could help compensate the impact of a diminishing workforce (Haan, 2017). Although in the beginning stages of development, this process could be gradual in developing countries. Improved and heightened human development does not inevitably enhance economic growth and “some fast-growing developing countries show the least signs of progress in gender equality in terms of labour force participation and in wage disparities between men and women (and of course there are large outliers including many oil-producing rich countries)” (Haan, 2017, p. 13). According to Haan, the hypothesis suggest that in poor countries, women participation is high and this is because women are engaged in survival activities, and women participation fall in middle-income countries because of the shift to industrial jobs, which historically have been dictated by men. In

Afghanistan, one of the main obstacles is the security where although perspectives do start to change, the security remains a threat. Also, Afghan culture has always encouraged women to play very traditional roles in societies. From a young age, girls are being prepared for marriage and for finding a good home for marriage. They are thought to do house chores such as cooking and baking bread and are usually not granted access to further education after marriage. At the same time, women who have education are seen with a degree of respect. “There is a slight positive correlation between level of education and participation in community decision-making” (Kristensen, 2016, p. 47). This means that women with education have a better chance of making a difference and being empowered. Education is one aspect of women empowerment; however Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) statistics show that in Afghanistan, majority of women in labour force did not have a formal education (Desai & Li, 2016).

1.2. A Brief History

Before Afghanistan took its independence from British influence, Afghanistan was under the rule of Mahmud Al Ghazni in the 11th century and later under Genghis Khan in the 13th century. In the year 1919, Afghanistan gained its independence when the British tried to seize it to protect its Indian empire from Russia. Amir Amanullah Khan took over and declared the country a monarchy. By 1926 he had launched a series of modernization plans, however he had many critics and by 1929, he had left the country. In 1933, Zahir Shah became the new king of Afghanistan and ruled for 40 years. Afghanistan was officially recognized in 1934 by the United States. In 1953, Afghanistan had a prime minister, Mohammed Daoud Khan, who was pro-soviet. By 1965, Afghanistan formed a secret Communist Party. In 1973, Mohammed Daoud Khan removed king Zahir Shah and became president. Khan was assassinated in 1978 and a civil war started. At the

same time, the Mujahideen, a rival Islamic group was created to face the oncoming communist regime.

The war against the Soviet regime lasted until 1989, when a peace treaty was signed in Geneva which included Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and USSR. However, issues in the country were still unresolved as communist supporters and the Mujahideen had conflicts. The Taliban was formed in 1995, promising to implement laws that included the abolishment of drugs and crime reduction. They also held a more radical view when it came to education and work for women. Nevertheless, the Taliban had a majority support from Afghans who were exhausted from the communist war and the civil war. Apart from solving some issues, other problems began to arise such as the issue of terrorism. At the same time, Afghanistan experienced major drought that affected farmers, and a large number of Afghans started to emigrate to neighboring countries. In 2001, after the September hijacking in the United States, Afghanistan was seen as a threat and US troops were sent there to fight whom they thought to be terrorists. The dragging war between the Taliban and the United States began. All this affected the economy severely. There was no time where the economy would recover and be steady. By 2003, NATO took over the security in Afghanistan and the next year millions of Afghans registered to vote. Hamid Karzai won the elections once again, the first time being in 2001. The situation was still the same, with US and NATO troops trying to eliminate the Taliban. In 2013, the Afghan army was ready to take over security from the US and NATO, and the next year Ashraf Ghani became the president. Until now, Afghanistan faces security issues, poverty, lack of equality between genders, and a slow economic growth among others.

1.3. Afghan Women in Society

This section describes the roles that Afghan women have in the society and how these roles are still restricted in many parts of the country. These restrictions such as mobility and freedom of choice are applied differently depending on the regions; in Kabul, women enjoy higher degree of freedom compared to Paktia or Kunduz. These restrictions are displayed in different areas; girls being unable to complete their education, and although they had attended primary school, they will be removed from school before they are able to continue into secondary education. This is one of the reasons that data for female education in Afghanistan is not complete for secondary and higher education. Other restrictions that limit women role in society is limited mobility; permission for going out for necessity chores is allowed with strict guidelines such as always going with a male relative. Even if these roles are slowly changing in urban areas, the situation is different in rural areas, which make up most of the country. However, this situation was very different before the Soviet invasion of 1979, when Afghan women enjoyed their rights and were active in many parts of the society. The war which followed after caused millions of Afghans to be displaced, disrupting the position the position which women previously held in the society. This was a big change for Afghan women, who had active roles in the society such as being teachers, attending universities, and taking part in other aspects of social, economic, and political life. However, the costs of the war was the destruction of these very same infrastructures, which resulted in poverty, famine, death and millions of displaced Afghans (Rezai, 2017). The civil war after the communist invasion resulted in further factions which made the situation more difficult for the once flourishing society. Afghan women in such a society were then greatly impacted when country-wide ban was placed on women to limit their mobility and be restricted to their houses. This ban was placed by the Taliban, who are a fundamentalist political movement and military organization, formed in 1994.

Believing that they needed to wage war against anyone with different views for the country, the Taliban started by controlling women's mobility and this was especially evident in the strict dress code that was designed for women to wear whenever they had to leave their houses. This was followed by the ban of girls' education, and therefore the destruction of the already existing girls' schools. These restrictions greatly limited women's roles in the society, and to this day, in many parts of the country, such ban still exists. Examples of the areas where the Taliban still have significant influence are Charkh District in Logar and Saydabad and Chak Districts in Wardak (Jackson, 2019). One of the reasons that they were popular in society is because of their ability to solve local issues and stop burglary and injustices in other forms. However, the situation was certainly not favorable to women especially the ban on female education, employment, limited mobility, and limited access to health care.

Although majority of Afghan women continue to experience restrictions and limited mobility, in some parts of the country women are rising and demanding equality between the genders. Since then, many aid organizations have supported Afghan women through policy making in areas related to business startups, support systems, educational courses, etc. Examples of some of these aid organizations are Afghan Women's Network (AWN), Afghan Women's Council (AWC), Afghan Women's Resource Centre (AWRC), Afghan Women's Welfare Development (AWWD), and Afghan Women's Education Centre (AWEC). These aid organizations provide a strong support system and a safe space for Afghan women to further participate in the society. This safe space has allowed women to join the labour force participation once again, although at a low percentage. In this context, labour force participation includes both formal and informal work. Also, in recent years there has been continuous efforts for women's involvement in the economic sector from the government and various organizations who have created working

programs for Afghan women where they get involved in small to medium businesses. Just recently, on March 8 2017, the Afghan government had launched the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Program (WEE-NPP). In line with this research, one of the main aims of this program is to increase women's ownership over economic assets and activities which in turn will help improve the overall well-being of families and the overall economy. This is a pathway for more women empowerment.

In 2004, women were granted political participation, where once again, they could hold seats in National Parliament. At least 27% of seats in the lower house of the bicameral parliament (Wolesi Jirga) were reserved for Afghan women in Article 83 of the Constitution, while Article 84 ensures that at least 50% of the seats in the upper house (Meshrano Jirga) is reserved for women; women held 64 seats out of a possible 249 seats in the lower house and 17 seats out of a total of 34 seats in the upper house (GenderConcerns, 2017). In Afghan societies, more influence is held by tribal leaders and therefore more control is held at the lower house of parliament. As women have a lower percentage of seats in the lower house of parliament, their influence is lowered, and their decisions have a lesser and slower impact for other women in society. More programs involving capacity building and policy making have emerged to make up for the marginalized women voices and for the lack of women influence in other areas. These are some of the channels through which Afghan women continue to make use of for getting more women to actively participate in their societies, whether through providing safe spaces for women to work or providing support through training programs.

1.4. Review of Literature

This section looks deeper into various aspects of women empowerment within the female labour force participation in relation to economic growth. Some topics are explored such as the importance of women empowerment relative to Afghanistan and its societies, labour force participation of Afghan women, economic barriers that are faced by Afghan women, and some challenges and issues faced by Afghan women entrepreneurs. Different literatures and studies are explored to get a wider picture on related topics.

Afghan women empowerment has gotten more attention lately, as it is still a new phenomenon which Afghan women struggle with although there have been many improvements. However, improvement in terms of participation is not enough and Afghan women first and foremost need to have secure access to constitutional rights. Afghan women need to fully engage in the society, although there are some barriers such as cultural (early marriages), high rates of illiteracy (little to no education), and societal expectations of women (limited mobility). Seemingly, agriculture, access to finance, creative industries, and basic skills and capacity building are seen as significant areas for Afghan women. According to one study it has been said that “saffron production might be the only good example of female presence in the production industry in Afghanistan” (Nijat & Murtazashvili, 2015. p. 9). The study also stated that women’s passive economic role limits their capacity to emerge as leaders or caretakers in their family. Worldwide, women contribution to the economy is seen as significant mainly for the rise of GDP in their particular countries. In fact, according to UN Women, ‘an increase in FLFP or a reduction in the gap between women’s and men’s labour force participation results in faster economic growth’ and ‘it is calculated that women could increase their income globally by up to 76 per cent if the employment participation gap and the wage gap between women and men were closed. This is

calculated to have a global value of USD 17 trillion' (UNWomen, 2018). However, in some cases, this economic growth is not always consistent with FLFP, as will be seen in this thesis (U-shaped hypothesis). Globally, women contribution to economic growth is rising significantly. In Afghanistan, although women are taking an active role in socio-economic aspects, the percentage is still yet to have an influential impact. Perhaps this could be due to the lack of recent research in the area. This research will examine Afghan women empowerment through female labour force participation and economic growth and look for gaps that may be filled for future references.

To further understand Afghan women and their lives, it is necessary to look at the wider picture embedded within decades of strong traditional values which have marginalized women in a part of society where their roles have become limited to domestic chores. With this long-held views, which has limited education and empowerment for Afghan women, gender roles have been strictly constant. With women getting little to no education, where their focus is on domestic chores, change for Afghan women has been very slow. In a very traditional and cultural setting, an Afghan girl is praised for staying at home and judged by her ability at domestic chores and traditional crafts. Education was never a concern for decades. Due to this, the fight for women's education has been going on for a very long time. "Taliban's five-year ban on education for women caused a huge decline in medical education and a subsequent drain of doctors from the country" (Odell, 2016, p.7), thus showing that education also effects women health, and therefore women empowerment. Girls are also married young to provide financial aid for their families from the dowry. Afghanistan is as a traditional society and a very high population of the country live in the rural areas. Therefore, their emphasis is more on a woman's capability to marry and bear children (Wafeq, 2016), slowing down the pathway for women's empowerment.

Afghan women had a full right to education before the Soviet invasion in 1978. Among this right, they also enjoyed other types of freedom. “Afghan women gained the right to vote in 1919, a year before their counterparts in the United States, and in the 1960s a new constitution ushered in equality in many areas” (Odell, 2016, p. 2). It was before the Soviet invasion that Afghanistan was a flourishing society in terms of education, economy and women empowerment. There were many laws that were introduced for women empowerment. For example, during the revolution of 1978, an “aggressive program for social change” was implemented which included mandatory literacy programs for women (Odell, 2016, p. 6). However, after the US invasion, most of the rights that Afghan women held were taken away and the fight for education and equality has still been going on to this day in some parts of the country. Although educational policies were being implemented around 1978, it was in most parts of Afghanistan, viewed as something alien from the culture. Due to these same views again and again, Afghan women have continued to struggle for their right to education and equality. Due to this, female education statistics in Afghanistan are still incomplete. However with an emerging trend in societal beliefs about women’s roles, there is much hope in the roles that Afghan women seek to carry out. Investments for women empowerment and equality made over the last decades have tremendously helped in shaping these perspectives. These differences can be felt when discussing previous roles of Afghan women. “For women - led businesses, existing challenges are exacerbated by social limitations; their gender makes access to markets and credit, where property documents are often required for loan insurance, more complicated. Illiteracy and lack of capacity are also key issues” (Mashal, 2014, p. 11). With more investments in internal policy making for women, and granting them increased opportunities, the changes are significant enough to be seen. Other researches, for example, showed that “a study in China and two in India, displayed that increased opportunities for women in the

labor market do indeed translate into better outcomes for women’’ (Duflo, 2012, p. 8). In the long run, not only will it be an empowerment for women, but also FLFP will increasingly add to the economic benefits of Afghanistan.

1.4.1. Women Empowerment

Globally, and particularly, in developing countries, the struggle for women empowerment continues in the form of defiance against gender inequality and gender-based discrimination in everyday circumstances in the societies in which women seek to take part in. Women empowerment is defined as the “process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices’’ (EIGE, 2020). The Afghan government through the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), defines women’s empowerment as “a condition where women take control and determine the direction of their lives, develop their full potential, make enlightened decisions, and exert positive influence over processes, mechanisms, and decisions that affect their well-being’’ (GoA, 2007). Due to the societal norms that men and women differ in their positions in society and workplace, and where these differences bring forth with it an unequal power dynamic, women continue to struggle for equality in the political, social, and economic aspects. Owing to this, more definitions of women empowerment arise which include the process of expanding women’s access to control over the strategic life choices that affect them and access to the possibilities that allow them to fully recognize their capabilities (Chen & Tanaka, 2014). To fully recognize their abilities, women need to integrate some basic components of women empowerment. Generally, there are five main components of women empowerment: women’s sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence

the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally (EIGA, 2020). When these basic components are realized not just by women, but by the society, and are willingly granted to women, only then can the society further benefit from the resources and talents provided by women, especially when this empowerment becomes a pathway towards other developmental goals.

Women empowerment can be seen through different levels of autonomy in various parts of the world. Generally, for women in developed countries, women empowerment may not be an issue that needs to be dealt with daily, whereas in developing countries, women empowerment may be the daily concern for most women; empowerment can be a daily concern with it comes to making everyday decisions for women in some parts of developing countries. Empowerment of women is intricately connected to their autonomy in decision-making at the household level (Boatenga et al., 2013). For example, “in traditional Pakistani families, a woman after getting married entered in the house as a newly married daughter in law having very limited empowerment in decision-making; during that phase, it is expected that her mother in law (higher role in decision-making) will supervise her in performing different household assignments and adjusting to the new family” (Akram, 2017, p. 768). According to the same study, the possibility for this difference in the empowerment dimension of elder women is due to the passage of time, where the women earns her husband’s trust, and her children become a form of security for her. The daughter-in-law then gains a similar position in the future when she herself becomes a mother-in-law. In similar situations across various developing countries (including Afghanistan), such empowerment dimension is an important part of daily life, even though this dimension is limited to the household. In a study on empowerment of married women in Zambia, Boetang et al. (2013) found that about 80% of married women were engaged in a final say on day-to-day household goods; in this

empowerment dimension, the allocation of married women across the wealth quintile is uniform likewise the distribution of married women across the nine provinces in Zambia. However, it is also important to note that various empowerment dimensions can be extended differently in urban areas from rural areas. Akram (2017) found that living in urban areas has a significant and positive impact on women's empowerment, therefore women in urban areas may experience empowerment and autonomy before women in rural areas.

Empowerment can also be measured through a statistic composite index such as the Human Development Index. The Human Development Index, which measures three key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living, ranks Afghanistan at the 170th position in 2018 (UNDP, 2018). These three key dimensions are important for measuring development, and therefore relate to the basic decisions that humans should be able to make. Women empowerment can also be created through higher autonomy such as representation, which is another important factor that creates the pathway for empowerment and development. However, “in the developing countries, women are having very limited representation in politics; they are mostly working in informal sectors where they gain minimal financial rewards” (Akram, 2017, p. 756). A higher representation in politics mean that women can make more influential decisions that affect women involvement in everyday society and thus women empowerment. Young (1993) makes a summary of the notion of empowerment from an individualistic perspective to a collective dimension such as a political perspective, where importance is put on collective action as a pathway for individual empowerment.

The concept of women empowerment indicates that in different regions, women experience various degrees of empowerment. Differences in cultural perceptions also has an important role in what empowerment means for women in certain societies. Also, determinants of empowerment

show different degrees in measurement, and one woman's empowerment can be another woman's struggle. However, it remains that all women should have a basic right to empowerment especially in the sense of autonomy, such as being able to make their own decisions in important aspects of their lives.

1.4.2. The Importance of Women's Economic Empowerment

Being a multidimensional process that includes changes in the economic, social and political scope, women's economic empowerment is a necessary tool for economic development. Also, these spheres are inter-related, where a substantial change in one dimension will likely lead to changes in other dimensions. "Women's economic empowerment relates to the enhancement of women's capacity for strategic choice and agency in the sphere of the economy and to the possibilities this opens up for change in other spheres of their lives" (Kabeer, 2009, p. 7). In addition to this, economic empowerment of women is an issue of social justice and human rights, especially considering that men generally have the upper hand in most matters including basic decisions in majority of the developing countries. Again, stressing on the issues that there still exists gender inequalities in divisions of labour, whether it is paid or unpaid work, formal or informal and the unequal access to valuable resources, which presents itself at the center of women's secondary status in society. This ongoing position causes dependence on men for basic issues and removes major opportunities for women that could have benefitted both men and women for generations to come. Additionally, with no economic empowerment, women are forced to compete in an unfair market, where in the long term, their labour will produce lower profits. Kabeer emphasizes that a disadvantaged position in an economic environment will reinforce women's lack of strategic agency, not only in relation to their own lives but also in relation to the wider society. Importantly, when women are economically empowered, having equal access to opportunities and

resources, they will bring a positive reinforcement to their families and children, which contributes to their well-being. “A sustained change is thus possible only through transformations at both individual and structural levels” (Syzova, 2017, p. 14). Empowered women will have higher chances of seeking health services, family planning, and ensuring that their children get better education. Seemingly, cultural and generational inequalities within households will be reduced, and both men and women will be agents of better and healthier societies, reducing poverty in the long run. On the other hand, little to no economic empowerment means that although women may have some skills, they will continue to face discrimination in marketplaces in terms of the selling and buying price of their products, services and wages as well as their access to necessities such as financial and technological services.

It is important to note that women’s economic empowerment can also come as an aid in times of economic difficulties; “investing in women’s economic resources helps poor household to weather crisis and increases their chances of moving out of poverty” (Kabeer, 2009, p. 8). In times of economic difficulties, depending on only the male members of a family may at times not be sufficient. In such times, women who are empowered are more recognized and this paves the path for societal recognition of women empowerment and their contribution. However, women empowerment should be seen through a wider lens, which embody an expansion of opportunities for women.

1.4.3. Female Labour Force Participation

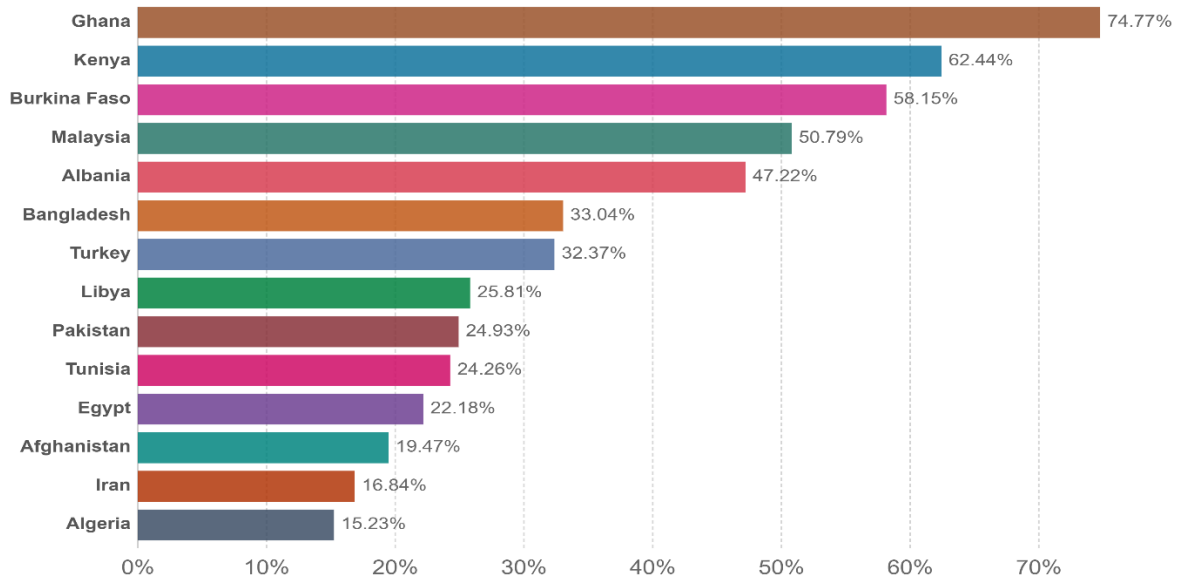
Female labour force participation is an important drive of the economy in any country and there is a strong positive correlation between FLFP and GDP (Per Capita). FLFP rate is defined as the proportion of the population who are at least ages 15 and above, who are economically active: all people who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period of

time (Indexmundi, 2019). However, definitions regarding paid and unpaid labour force differ, which can make cross-country comparisons complicated. For example, it was derived from further studies that “in a developing country (Sri Lanka), all female unpaid family workers are deemed to be economically active (Central Bank of Ceylon 1974), whereas in an industrial country (Britain), such workers are at times included and at times excluded” (Psacharopoulos & Tzannatos, 1989, p. 188). Women in low income countries often work in family businesses or on farms, or nearby where they live, with little to no pay. Women in these situations have to mix work and family events. On the other hand, women in high income economies, where education and women empowerment is easy to attain, have stable and long-term careers, clearly demonstrating differences from developing to developed countries. These differences show that estimates are not clear across borders and cannot be comparable internationally. Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos (1989) further state that there are two obstacles that heighten the problem. The first is that work is a flow variable which has to be defined against a length of time (such as casual and seasonal work) and the second is the difficulty in establishing which unemployed people are seeking work and which are not. The most thorough source for comparing data across borders is the labor force surveys as all sectors of the economy are covered, with all the categories of workers, where in most countries is the age of 15 and older. However, some countries may have age limits, where calculations may then analytically over or underestimate the authentic rates.

Afghanistan is ranked 115th in the world for its FLFP rate as of September 2019 with a value of 48.85 (Indexmundi, 2019). Figure 2.1 below shows the rates of FLFP of Afghanistan in 2017 in relation to some countries that may have similar economic positions and some other countries that may have higher or lower economic positions.

Female labor force participation rates, 2017

Labor force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active.



Source: World Bank

Note: All figures correspond to 'modeled ILO estimates' (see source for details).

OurWorldInData.org/female-labor-supply • CC BY

Figure 2.1. *Female Labour Force Participation Rates 2017*

As can be seen from Figure 2.1, female labour force rates continue to be low even in regard to still developing countries such as Ghana and Kenya. This assumes that there are fundamental issues which prevent Afghan women from contributing more. These fundamental issues are related to barriers such as large gender inequalities, limited mobility, and cultural effects such as the notion that education is not necessary for women. In regards to women in the labour force in Afghanistan, “45.3% of women never went to school while 16% have secondary school education and 18.3% have tertiary education; the most common occupation is the school teacher (15.4%), followed by skilled workers/artisans (6.5%) and laborer/domestic/unskilled workers (3%) while other occupations are farmers, informal sales, government and private office workers, and self-employed workers” (Desai & Li, 2016, p. 13). These statistics give a hint that although females do participate to a certain extent in the labour force (in this case, mostly as a coping mechanism), there may exist gender inequalities in different areas of workplace that explain this informal labour force sector.

Another example is that “in Bangladesh, women account for most of unpaid work and when women are employed in paid work, they are overrepresented in the informal sector and among the poor” (Moon, 2019, p. 362). Furthermore, Rahman and Islam (2013) state that gender difference in employment growth can be found not only during periods of economic growth but also during downturns with women often being retrenched first. More needs to be done to empower women so that their contribution will be recognized and produce a significant difference for economic advances. By being both an outcome and a driver of economic development, female labour force requires that more women enter the labour force for greater labour inputs in fast growing economies. While economies grow and countries become more developed, women attain higher and improved capabilities, reducing social constraints and paving the pathway for more women to join the formal labour force. The transition from informal labour to formal labour is necessary because informal labour does not guarantee policies that protect workers, such as unemployment benefits, pensions, or maternity leave and protection. “Policymakers need to understand the nature of women’s labor supply and to monitor women’s labor force participation; ultimately, labor force participation is the outcome of not only supply-side factors, but also of the demand for labor” (Psacharopoulos & Tzannatos, 1989, p. 188).

“A great majority of empirical studies demonstrate that in the initial phases of economic growth female labor force participation tends to be lowering, while after reaching the certain level of output per capita, the positive relationship emerges and women’s engagement in labor market gradually increases” (Lechman & Kaur, 2015, p. 246). This may happen when the society is shifting from an agricultural type to an industry type society, where FLFP may be lowered at first. While the society then transitions to a service type, is where there will be an increase in FLFP. This is explained when more women join the service industry working in offices or with computers.

Women's participation in the labor force is needed not only in terms of equality but importantly in terms of productivity (Doğan & Akyüz, 2017). Adding to the economic output in today's globalized society cannot only be done by men, but women must be a part of this output and must be recognized for women empowerment to be further achieved. However, still in some parts of developing countries, there is a perception that women do not need to be healthy and strong and that education is not a necessity if women do not work outside the home (Duflo, 2012). Therefore, in those parts of developing countries, women who choose not to work are perceived as not needing to be empowered. This research and similar others continue to prove the necessity of FLFP and women empowerment.

1.4.4. Economic Participation of Afghan Women

Afghan women make up at least half of the population in Afghanistan, with the most recent value at 48.7% (WorldBank, 2019). Despite making up half of the population, Afghan women, especially in rural areas, could not fully participate in the economy due to marginalization; only 20% of the women population are active in the economic sector according to Afghanistan's statistical yearbook (2018). However, important steps have been taken by the government to reduce societal marginalization. The Afghan government define women empowerment as “a condition where women take control and determine the direction of their lives, develop their full potential, make enlightened decisions, and exert positive influence over processes, mechanisms, and decisions that affect their well-being” (GoA, 2007). The Afghan government, in 2016, approved of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017-2021 with the aim of overseeing the country towards inclusive economic development which would include women's economic empowerment (Junussova et al., 2019). Policy action has been one way through which inclusive economic growth is implemented. Inclusive economic growth is when

economic growth is being equally distributed across the society and sectors, where there are direct connections between macro-and-microeconomic elements of the economy. The international community, particularly the UN, has had its own role in promoting gender equality and women empowerment, mainly through its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Efforts for women's economic empowerment have been more evident in recent years, where there has been continuous efforts for women's involvement in the economic sector. Various organizations have created working programs for Afghan women where they get involved in Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Just recently, on March 8 2017, the Afghan government had launched the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Program (WEE-NPP). In line with this research, one of the main aims of this program is to increase women's ownership over economic assets and activities which in turn will help improve the overall well-being of families and the overall economy. SMEs are becoming an important pathway for women empowerment, due to various support systems and training programs offered for women. According to Butler & McGuinness (2013), at least 78% of SMEs are owned by Afghan women. Currently, 73% of women-owned SMEs have moved to the production sector; since then, 300 factories have been established by women in 2018, where 4000 jobs were created, 45% of which are for women and a total investment of 6.8m USD has been made by 682 women entrepreneurs (AWCCI, 2018). Although these numbers may not be significant in comparison to the world rate, it has created an important contribution to the Afghan economy and opened opportunities for more women to join entrepreneurship. Women contribution to their own household has also created important shifts in their communities; in 2018, 19.1% of Afghans say that female members contributed to their household income, an increase of 5.5 percentage points (13.6%) since 2009 (Survey of the Afghan People, 2018).

1.4.5. Barriers to Involvement of Afghan Women to Economic Growth

The delay in the economic involvement of Afghan women is related to the various barriers that are faced by them in the society. These barriers have slowed down progress for women, and thus women empowerment, not only in the economic sector but in other areas of their lives as well. This section briefly explores these barriers for women. Social inclusion has taken up a lot of time for majority of Afghan women, as the cultural perception remains in many areas that women's role is only for taking care of the household and the house is seen as the place for women to be limited to. This view has stopped women from being empowered and continue to remain a barrier for most women particularly in rural areas. Similarly, cultural barriers have played a strong role in slowing down women empowerment. In this sense, cultural barriers is related to the perception that marriage is a priority, and therefore girls should marry young. When girls marry young, they are usually consumed in married life. The worth of girls are placed on how well they can do household chores and take care of her new family. For generations, this is what women were taught to believe in, and encourage other women for. This notion has stopped women from prioritizing important elements that could better benefit a woman and her family and contribute to the society, such as education, learning new skills, and sharing ideas. It has also limited women's time to be used only for certain tasks within households. However, in today's time, such barriers tend to be found in remote and rural areas. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in some specific rural areas, women skilled in eloquent crafts can be found who have passed their skills to the next generations. But lack of market knowledge has kept these skills within households, with only few women being able to market their products. Lack of market information has been another major economic barrier and has created discrimination and inefficiency for women entrepreneurs. "Discrimination against women manifested in imposition of limited social, economic and political roles makes women

more susceptible to poverty and exacerbates the way women experience poverty’’ (NAPWA, 2007, p. 9). Market information may only be accessible to selective targeted groups by several formal programs (Equality for Peace and Democracy, 2015). Access to finance is also a major issue; Afghan women have less access to start-up capital and equity to start their businesses (NECDO, 2018, p. 4). These hindrances do not usually apply for men, and therefore has turned into discrimination for women, creating further gender gaps and inequalities. Finally, security issues is one of the biggest obstacles to women economic empowerment, with female journalists receiving the most threat for being vocal; women are particularly vulnerable, their profession and their gender making them a “double target” (UNESCO, 2020).

Laws and plans have been introduced to remove these barriers, such as the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), which is the government’s main vehicle to implement policies and commitments for the advancement of women’s status. “NAPWA is a major vehicle for consolidating Afghanistan’s gains over the past five years and using them as a foundation for institutionalizing a more coherent and comprehensive strategy to advance the status of women in Afghanistan for the benefit of all Afghan society’’ (NAPWA, 2007, p. 13). Despite the introduction of various laws and programs for Afghan women, societal perception remains a large part of Afghans lives. Societal perception, as mentioned in the first chapter, are related to strong cultural values that Afghans have passed from generation to generation and cannot be easily put aside or lost. Afghan women have come a far way to prove that their empowerment is much needed and how their roles effect society positively. Putting themselves in the society and convincing family members for support, they have proved that if the opposite were to happen, the society would not have progressed as much as it has today.

1.4.6. Challenges and Issues Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

This section briefly explores some challenges and issues that Afghan businesswomen had faced. The information was collected by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce in 2019. The survey done by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce found that only 45% of businesses which were examined have a registration with the government. Furthermore, 8% from those surveyed withheld their registration status stating that businesswomen in some province were still unwilling to talk about their business activities. Working from home by tailoring or handicraft have also stopped some businesswomen from taking an official business license. The scope of market was another challenge for businesswomen. According to the survey, only 2% of businesswomen were able to market at the global level. While the majority were only able to market at the provincial level at 44%. The reasons for the scope of market is mainly due to the type of business that women are involved in. They market for the locals mostly due to not being able to meet the requirements of quality and packaging which could have helped them to market abroad. Taxation was another issue faced by businesswomen. Taxes were either too high or with complex laws. There was also a lack of awareness of the tax payment system. According to the survey “low number of tax processing centers and remoteness of these offices were also cited as key issue together with corruption and inefficiency in the tax collection offices.” The frequency of tax collection is another issue. The demand is for it to be held annually while currently it is being held on a quarterly basis.

Some of these challenges and issues highlight the economic barriers that women face. With better policy making that emphasizes these issues and makes improvements in various systems, Afghan women can conduct businesses more efficiently with available resources.

CHAPTER TWO

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes some theories regarding economic development to women empowerment and women empowerment to economic development, gender equality to economic growth and economic growth to gender equality, and examines the U-shaped hypothesis, which is the underlying notion for this thesis. Furthermore, the remaining independent variables are explained regarding economic growth and development.

2.1. Empowerment to Development and Development to Empowerment

There are many researches connected to theories on women empowerment and economic growth. Women empowerment in different aspects of society will lead to equality between the genders. The opposite is true in the long run. “The simplest argument for why gender inequality harms economic growth rests on two premises: (1) men and women are separate inputs in the economy-wide production of goods and services, and (2) each input has positive and diminishing marginal products” (Klasen & Silva, 2018, p. 1). It has been shown that the participation of women in the society and the economy is necessary not just to bring a fair gender role play to the society, but for a greater and more efficient economic output. Some theories state that economic development is the cause of women empowerment. This is from the development-empowerment relationship theory which argues that “there is a bidirectional relationship between economic development and women’s empowerment defined as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development—in particular, health, education, earning opportunities, rights, and political participation” (Duflo, 2012, p. 1053). If there is development, women empowerment is sure to follow, leading to greater women contribution to economic growth. Any type of prejudice

against women, will, on the other hand, decrease development. Those on the side of the empowerment to development argue that gender equality will enhance once poverty declines. Therefore, there should be prospects for economic growth and prosperity. The reason is that poverty and lack of opportunity cause inequality between the genders. When economic development reduces poverty, the conditions of women improve, due to the circumstances that the condition of everyone improves and also gender inequality will decrease as poverty decreases. Those on the side of empowerment to development, argue that gender equality becomes a prospect for achieving development. There are, however, many other factors involved when it comes to bringing equality between women and men; to create complete equality between the genders, economic development is not enough (Duflo, 2012). Policy action becomes an important tool to achieving gender equality. Policy action is increasing in Afghanistan, particularly those policy actions that come from organizations from outside the country. When there is gender equality, there are greater opportunities for women to use and contribute to economic growth. This is much necessary in Afghanistan where gender inequality has existed for more than decades. Empowered women have a role in changing society's choices in essential ways, especially in a country like Afghanistan, where these choices can add up to make a difference. For example, Doepke and Tertilt (2016) state from empirical evidence that mothers with money spend more on their children as opposed to fathers. This can create empowerment in the sense that it allows women to make decisions, particularly in developing countries. Based on such empirical evidence, "among policy makers the idea has taken hold that there may be a causal link running from female empowerment to development; if this link were to prove real, empowering women would not just be a worthy goal in its own right but could also serve as a tool to accelerate economic growth" (Doepke & Tertilt, 2016, p. 310). It is also important to note that female development includes accessing other

areas related to women and is not limited to reducing discrimination against women and granting rights as equal to men. Empowering women is likely to quicken growth in progressive economies that rely mostly on human capital but may actually slow growth in economies where physical capital growth is the main engine of development (Doepke & Tertilt, 2016). This is relevant with the findings in this study.

2.2. Gender Equality to Economic Growth and Economic Growth to Gender Equality

Other researches, García et al (2018) suggests that some gender factors were seen as prompts of economic growth and therefore gender dynamics play a crucial role in the economic growth. This is because there has been a lot of efforts in the different decision-making areas under conditions of gender equality (especially in the social and political arenas). In this perspective, economic growth is seen as an “exclusive economic growth meaning that the effort to advance a country’s growth and development should be produced with the contribution of all citizens without excluding an important group of the society, more specifically, women” (García, et. al, 2018, p. 1). The notion of gender is deemed as an important element in development policies. These policies make an aim of providing equal opportunities for all regardless of gender. In different literatures, both sides of gender inequality and economic growth are examined; economic growth as a cause of gender equality and gender equality as a cause of economic growth (Klasen & Silva, 2018). Furthermore, there is an importance related to time and the opportunities that are available to both genders due to their availability for time. This suggests that economic growth is affected through two key procedures and one of them is to do with how much time women have; generally (in particularly in Afghanistan), women’s time is associated with domestic chores and raising children. Interestingly, a low value of women’s time means that children are cheap (Klasen & Silva, 2018). In this situation, there is a high level of fertility which means that economic growth is lowered

(quantity-quality trade-off), and there is less FLFP. In this thesis, FR is the only variable which showed high negative correlation with the GDP variable. LEAB has a more significant and more regular positive relationship with per capita output growth and so do population growth rates, regardless of period or sample stratification. In addition, negative relationships are stronger when all the variables are analyzed against GDP per capita, and according to Brander and Dowrick (1993), this is usually the case in the latest phase rather than in the earliest phase. Again, this is evident in Afghan society, although slowly changing. These key processes are much more apparent in developing countries where gender gaps are wide in many aspects such as FLFP, education, health, access to work, access to capital, etc. All these gaps should be filled for there to be substantial effect on economic output. When the gaps are filled, women have higher chances of making a difference by joining in the labour force which leads to women empowerment leading to a greater and a more efficient economic growth. Also “better access to childcare, longer maternity leave, more care services for minors or dependent ascendants and greater flexibility in work arrangements are associated with higher FLFP” (Altuzarra et al., 2019, p. 1).

2.3. The U-Shaped Hypothesis (FLFP and Economic Development)

The U-shaped hypothesis between FLFP and economic development is the most discussed hypothesis in literature and is usually related with developing countries due to structural changes (Mujahid & Zafar, 2012; Ota, 2017; Tsani, Paroussos, Fragiadakis, Charalambidis & Capros, 2013; Tam, 2011). “The U-hypothesis states that during the early stages of economic development, FLFP tends to decline due to the structural changes in the economy from an agricultural to an industrialized economy, and in later stages of development, FLFP increases as countries undergo the transition into modern economies, FRs decline and female education level increases” (Altuzarra et al., 2019, p. 2). In poor countries, women are compelled to work out of necessity. The

work is mainly done in the agricultural sector or home-based production, where final products are sold to the public. This type of work does not last long especially when a country develops, as a shift can be seen from the agricultural sector to the industrial sector. This shift from sectors usually will benefit men more than women, especially in developing countries, as most of these industrial works are based on technical skills, which are more easily acquired by men than women. However, as time passes, the result of this shift is that economies improve, education is more affordable and available, previous social projections decreases, and women are again able to take on new jobs, this time with acquired skills followed by a decrease in FR.

The U-shaped hypothesis was developed by economist Simon Kuznets in the 1950s and 1960s. The hypothesis is also known as the Kuznets curve. The name comes from the inverted ‘U’ shape when inequality would rise and then fall again with the increase of income per-capita. This can also be applied to households, when these underlying shifts are described in the context of the neoclassical labour supply model: “as a spouse’s wage rises, there is a negative income effect on the supply of women’s labor and once wages for women start to rise, however, the substitution effect will induce women to increase their labor supply” (Verick, 2014, p.6). Verick further goes on to explain the U-shaped pattern from an economic and labour force perspective and found that not all countries will follow the pattern when the economy grows. An example that Verick found is that the female labor force participation rate increased from 23.9% in 1990 to 36.0% in 2010 in Bangladesh, a low-income country, while it declined in India (especially in rural areas). Previous studies that have been done in relation to women empowerment and economic growth have shown similar results. For example, although Turkey has grown economically in recent years, Turkey has lagged behind the world in terms of participation in its female labor force (Doğan & Akyüz, 2017). In the same study, findings show that “economic growth increases women's labor force

participation rate first but then it decreases women's labor force participation rate; findings indicate that there is a reverse "U" relationship between economic growth and female labor force participation'' (Doğan & Akyüz, 2017, p. 33). However, ascribing the changes of percentages in FLFP only to economic growth overlooks the reality of the involvement of other elements in the process. Downward trends in FLFP can also be explained through increasing urbanization, which leads to the shift from agricultural to industrial sectors. In such cases, women will naturally withdraw from the formal FLFP to engage in domestic jobs. Women may join the formal FLFP when conditions once again demands their participation, such as better work opportunities, trade liberalization, educational attainment, and export-oriented manufacturing. Women in Turkey, due to better macroeconomic conditions, have rejoined the FLFP; by 2012, participation rates increased to 29.5% (Verick, 2014, p. 4). In relation to Afghanistan, widespread gender gaps reduce the total amount of women empowerment and FLFP to a smaller scale.

2.4. Other Variables that Affect Economic Growth

This section briefly touches on other variables apart from FLFP that have been used in this thesis. Fertility Rate (FR), Female Population (FP) and Life Expectancy at Birth (LEAB) have been examined. These were the only related variables that have not shown outliers, as well as fit with the hypothesis and model of this thesis. These variables also have a connection with each other and the changes in one variable affects the changes in the other variables. This thesis shows that all four variables together have a negative correlation with GDP. There are some evidences and reasons towards why such results may occur. The neoclassical growth theory gives a natural interpretation with LEAB. When life expectancy is increased, population follows, which primarily lowers capital-to-labor and land-to-labor ratios, therefore reducing income per capita. “In the later stage, when more people enter the labour force, higher output will be expected. This compensation

can be complete and may even exceed the initial level of income per capita if there are significant productivity benefits from longer life expectancy” (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2006, p. 929). This shows a similar pattern regarding LEAB and FLFP pertaining to the U-shaped hypothesis. According to OECD Data (2020), LEAB is defined as how long, on average, a newborn can expect to live, if current death rates do not change. Being one of the most frequently used health indicators, increases in LEAB can be ascribed to factors such as rising living standards, improved lifestyle, better education, and greater access to quality health services. In regard to life expectancy, generally, higher life expectancy is associated with higher incomes per capita and thus increased economic development. A study by Cervellati and Sunde (2009) found that improvements in life expectancy primarily increases population before the demographic transition in oppose to after the demographic transition, implying that demographic changes causes life expectancy to effect population, human capital and income per capita. High life expectancy is also the cause of the conversion to continued income growth.

When it comes to FR, “the social structure, cultural background, and economic and environmental conditions are the main factors influencing the fertility changes” (Li, 2016, p. 6). Family policies also play an important role as a support system for parents, where they can get assistance in balancing family and work. Within economics, fertility is deemed as the number of children a women has or has had over her lifetime, hence does not refer to the biological capability of having children, but actual children born and only includes live births (OECD, 2020). High rates of fertility can have negative effects on economic growth through decreased FLFP. Similarly to this thesis, other literatures have also found negative relationships between FR and economic development (Guinnane, 2011; Goldstein and Klüsener, 2014; Galor, and Weil 1996).

Galor and Weil (1996) found, through household/labour-supply theories and growth theories, that an increase in capital per worker increases women's wages due to their productivity being linked with capital; women's increased wages leads to a decrease in fertility as increased wages mean that women spend less time on the cost of children. At the same time, decreased rate of fertility creates opportunities for economic growth through the upsurge of the working-age share of the population. Decreased youth dependency rate also leads to more investments in each child, which in turn increases the productivity of children in the future when they themselves enter the workforce. The process continues to show that income growth and a decrease in fertility can strengthen each other.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

A hypothesis is formed to test whether to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis. FLFP as a women empowerment variable is tested with GDP per capita. The hypothesis is as follows:

$$H_0 : \beta_1 = 0$$

$$H_1 : \beta_1 \neq 0$$

The null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between women empowerment and economic growth in Afghanistan. The alternative hypothesis states that there is a relationship between women empowerment and economic growth in Afghanistan.

To test the hypothesis, unit root tests and regression analysis are done. The methodology employed in this study uses log of real GDP per capita (Y) as the dependent variable representing economic growth. Four variables act as the independent variables and they are as follows: Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP), Fertility Rate (FR), FP (FP), and Life Expectancy at Birth (LEAB). Women empowerment is mainly represented by FLFP. The equation is as follows:

$$GDP(Y) = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 FLFP + \beta_2 FR + \beta_3 FP + \beta_4 LEAB + \varepsilon_5 \dots \dots \dots 1$$

The data covers a period from the year 2002 – 2018. Data were collected from statistical websites such as the WorldBank, TradingEconomics, and Afghanistan's Annual Statistics Reports.

3.1. Unit Root Tests

Whether the time series used in econometric models are stationary or not contains important results about the empirical findings of the model. In a stationary process, the series fluctuates around a fixed long-term average and the effect of any shock is not permanent. On the other hand,

if the series have unit roots, the series will not have a tendency to revert to the long-term deterministic path (where no randomness is involved), and more importantly, a shock that will emerge in the current period will have permanent effects on the long-term values of the series. Therefore, the degree of integration of macroeconomic variables contains important information for the appropriate modeling of time series.

Unit root tests are performed to determine whether the series are stationary or not, because the problem of spurious regression can be encountered in analysis using non-stationary series. In other words, variables that do not have any relationship between them can be seen as related because the series are not stationary. Therefore, the first thing to be done in the analysis using time series is to determine whether the variables used in the model are stationary. “A stochastic process is said to be stationary if its mean and variance are constant over time and the value of the covariance between the two time periods depends only on the distance or gap or lag between the two time periods and not the actual time at which the covariance is computed” (Gujarati, 2004, p.797).

The most commonly used methods in testing the stationarity properties of series in practice are Dickey Fuller (DF), Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF), Phillips Perron (PP) and Kwiatkowski–Phillips–Schmidt–Shin (KPSS) tests. Two of these tests are selected and the results are reported in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. ADF and PP Unit Root Tests

Variable	ADF Test		PP Test	
	Intercept	Trend and Intercept	Intercept	Trend and Intercept
GDP	-1.3979 (0)	-0.4735 (0)	-1.4001[1]	-0.4674 [1]
Δ GDP	-3.4200** (0)	-3.7402*** (0)	-3.4693** [2]	-3.7387*** [1]
FLFP	-1.7469 (1)	-2.9146 (2)	0.5557 [2]	-0.8540 [2]
Δ FLFP	-3.6120** (3)	-3.7575*** (2)	-3,9591** [2]	-3,7597** [2]
FR	-4.0582 (2)	-4,6073 (2)	0.2947 [2]	-2.1980 [2]
Δ FR	-5.9384** (2)	-5,3475 ** (2)	3,9591** [2]	5.2543** [4]
FP	-1.0239 (0)	-0.8282 (2)	-1.3564 [2]	-1.2907 [2]
Δ FP	-1.1350 (2)	-21.343*** (1)	-1.8209 [2]	-22,1484*** [1]
LEAB	-2.7671 (2)	-21.665*** (1)	-2.7990 [2]	1.5169 [2]
Δ LEAB	-3.2570** (2)	-3.8867** (2)	0.2219 [2]	-3,7597** [2]

1) ***, **, * represents significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively 2) The numbers in () are the lag orders which are determined by Schwarz Info Criteria 3) The numbers in [] are the bandwidth which are determined by Newey West using Bartlett kernel 4) Δ is the first difference operator

The results of the Augmented Dickey Fuller and Phillips Perron unit root tests show that GDP, FLFP, FR, FP, LEAB series are not stationary at their levels but they become stationary when their first differences are calculated which means they are all integrated of first order I(1).

3.2. Regression Analysis

Descriptive statistics is the process of applying and evaluating summarized elements from a set of information. To obtain a general overview for the descriptive data, statistical descriptions, and visual analysis such as the standard deviation, standard error and mean are exhibited in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	N
GDP	6.1468	18.287	.22986	17
FLFP	44.6694	.036	2.09325	17
FR	5.9374	.272	.91754	17
FP	48.6102	.262	.14427	17
LEAB	62.2824	.073	2.58905	17

A total of 17 observations with no missing values are shown. Nonexistence of outliers have prompted the usage of these variables. The lowest average score was the FR ($M = 5.94$, $SD = .917$) while the highest average score showed to be LEAB ($M = 62.28$, $SD = 2.58$). FLFP and LEAB indicated a higher variation compared to other independent variables (FR and FP).

A correlation matrix is a table displaying correlation coefficients between variables. Each cell in the table demonstrates the correlation between two variables. Proceeding to the results of the analysis, Table 3.3 shows the Correlation for the variables.

Table 3.3. *Correlation Table*

	GDP	FLFP	FR	FP	LEAB
GDP	1.000				
FLFP	0.59827	1.000			
FR	-0.92751	-0.84237	1.000		
FP	0.753459	-0.00401	-0.52005	1.000	
LEAB	0.946487	0.797563	-0.99591	0.575707	1.000

Cohen (1988) indicates the following principles: $r = .10$ to $.29$ small correlation; $r = .30$ to $.49$ medium correlation; $r = .50$ to 1.0 large correlation. The results of the correlation show that the variables are either having a strong positive or a strong negative correlation with GDP. The strongest positive correlation is with LEAB and FP. Theoretically, life expectancy may have a positive or negative correlation. In this case, the higher FP and LEAB are explained by the fact the GDP per capita increases as the population increases and living conditions are better proving that with human capital, Afghanistan's economic situation can improve. GDP also has strong positive correlation with FLFP, showing that female participation in the economy does make a significant difference. Although the difference is on a smaller scale, it can significantly increase when women are given more empowerment. The strong negative correlation between GDP and FR shows that when FR increases, GDP per capita decreases. In Afghan society, where there are high levels of

socio-economic barriers for women, it is expected that female graduates who immediately go into workforce are expected to have lesser children compared to females who do not have an education or have a very minimal education and are married at a young age. This also explains the correlation between FR and FLFP, where there is a high negative correlation. The opposite is true for FP. A higher FP will not give a higher labour force, as only a small percentage of females have access to the formal labour force. Although the results do show a negative correlation, we find that it is only slightly negative.

Regression analysis is a set of statistical methods for assessing the relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Table 3.4 below shows the overall regression statistics. The R-squared shows how near the data is fitted in a regression line, also displaying the coefficient of determination. The strong value of R and R^2 shows a solid relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variables. At least 98% of the change in per capita GDP is explained by FLFP, FR, FP, and LEAB together.

Table 3.4. Regression Statistics

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.993 ^a	.986	.981	.03188	.986	205.006	4	12	.000	2.767

a. Predictors: (Constant), LEAB, FP, FLFP, FR

b. Dependent Variable: GDP

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a test of hypothesis and a set of statistical models and their related estimation processes used to evaluate the variations among group means in a sample; it presents a statistical test of whether two or more population means are equal, and thus generalizes the *t*-test beyond two means. The ANOVA results in Table 3.5 shows F statistics has a P value below .05,

showing that model is statistically significant. In this case, we have to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between all the independent variables and per capita GDP.

Table 3.5. ANOVA

Model 1	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.833	4	.208	205.006	.000 ^b
Residual	.012	12	.001		
Total	.845	16			

a. Dependent Variable: GDP

b. Predictors: (Constant), LEAB, FP, FLFP, FR

The coefficients show how much the mean of the dependent variable is likely to increase when an independent variable increases by one, while the other independent variables are held in constant. The coefficients also display the *t* stat and significance for a hypothesis. The coefficients are shown in Table 3.6 below. We reject the null hypotheses, as the *t* stat is greater than the table critical value. We therefore conclude that the results are statistically significant.

Table 3.6. Coefficients

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig. P	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	58.762	18.287		3.213	.007	18.919	98.605
FLFP	-.161	.036	-1.465	-4.477	.001	-.239	-.083
FR	-1.144	.272	-4.568	-4.206	.001	-1.737	-.552
FP	-.540	.262	-.339	-2.065	.061	-1.110	.030
LEAB	-.199	.073	-2.239	-2.728	.018	-.358	-.040

a. Dependent Variable: GDP

Figure 3.1 below shows a scatterplot with the main women empowerment variable and the log of GDP per capita to further display the U-shaped hypothesis using the linear equation $y =$

$5.4483x + 11.18$, $R^2 = 0.3579$. The log of GDP per capita, which is the dependent variable, is used with the FLFP, which is the main independent variable.

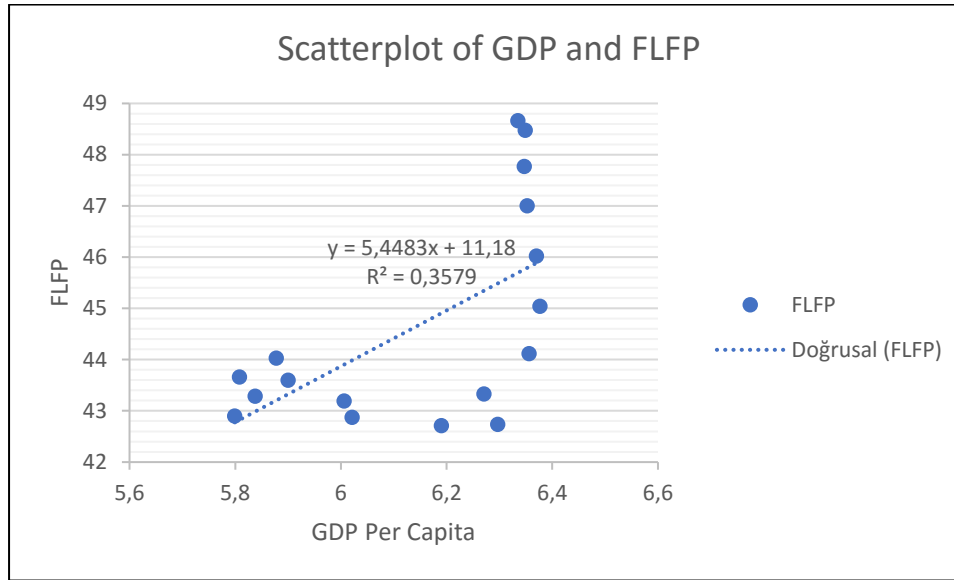


Figure 3. 1. *Scatterplot of GDP and FLFP*

3.3. Empirical Results

Our unit root tests displayed that the FLFP, FR, FP and LEAB series are not stationary at their levels. The series were become stationary when their first differences were calculated which means they are all integrated of first order.

The coefficients of the regression results displayed significance, successfully predicting log of GDP ($F(4,12) = 205.01$, $p < .001$). The model also exhibited 98.6% of variance in GDP. GDP was predicted by FLFP ($\beta = -1.47$, $t = -4.5$, $p < .001$), for FR ($\beta = -4.57$, $t = -4.21$, $p < .001$), for FP ($\beta = -.34$, $t = -2.1$, $p > .001$), and for LEAB ($\beta = -2.24$, $t = -2.73$, $p > .001$). FP was not significant at $p > 0.61$ along with LEAB which was not significant at $p > 0.18$. The results support the theoretical framework of a U-shaped hypothesis. As explained in the theoretical framework, there are certain factors which create the U-shaped hypothesis. It is evident that one of these factors is the

transformation of societies from the agriculture to industrial type. The FR also contributes to the hypothesis, that when the female labour force and GDP per capita increases, FRs decreases and vice versa. In Afghanistan, the beginning of the industrial stage is marked with male dominance in the society as they have better access to opportunities. However, as gender inequality gradually decreases, and females have better access to education, are more empowered and have a higher chance of joining in different parts of the society and wider scope in workforce, it is expected that there will be a positive linear relationship between female empowerment represented by female labour force and economic growth, where the value of both variables increase at the same time.

3.4. Conclusion

It can be seen that some of the fastest growing countries (developing) still continue to show the least gender equality results. Therefore, the hypothesis had been formed that there is no relationship between women empowerment and economic growth in Afghanistan. The aim of this research is to find if there is a significant relationship between women empowerment, represented through female labour force participation, and economic growth. Unit root test is done to test for stationary, and it is found that the variables (GDP, FLFP, FR, FP and LEAB) were not stationary in their level but is stationary when their first differences are calculated. Accordingly, regression analysis showed significant results for the variables. At the same time, a U-shaped is found between FLFP and GDP.

Economic growth alone will not be enough to grant women empowerment. As economic development increases, women empowerment, mainly represented by female labour force participation, decreases. However, when elements such as gender inequality are removed, it is expected that women empowerment will have a positive relationship with GDP. It may take a while before women are even able to benefit from economic growth in their countries. Women

empowerment needs to begin from within the structural societies through policy making and being more open to perspectives from women, especially in developing countries. Granting more opportunities and access to financial services, efficient transportation, and better networks to hire and promote women can provide spaces for women to contribute economically. This way, the rate where economic growth and female empowerment have a positive relationship, will happen at a faster pace, which brings tremendous economic benefits to a country, especially evident in developing countries.



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