

Impacts of Globalization on Kazakh Women



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ABSTRACT

The current paper discusses the effects of globalization over Kazakh women. Kazakhstan- a large country, larger than all the other Central Asian states with a small population, a country rich in natural resources, adopted the market economy with full vigour. It is prodigiously rich in oil, gas and mineral deposits and also it is the major source of non-ferrous metals. Kazakhstan had a better base for creating a market economy, given its higher living standards and human capital endowments, and it too was initially viewed as one of the more reformist Soviet successor state. Actuality, Kazakh women are lingering in the hardships of working women, family liabilities and the exploitive policies of MNCs. They are trapped in triple burden. However, their involvement and contribution is remarkable in making the present market economy system a success.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Central Asia, globalization, market economy, women

Introduction

The Kazakh government has eagerly embraced IMF reforms and it has adopted over 130 market friendly laws, expanded trade vigorously, privatized most of its industrial giants, including the country's major oil and gold facility and signed dozens of multi-million dollars international deals. In the global perspective, Kazakhstan is located in the lower rank of human development. In 2006, the country ranked 71 in Human Development Index (HDI). The estimated earned per capita income for man was US \$ 11782 and for woman US \$ 8039 (UNDP, 2008), women in the country earning about 32% less income than men. This is quite a low rate indicator for the position of Kazakh women in the field of work and employment.

During the period of 2001-2008, the number of male employees improved by 28% and the number of female employees by 42.5%. Each year female employment grew slightly more rapidly than male employment but such increase in total employment was a bit unpredictable. The period from 2001-2008, the official unemployment rate of Kazakhstan gradually fell from over 10% to below 7%. Although the absolute gap between the male and female unemployment rate fell somewhat (in 2001 nearly 14% of women were unemployed, against 10% of men), but the female unemployment rate had elevated up to three times more than

the males in 2008. During the period from 1991-2000 and 2001-2008, if a comparison is made in reference to general employment and especially women employment then the overall situation relatively improved in the later period.

The area of oil, gas, mining and metals directly account for 35% GDP and giving exposure to nearly 80% of industrial output, and more than 80% of exports and able to generate new jobs. After initial gains from aggressive economic reform, productivity has remained stagnant in other sector since 2001. The agriculture sector is considered one of the sustainable and reliable sectors in the economy of any country. While the agricultural labour productivity has been falling for more than a decade, the employment in agricultural jobs had increased to 35% in 2003.

In 2002, an estimated 43% population suffered from at least one form of poverty which 58% in rural and 30% in urban areas was recorded. By 2002, the pension system was the main mechanism for preventing poverty among the elderly citizens. But under the pension reform the level of benefits declined significantly below the 2002 level. The overall decline is driven by the steep decline in the value of women's pension due to the more direct relationship between wages and years of work in new system. According to the World Bank, "the significant reduction of pension benefits could

lead to a greater prevalence of poverty among the elderly, especially women."

Though the Kazakh women have an excellent presence in sectors like agriculture, forestry and fishing and record a very nominal participation in mining, utilities (gas, water and electricity) and construction. Women's participation is better than men in wholesale and retail trade, restaurant and hotels, education, health and social work while in all other categories women are lacking behind to men. In 2008, the total men labour force was 4,018,000 and women were 3,839,000 i.e. 48.9% women's share in total work force and it gives a reflection of a legitimate participation at various workplaces in Kazakhstan.

Kazakh women are primarily involved in low paid jobs like the occupational groups of professionals, technicians, associate professionals, clerks, services, shops, sales workers and their number is quite low in power jobs where one has the power of decision making in their respective professions. It means that the market economy has just provided woman an opportunity to work in Kazakhstan and their involvement in numbers at workplaces are improving primarily. There is a positive shift in the position of Kazakh women where they are making a move from working to an empowered position; a position where she could drive her thoughts in running the system. Yet, generally, the decision making positions are still occupied by the males.

Apart from this, it is a global fact that women take their work and duty more sincerely and seriously. The average income gap between male and female grew from 30% in 1990 to 38% in 2002, and in 2008 this difference in income was 31.4%. The things are shocking at this point, first, though the Kazakh GDP is improving the conditions of women income is no better than at the time of independence. Secondly, there is discrimination towards women in their professional life; the worst kind of discrimination being, the males employing men predominantly in key and high salaried positions in all relevant sectors. Sometimes women are not even equally paid for the same services compared to a male counterpart. The negative impact of market economy increases their vulnerability to poverty and losses to the economy of highly educated workers. The wage

gap sometimes is a disincentive for women to seek employment, especially when little child care facility is available. Women would not be interested to improve their skills when they may not be promoted and given power posts. Women hold only 3% Of management positions despite being just under almost 50% of work force. Most notably, with the public service, 77% of lower positions are held by women despite their higher education.

In this way, they are facing vertical segregation in the market economic system. The women participation in Kazakhstan is basically in stereotyped jobs, for instance, education, social and health care, wholesale and retails, hotels and restaurant sectors but not in the sectors of high growth such as industry and processing. The Feminized sectors tend to have lower average salary, which contributes to the overall average wage gap between male and female. In that situation they are suffering from the horizontal segregation of market economic system.

Due to all the above given reasons Kazakh women make up 51.2% of all self employed people. About 42% of all women rely on self employment compared with 36% of men; in rural areas 64% of women are self employed in low skilled agricultural activities. After the decline of social welfare facilities in Kazakhstan women have to bear family responsibility, while worrying their family financial conditions. So they do not have as much time for extra skilled training. Further, there is a complete lack of the availability of better training centres in rural areas. Without any other support, such as business training or access to markets for products or services, it is complicated for many women to expand self-employed activities into possible business enterprises. Thus self employment may not offer them a reasonable return on their labour as compared to men.

Moreover, there is another effect of market economy on women in Kazakh society. After introducing that system there was a decline in marriages and low fertility rate is observed in that society. Though all the Central Asian states witnessed such decline after 1991 but the Kazakh society seems largely affected by this phenomenon. Nationally, the crude marriage rate declined from 10.1 marriages per thousand populations in 1991 to only 5.8 in 1999, a 43% decline. The

primary reasons behind this entire episode are that firstly, the market economy has enhanced the economic competition among the country's general population; secondly, women's involvement in such rivalry was also recorded.

Consequently, Kazakh women are not able to give rightful consideration to family and marriage. Therefore, such primary institutions like marriage and family are now at back foot and losing its grip in Kazakh society in contemporary times. On the other hand, there is a great influence of Europe over Kazakh society, as a result of which women are more concerned with their career and higher education. Subsequently it has increased the age for marriage and simultaneously a drop in fertility was also noticed.

The fertility rating after 2003 is not satisfactory and is rather low; such index is not at all favourable for a healthy society. The total fertility rate may widely differ between population groups in regions also; in 1999, the TFR for ethnic Kazakh was 2.5 and that for Russian was less than 1.4; in the southern Kazakh the TFR was high on the other hand, while in western region it was quite low. The market economy has raised the rate of emigration and most emigrants are young adults of marriageable age, which also has a negative effect on fertility.

Gender inequality is one of the structural socio-cultural causes hampering development in Kazakhstan. Such dissimilarity stems from the legacy of the past along with factors such as a traditional culture with weak democratic values,

paternalistic relations in society, peculiarities of economic activity, dependence on mining industries, weak infrastructure, regional disparities, and unsustainable use of environmental resources. These causes lead to insufficient participation of women in different sectors of society, their exposure to various risks, and a growth in discrimination and sexism. Kazakhstan has the potential to achieve gender equality by 2015. The issue now is how this potential will be developed and used, how deep the institutional and cultural changes in the society will go, and whether new threats to equality might arise.

Conclusion

The Kazakh society is having a European culture in its society. The career and higher education are the primary issues for the Kazakh women. In general it can be observed that the Kazakh women are affected by the negative effects of market economy. Kazakh women have adopted the market economy system and as part of it and it seems that they are also enjoying the surfacial benefits of such system. The Kazakh society is still far from that ideal position where women are treated as equal to men. But it is true that the market economy has given women a better strength in their national economic system, their position is far better than many other countries in the region and the world at large in this respect. On the other hand, the present market economy system has snatched all the facilities which were provided by the Soviet Union to women and made their lives tough for women to work.

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