

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF LITERACY RATE, HEALTH, AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ON WOMEN'S LABOR PARTICIPATION RATE IN OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES



Rosita Milenia Sari¹

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

b300200028@student.ums.ac.id

Siti Aisyah²

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

aisyah.feb.ums@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to explore the influence of literacy rate, women's involvement in parliament, fertility rates, and female life expectancy on the female labor participation rate in member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The study employs panel data analysis methods for 20 OIC member countries spanning from 2019 to 2021, utilizing data from the World Bank. The data is processed using Eviews 12 software. Findings from the Fixed Effects Model (FEM) approach indicate that women's participation in parliament harms the female labor participation rate. However, literacy rate, fertility rate, and female life expectancy do not significantly affect the female labor participation rate. Based on the research outcomes, governments should evaluate the causes of the declining female workforce participation rate, engage in dialogue with various stakeholders, and formulate policies that support women's involvement without compromising their participation in the workforce. Additionally, strengthening family support policies, promoting gender equality in parliament, and enhancing women's financial literacy are essential measures.

Keywords: Female Labor Participation Rate, Literacy Rate, Health, Women Empowerment, Panel Data

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in the labor market has been a key concern in the social and economic development of many countries, including member states of the OIC. Women's contributions to the workforce have significant impacts on economic growth, community well-being, and gender equality as indicated by several studies (Ghosh, 2018; Ruiters & Charteris, 2020; Girón & Kazemikhasragh, 2021). Economic growth can generate new employment opportunities in cleaner sectors, such as environmentally friendly manufacturing and renewable energy (Rofiuddin et al., 2019). However, research by Al Faizah et al. (2020) indicates that developing countries still face significant challenges in terms of the Gender Inequality Index, underscoring the importance of addressing issues related to women's empowerment, reproductive health, and involvement in the workforce. The GII includes key aspects such as reproductive health, empowerment, and economic opportunities (Barnat et al., 2019).

Numerous studies have been conducted to identify factors influencing female labor participation rate (Batool et al., 2019; Idowu & Owoeye, 2019; Sasongko et al., 2019; Al Faizah et al., 2020). Additionally, several empirical studies have explored the relationship between literacy rates and education with female labor participation rate across various global regions (Shittu & Abdullah, 2019; Imamura et al., 2020; Al Faizah, 2022). Increasing literacy rates generally create better job opportunities for women, while the level of education influences their professions (Saputra & Junaidi, 2011).

Female labor participation rate in member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) varies. In 2014, approximately 46.6% of women were engaged in the OIC labor market (SESRIC, 2016). However, there is significant inequality among OIC member countries regarding the female labor participation rate. It is estimated that by 2025, the female labor participation rate in OIC countries will decline to 39.6% (SESRIC, 2018). Efforts to address the inequality in female labor participation rate in OIC member countries involve improving access to education, skill development, family support policies, closing the gender pay gap, and empowering women economically (SESRIC, 2016). With these measures, it is expected to enhance opportunities and support women in contributing to the labor market while reducing disparities in female labor participation rate in the region.

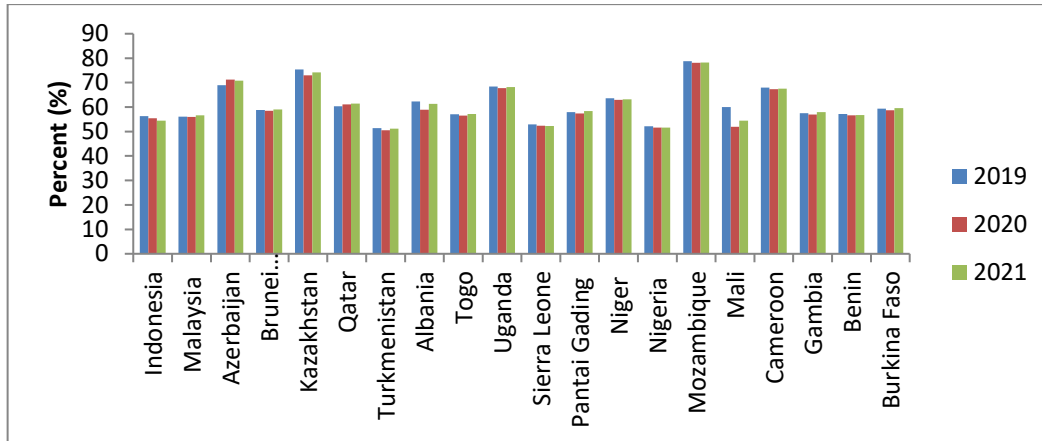


Figure 1.

Female Labor Participation Rate in OIC Member Countries 2019-2021

Source: World Bank, Authors

In Figure 1, during the period of 2019-2021, Mozambique recorded the highest female labor participation rates, reaching 78.37%, while Turkmenistan had the lowest rate at 51.02%. Following Mozambique, Kazakhstan ranked second with a female labor participation rate of 74.20%. Countries such as Uganda, Cameroon, Niger, Qatar, and Albania also reported female labor participation rates above 60%. Interestingly, Qatar experienced an upward trend in participation, rising from 60.30% in 2019 to 61.41% in 2021. In contrast, Mozambique, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone exhibited stable female labor participation rates compared to other OIC countries, with all mentioned countries surpassing the 50% threshold.

Previous research has highlighted various factors influencing female labor participation rate. Women's politics, as indicated by Lv & Yang (2018) and Al Faizah et al. (2020) studies, have been identified as significant factors. Additionally, factors such as women's fertility rates, the number of children, and women's life expectancy also have a significant impact on female labor participation rate, as noted in the research by Alfaizah & Puspitasari (2022), Blau & Kahn (2020), and Rahmawan & Aisyah (2024).

Theoretically, literacy rate play a crucial role, as women with higher education are more likely to engage in the labor market (Imamura et al., 2020). Women's involvement in political affairs can enhance their participation in the workforce. When women have adequate political influence to voice opinions and make an impact, they tend to take steps or

enact regulations, such as gender anti-discrimination policies in the workplace, to ensure women's rights (Lv & Yang, 2018). Fertility and the number of births can influence participation by determining the extent to which childcare responsibilities limit women's involvement in formal employment (Al Faizah et al., 2020). Women's life expectancy is linked to health and well-being, which can affect their ability in the workforce (Alfaizah & Puspitasari, 2022).

While numerous theoretical studies have identified factors influencing women's participation in the workforce, further quantitative research is needed to deeply understand how literacy and political factors, in particular, affect their participation levels. Additionally, research exploring the complex interaction between literacy rates, parliamentary involvement, fertility rates, and life expectancy can provide deeper insights into the dynamics of the female labor market, especially in the member countries of the OIC. Therefore, this study aims to explore the influence of literacy, women's involvement in parliament, fertility rates, and female life expectancy on the female labor participation rate in OIC member countries.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The involvement of women in economic activities, known as the female labor participation rate, holds significance in the realm of sustainable development. Enhancing women's participation is crucial as they can contribute significantly to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (Amanuma et al., 2023; Leal Filho et al., 2023). Factors such as literacy, health, culture, and women's empowerment can influence their participation rates in the workforce (Al Faizah et al., 2020; 2022).

Women's literacy, as a primary foundation for economic and social empowerment, plays a crucial role in shaping the female labor participation rate. High literacy rates not only provide women access to skills and knowledge but also equip them with the confidence and competitiveness crucial for success in an increasingly competitive job market (Schier, 2020). Research by Al Faizah et al. (2022) found that each increase in women's literacy rates can enhance their participation in the workforce. Similar studies by Aboohamidi & Chidmi (2013) highlight that literacy rates can boost female labor participation. However, literacy is

not merely about technical skills; high literacy also fosters an open and progressive mindset (Boakye & Southey, 2008). Women with good literacy tend to have inclusive perspectives, giving them the courage and motivation to pursue careers beyond the household. Therefore, literacy serves not only as a gateway to knowledge but also as a driver of positive social change.

The engagement of women in politics, specifically in parliamentary roles, has a notable influence on the female labor participation rate. Two studies conducted by (Al Faizah et al. (2020; 2022) found that an increase in the percentage of women in parliament positively correlates with an increase in their participation in the workforce. This indicates a close relationship between women's political representation and their engagement in economic activities. With stronger representation in legislative bodies, women can more effectively advocate for policies that support their rights in the workplace (LV & Yang, 2018). Although women's involvement in politics and gender literacy serves as positive driving factors, the complexity of the female labor participation rate cannot be overlooked. A recent study by Cao et al. (2023) highlights that there are other influencing factors affecting female labor participation rate. These factors include organizational culture, government policies related to women's employment, and social norms that still impact the understanding of gender roles in society.

Research has also highlighted the fertility rates of women as a crucial factor negatively impacting their participation in the workforce (Bakar et al., 2014). Women with a significant number of children often face increased household responsibilities, creating time and flexibility constraints that can diminish their involvement in economic activities. Nazah et al.'s study (2021) supports these findings by demonstrating that any increase in women's fertility rates can contribute to a decline in their workforce participation. Traditional roles associated with household responsibilities can act as barriers for women to fully activate their economic potential (Zuhri et al., 2020). Therefore, policies and initiatives supporting a balance between work and personal life, such as flexible parental leave programs and childcare facilities, can play a crucial role in enhancing female labor participation rate (Ziegler & Bamieh, 2023). Additionally, gender inequality in household responsibilities can be a structural barrier that needs addressing (Samtleben & Müller, 2022).

Encouraging equal sharing of responsibilities between partners in families and shifting social norms that bind women to traditional roles can create a more supportive environment for women's participation in the workforce.

The life expectancy of women also has a significant impact on female labor participation rate (Al Faizah et al., 2020). A high life expectancy for women not only reflects improved well-being and access to better healthcare services but also provides them with greater opportunities to advance their careers (Lozano & Solé-Auró, 2021). With a longer life, women can allocate more time to education, training, and professional development, thereby enhancing their skills and contributions in the workplace (Clarke, 2011). Women who feel more secure about their health and that of their children are likely to actively seek and maintain employment (Gjellestad et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilizes samples from twenty member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) with annual data spanning from 2019 to 2021. These countries were chosen as they can provide a robust representation of the role of women in the labor market, with their participation rates exceeding 50 percent. The selection of the timeframe was made to observe and analyze the economic crisis impact induced by the Covid-19 pandemic on women's participation in the labor market. This timeframe encompasses periods before, during, and after the crisis, enabling researchers to assess significant changes in women's participation and the influencing factors during these periods.

The main focus of this analysis is the female labor participation rate. The data used measures the percentage of women aged 15-64 engaged in economic activities or the workforce. This participation rate is estimated by the International Labour Organization (ILO) using a specific model. Additionally, to gauge literacy rates, data on the percentage of adult women aged 15 and above with reading and writing skills are employed. Literacy is measured as a percentage of the total adult female population in that age group capable of reading and writing, reflecting the literacy proficiency within that population. All the data used is sourced from the World Bank. Data were processed with Eviews 12 software.

This research employs a panel data regression approach to assess how various independent factors influence the female labor force participation rate in member countries of the OIC. The assessment model includes the Common Effects Model (CEM), Fixed Effects Model (FEM), and Random Effects Model (REM). To identify the most appropriate model, two examinations are performed: the Chow Test and the Hausman Test. Key variables established in previous research are utilized, as numerous independent variables can impact the female labor force participation rate, and this data is accessible across different countries (Batool et al., 2019; Idowu & Owoeye, 2019; Sasongko et al., 2019; Al Faizah et al., 2020). Therefore, this study applies the following statistical models to estimate the female labor participation rate in OIC member countries:

$$FLPR_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FL_{it} + \beta_2 WP_{it} + \beta_3 FR_{it} + \beta_4 LER_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where:

FLPR : Female Labor Participation Rate (%)

FL : Female's Literacy (%)

WP : Women's Involvement in Parliament (%)

FR : Fertility Rate (%)

LER : Female Life Expectancy (Tahun)

β_0 : Constant

$\beta_1.. \beta_4$: Independent Coefficients

ε : Error Factor

it : Panel Data

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.

Main Results of Panel Data Regression

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
FLPR				
Constant	19,872 (0,256)	54,882 (0,001)	42,879 (0,002)	
FL	0,023 (0,641)	0,141 (0,181)	0,112 (0,082)	

WP	0,384	-0,217	-0,138	
	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,004)	
FR	1,796	-0,757	1,290	
	(0,121)	(0,668)	(0,238)	
LER	0,373	0,044	0,114	
	(0,066)	(0,789)	(0,410)	
R ²	0,4102	0,9904	0,1702	
Prob. F-statistic	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	
Population	20	20	20	
Prob. Chow test				0,0000
Prob. Hausman test				0,0002

Source: Eviews 12, author

Table 1 showcases the practical findings from different panel data estimation models. In the fourth column, the Chow test yields a probability of $0.0000 < \alpha (0.05)$, while the Hausman test results in a probability of $0.0002 < \alpha (0.05)$. These outcomes suggest the adoption of the Fixed Effects Model (FEM), as indicated in the second column.

Column 2 displays outcomes from the Fixed Effects Model estimator, revealing an R² value of 0.9904. This suggests that 99.04% of the fluctuations in the female labor participation rate can be attributed to shifts in female literacy rates, women's involvement in parliament, fertility rates, and female life expectancy. The remaining 0.96% is impacted by variables not considered in the regression model.

The F-statistic probability in Column 2 is 0.0000, indicating significance below the α level of 0.05. This suggests that female literacy rates, women's involvement in parliament, fertility rate, and female life expectancy collectively impact female labor participation rate.

Table 2.
t Test Results

Dependent Variable Female Labor Participation Rate			
Variable	Coefficient	Prob.	Conclusion
FL	$\beta_1 = 0,141$	0,181	No significant effect
WP	$\beta_2 = -0,217$	0,000	Significant on $\alpha = 0,05$

FR	$\beta_3 = -0,757$	0,668	No significant effect
LER	$\beta_4 = 0,044$	0,789	No significant effect

Source: Eviews 12, author

Table 2 indicates that individual or partial women's involvement in parliament has a negative impact on the female labor participation rate at the α level (0.05). However, all other independent variables, such as the female literacy rate, fertility rate, and female life expectancy, either individually or partially, do not significantly affect the female labor participation rate.

The coefficient of women's involvement in parliament (WP) is -0.217, indicating that a one percent increase in women's involvement in parliament will decrease the female labor participation rate by 0.217 percent. This is attributed to a possibility of elected female representatives in parliament of sampled countries lacking commitment to addressing gender inequality. Gender inequality in terms of access to education, employment, and other resources can make it more challenging for women to participate in the workforce.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that women's involvement in parliament has a negative impact on the female labor participation rate. Gender inequality in terms of access to education, employment, and other resources can make it more challenging for women to participate in the workforce (Cao et al., 2023). This gender inequality can be exacerbated by the involvement of women in parliament if elected women lack a commitment to addressing gender disparities. This is supported by the research of Okşak & Koyuncu (2017), who found that women's politics negatively influences the female labor participation rate. However, these findings do not align with the research by Al Faizah et al. (2020, 2022), which found that women's involvement in parliament positively influences the female labor participation rate. When women gain political empowerment to voice their concerns and exert influence, they often enact measures or regulations, as seen in addressing sex discrimination in the workplace, to safeguard women's rights. This can foster greater female involvement in the labor force.

The female literacy does not significantly influence the female labor participation rate. This is due to socio-cultural factors where women are expected to focus on household

and family matters (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). This may result in women lacking opportunities to work, despite having a high level of literacy. However, research by Aboohamidi & Chidmi (2013) and Al Faizah (2022) found that the female literacy rate can enhance their labor force participation. When women have a good literacy rate, their chances of participating in the job market are more significant compared to those with lower literacy skills. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are crucial. Improving the literacy culture among women is not an easy task. However, enhancing their motivation can boost the literacy rate of women, leading to an increase in female labor participation.

Fertility rates do not significantly affect the female labor participation rate. This is attributed to educated women with better job opportunities tending to have lower fertility rates. However, research by Bakar et al. (2014) and Nazah et al. (2021) found that female fertility rates can decrease their labor force participation. This is due to a trade-off between domestic and economic roles. Women with children, especially young ones, require more time and energy for childcare, reducing the time and energy available for work.

The female life expectancy does not significantly influence the female labor participation rate. Female life expectancy serves as an indicator of their health and well-being. However, an increase in female life expectancy does not necessarily translate to an increase in the female labor participation rate. This is because the rise in female life expectancy can be attributed to various factors, such as advancements in health technology, improved access to healthcare services, and overall enhancement in quality of life (Li et al., 2018). While these factors may have an impact on the female labor participation rate, the relationship is not direct.

Based on the research findings, the government needs to evaluate the causes of the decline in female workforce participation after involvement in parliament, engaging in dialogue with various stakeholders, and creating policies that support women's involvement without compromising their participation in the workforce. Additionally, strengthening family support policies, promoting gender equality in parliament, and enhancing women's financial literacy are crucial. Through these measures, it is hoped that the government can increase female workforce participation and support economic development and gender equality.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study is that job embeddedness has a positive and significant effect on job performance at the Cilacap Regency Education and Culture Office. Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on job performance at the Cilacap Regency Education and Culture Office. OCB mediates the effect of job embeddedness on job performance at the Cilacap District Education and Culture Office. OCB mediates the effect of employee engagement on job performance at the Cilacap Regency Education and Culture Office.

This research aims to explore the influence of female literacy, women's involvement in parliament, fertility rates, and female life expectancy in OIC member countries during the period 2019-2021. The research findings, utilizing a panel data method with a Fixed Effects Model (FEM) approach, indicate that women's involvement in parliament has a negative impact the female labor participation rate. This is attributed to elected female parliamentarians lacking commitment to addressing gender inequality. Gender inequality in terms of access to education, employment, and other resources can make it more challenging for women to participate in the workforce.

However, female literacy rates, fertility rates, and female life expectancy do not significantly impact the female labor participation rate. Based on these research findings, governments need to evaluate the causes of the decline in female labor participation after parliamentary involvement, engage in dialogue with various stakeholders, and formulate policies that support women's involvement without sacrificing their participation in the workforce. Additionally, strengthening family support policies, promoting gender equality in parliament, and enhancing financial literacy for women in OIC member countries are crucial. The limitations of this research involve a limited time period, preventing the inclusion of long-term dynamic changes. Moreover, the study relies on available data and does not encompass other factors that may influence female labor participation rate, such as cultural factors or local policies.

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