



Takafu

Equal
Opportunity
Index *Pilot Report*

Executive Summary



We dedicate this report to Her Royal Highness the late Princess Banderi bint Abdulrahman Al Faisal, the former Chief Executive Officer of the King Khalid Foundation and an effective member of Alnahda Society. HRH Princess Banderi was not only a pioneer of philanthropy and social work; she was also dedicated to building local capacity within the social sector and advancing a culture of evidence-based policy making. It is through her vision and her faith in Alnahda that this initiative was possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	8
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
TAKAFU INITIATIVE	10
I. Domains and Subdomains	10
II. Data Sources	10
III. Piloting Implementation	11
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	12
I. Takafu Index	12
II. The Takafu Survey	12
III. Takafu Policy Review	14
CONCLUSION	16
I. Policy Recommendations	16
II. Employer Recommendations	17
III. Local and International Organizations	18
IV. Areas for Future Research	18



PREFACE

Alnahda Society (Alnahda) has pursued the design and development of the Takafu Initiative, in continuation of a historical commitment to the empowerment of marginalized groups, especially women, and the activation of their role in Saudi society.

Since its establishment in 1963, Alnahda has remained committed to promoting the social and economic participation of women through a variety of programs. For example, in 1995, Alnahda established a program that provided job placement services to women, which ran for 22 years. In 2015, Alnahda led the campaign to promote women's participation in Municipal Elections. Today, Alnahda continues to offer career education programs and scholarships to high school and college students (e.g., Mustaqbali, Fursa), with the objective of preparing young women for their academic and professional careers. In 2017, Alnahda established a research center that aims to build in-house capacity to define and measure the barriers to women's empowerment and produce evidence that can support Alnahda in accomplishing its mission.

The publication of this report marks the conclusion of the first year of the Takafu Initiative, in which Alnahda has been dedicated to designing and piloting the Takafu Index and survey, as well as developing an advocacy plan to guide their efforts in informing policy makers. In the coming years, Alnahda will aim to publish an updated report periodically to track progress in achieving equal opportunity in the private sector. Takafu will also gradually move towards expanding the scope of the survey to include a larger sample and possibly include the public sector. In the interim period between the publication of each report, the teams will focus on implementation of the Takafu advocacy plan.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Takafu initiative is implemented by the Alnahda Center for Research. The project team includes Jawaher Al Sudairy, Chaza Abou Daher and Leen Al Hajjar and incorporates a lead affiliate researcher, Dr. Leena Merdad, from King Abdulaziz University, as well as the support of research interns Dahna Black and Ali Tarhini.

The Takafu team would like to thank its partner establishments for participating in the Takafu surveys and for contributing to this report's analysis. A total of 50 establishments, including holding companies and subsidiaries, joined the Takafu surveys in the regions of Riyadh, Makkah and the Eastern Province. The list of Takafu Partners includes, but is not restricted to, the following:

- Al-Rashid Trading & Contracting Company
- AlTurki Holding
- Arkaz
- Azadea Company Limited
- Banque Saudi Fransi
- Musanadah
- Nesma Group
- Olayan Financing Company
- Olayan Saudi Holding Company
- Rawabi Holding
- Red Sea Gateway Terminal
- Samara
- Saudi Readymix Concrete Company
- Saudi British Bank
- Sawafi
- Tasamy for Social Entrepreneurship
- The Palladium Group



Takafu is an initiative carried out by the Alnahda Center for Research. Meaning 'parity,' the Takafu initiative aims to establish the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's first Gender Equal Opportunity index. In line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which stipulates measurement of growth and prosperity to support the future of the Kingdom and promotes equal access to economic opportunity for men and women (Saudi Vision 2030), the Takafu initiative aims to support the vision and identify areas where policy makers can intervene and improve work conditions for men and women.

At this time, the scope of the Takafu Index measures gender gaps in the private sector only, covering formal and paid work for Saudis and non-Saudis.¹ The Index does not include the labor force in the public or informal sectors. It also does not include self-employment, freelance or domestic workers. In the future, the Takafu Index aims to expand its scope to include the public and informal sectors, especially considering that a large proportion of women are active in both sectors.

I. Domains and Subdomains

The Takafu Index is based on three main domains: participation, career development and compensation:

- **The first domain** – *participation* – measures the gap between the participation of men and women in the Saudi labor force. This domain comprises 2 subdomains: access and representation. Access measures the likelihood that women and men can gain employment, while representation measures the ratio of female-to-male shares of employment.

- **The second domain** – *career development* – focuses on the gap between men and women's decision-making power in the economy. The gender gap is calculated as the ratio of the share of women to men in managerial positions.
- **The third domain** – *compensation* – examines gender inequality in labor market earnings by measuring the earnings gap ratio, which is the ratio of the female-to-male mean monthly salary.

These domains are aligned with the International Labor Organization (ILO) Decent Work Indicators, presented at the 18th International Conference of Labor Statisticians, December 2008 (International Labour wOrganization, 2013). In particular, the Takafu Index corresponds to the statistical indicators under Equal Opportunity and Treatment: 1) Occupational Segregation by Gender, 2) Female share of employment in senior and middle management, and 3) Gender wage gap. The Takafu Index measures gaps at the level of industries and firm size.

II. Data Sources

The data used in this report rely on three sources, administrative data, survey data and policy documents. The main source of administrative data is the General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI), a public organization that is responsible for social insurance coverage for private sector employees (General Organization for Social Insurance, 2018). GOSI collects data on the labor force through regular reporting by private employers.

Table 1: Industry list, based on categories defined by GOSI

Industry Categories	
Accommodations & Food Services	Manufacturing
Agriculture & Fishery	Petroleum & Mining
Business Services	Real Estate
Construction	Social Services, including NGOs
Education	Telecommunication, Mail & Information
Electricity, Gas & Water	Trade & Retail
Finance & Insurance	Transport & Logistics
Health Services	

The second source, survey data, is collected by the Takafu team using two survey tools, one survey directed at HR managers within private companies and another survey directed at male and female employees within private sector firms.

The third source includes all laws, regulations, and information published by government entities relating to labor policies and programs.

III. Piloting Implementation

At this stage, the Takafu team piloted the surveys, whereby the sample was restricted to a set of 50 companies and 1100 female and male employees. While the scope succeeded in targeting companies across all 15 industry categories, based on categories defined by GOSI, the sample was still not representative. Additionally, recruitment of employees who participated in the survey was limited to Saudis only.

¹ The survey in this report was a pilot and was limited to Saudi employees only. Future surveys will aim to include non-Saudis as well.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report pursues three main streams of analysis: the first is the Takafu Index, which estimates the gap in equal opportunity in the private sector based on GOSI data (Chapter 1). The second is an analysis of Takafu survey data collected within a sample of private sector companies. The survey collects responses from HR representatives and employees within each participating company (Chapter 2). The third stream of analysis is a review of policies relevant to equal opportunity between men and women in the private sector (Chapter 3). Below are the key findings of each stream. The methodology adopted for Takafu and the recommendations generated based on this analysis are discussed at the end of this report (Chapters 4 and 5).

I. Takafu Index

The Takafu Index estimates the national gender gaps for 2018 at 53% and 65% for the total Saudi and non-Saudi private sector workforce, respectively. These findings are composites of the gaps calculated across the three Takafu domains: participation, career development and compensation.

The gender gap in participation between men and women for the total Saudi workforce is 52%, and it is 97% for the non-Saudi workforce. Regarding career development, the gap is estimated at 58% for the Saudi workforce and 97% for the non-Saudi workforce. As for compensation, the wage gap for the Saudi workforce is 49%, while non-Saudi females earn twice what their male counterparts make.

The highest-performing industries, in terms of equal opportunity for Saudi men and women, are education, health and hospitality, while the lowest-performing industries are utility industries, and post & telecommunications. For the non-

Saudi workforce, the highest-performing industries are social services, health and education, and the lowest-performing are in utilities and post & communication.

Regarding firm size, data indicate that equal opportunity for the Saudi workforce is highest in small and micro-sized establishments and lowest in mega establishments. For the non-Saudi workforce, equal opportunity is highest in large establishments and lowest in mega establishments.

The composition of the workforce within GOSI data shows that Saudi and non-Saudi women account for 9% of the total workforce. Saudi women account for 32% of the Saudi workforce, while non-Saudi women account for 3% of the non-Saudi workforce. In management, women constitute 22% of total managerial positions in the private sector. Saudi women hold 30% of managerial positions among Saudi managers, while non-Saudi women constitute 3% of non-Saudi managers. These estimates closely correspond to the proportions found in data published by the General Authority of Statistics and the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (table 3).

II. The Takafu Survey

The Takafu survey included two questionnaires, one that targeted HR representatives within companies that participated in Takafu and another that targeted a sample of their employees. The survey included questions on the drivers of the gender gap across the three Takafu domains, participation, career development and compensation, as well as employee perceptions related to each domain. Additionally, the survey enquired about internal policies and mechanisms that may influence equal opportunity and corporate culture in the company.

Table 2: Gender Gaps based on GOSI Data

Indicator	Gaps
Participation (Saudi)	52%
Participation (non-Saudi)	97%
Career Development (Saudi)	58%
Career Development (non-Saudi)	97%
Wage gap (Saudi)	49%
Wage gap (non-Saudi)	0% ²

Table 3: Composition based on GOSI Data

Indicator	Proportions
Women in the workforce (Total)	9%
Women in the workforce (Saudi)	32%
Women in the workforce (non-Saudi)	3%
Women in managerial positions (Total)	22%
Women in managerial positions (Saudi)	30%
Women in managerial positions (non-Saudi)	3%

Domain I: Participation

HR Survey

The sample of companies that participated in the survey reported a low rate of representation for women in their total workforce, which was also reflected in the proportion of female applicants that applied for vacancies within the Takafu sample. HR representatives reported that men were more likely to apply for vacancies in their companies than were women, and men were more likely to be hired as well.

² Non-Saudi females earn on average more than Non-Saudi males. However, the wage gap is reported as 0% to remain consistent with participation and career development domains. All ratios are truncated at equality or 1 (i.e., an equal number of men and women). This means that there is no reward or penalty for women surpassing men in a specific indicator.

Employee Survey

The majority of male and female employees who participated in the Takafu survey believe that women are underrepresented in their organizations. They emphasized the role of social stigma, mobility constraints among women, and the appeal of certain occupations to men compared to women as the main reasons for low female representation. To develop a closer understanding of the drivers of underrepresentation, employees were asked about education mismatch, commuting options, caregiving, and work hours:

When asked about career and education mismatch, female employees were more likely to state that compared to their male counterparts, their current employment does not match their education.

As for commuting, the majority of male employees selected driving as their main mode of transportation to work, while female employees reported more costly options because at the time of the survey women still relied on private drivers, e-hailing services and family members to drive them to work.

When asked about caregiving, male employees identified their spouses and other family members as the main care providers for their children. Female employees were more likely to use external caregivers or childcare centers and hence reported higher childcare costs compared to men.

The survey gave participants the option to choose between increasing or decreasing their number of work days, which would be associated with an increase or decrease in their earnings. Male participants were more likely than female participants to report a willingness to work more for increased earnings. Among female participants, those with caring responsibilities were more likely to prefer working fewer days compared to female non-caregivers.

Domain II: Career Development

HR Survey

The sample of companies that participated in the survey reported a low representation of women in managerial positions, estimated at 10%. Furthermore, HR representatives reported that 25% of promotions granted within or to managerial positions in 2017 were granted to female employees, while the rest went to male employees. Most establishments that participated in the Takafu survey reported providing career guidance and support to their employees, with no gender disparity.

Employee Survey

Among employees who participated in the Takafu survey, the majority of males reported that they believe there is gender equality in opportunities for promotions. Responses from female participants were equally divided between believing there is gender equality between men and women and believing that women have limited access to opportunities for promotion compared to men. The most common reasons for the disparity in women's access to promotion as identified by male and female employees included fewer opportunities for mentorship, training and networking compared to males. Additionally, female employees reported working fewer hours or were less likely to work overtime compared to their male counterparts.

Domain III: Compensation

HR Survey

The most common benefits offered to employees within the establishments that participated in the Takafu survey were health insurance for non-dependents as well as transportation and housing allowances. Additionally, HR representatives were more likely to report offering childcare allowances and onsite childcare services to female than to male employees.

Employee Survey

When asked about their perceptions of compensation, female employees were more likely than males to believe that women are compensated less than their male counterparts for performing similar work. The top reported reasons for the gender wage gap include domestic responsibilities that women have outside of work, undervaluing of women's work, female preferences for shorter/flexible hours, women's lower propensity to ask for a raise, and discrimination.

Corporate Policies and Support Mechanisms

HR Survey

The majority of establishments that participated in the Takafu survey reported having formal policies and/or strategies related to flexible work arrangements as well as equal opportunity in recruitment, promotion, training and development. Conversely, more than half of establishments that participated in the Takafu survey do not offer any support mechanisms to employees with caring responsibilities. Regarding work-life balance, establishments reported offering flexible hours, unpaid leave and opportunities to work from home.

III. Takafu Policy Review

Equal opportunity and female participation in the labor force are prominent themes that appear across national economic goals, especially those pertaining to labor policy. Key economic strategies that intersect with equal opportunity include Vision 2030, the National Transformation Program (NTP), labor policies and programs under the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (MLSD), the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF), the Council of Family Affairs, the General Organization of Social Insurance (GOSI) and the Council of Cooperative Health Insurance. A review of national efforts points to a serious commitment by the government to enhance equal opportunity and improve female

participation in the labor market. This review also identifies areas where bias is institutionalized and may have an impact on equal opportunity.

Domain I: Participation

Vision 2030 and NTP 2020 list strategic objective “4.2.2 Increase Women's Participation in the Labor Market,” which guides a wide spectrum of initiatives and programs within relevant ministries and agencies (e.g., employment support, job placement services, nationalization of the workforce, subsidies for commuting and childcare, encouraging flexible and remote work). The objective also sets national key performance indicators to increase women's participation in the overall Saudi labor force from 21.4% to 24% in 2020 and to increase economic participation for women from 17% to 25%.

However, a review of labor laws and regulations points to provisions that may have created institutional biases and impacted female participation, such as setting the retirement age for women at 55 years as opposed to 60 years for men, requiring segregated spaces in office-based occupations, prohibition of female employment in certain occupations and industries, and requiring greater benefits for women compared to men in paid leave, childcare and end-of-service awards. Together, these provisions may have created additional fixed costs for employers, which restricted female entry into the job market. However, most limitations mentioned above have either been eliminated or relaxed following the latest Royal Decree that resulted in the amendment of the Labor Law and Bylaws in 2019. Hence, the coming years may see a change in employer and employee behavior in response to these amendments.

Domain II: Career Development

Similar to participation, through Vision 2030 and NTP 2020 strategic objective “4.2.2 Increase Women's Participation in the Labor Market,” there is emphasis on the provision of training and development for women and on increasing their share of managerial positions. However, no national key performance indicators have been set to measure the proportion of women in management today, nor has a future target been set to encourage growth. Additionally, the emphases of the Vision and NTP 2020 have not yet resulted in the development of any policies or programs that encourage the integration of women in management, with the exception of

the provision of training and development (e.g., Doroob and Tamheer training programs). The latest amendment of Nitaqat, a quota system for the nationalization of the workforce, expands the scope of the nationalization quota beyond measuring participation and places greater emphasis on vertical integration, stability and productivity; it also rewards employers for hiring both men and women in high paying positions. While this revision of the program is not gender-specific, it may result in greater access to management positions for Saudi women.

Domain III: Compensation

Unlike participation and career development, compensation is not mentioned in Vision 2030, NTP 2020, or the Labor Law. Furthermore, it is not included in the national key performance indicators. The only instance where equal pay is mentioned is in the latest amendment of the Labor Bylaws document, which requires equal pay for equal work, a first in Saudi labor policy. Yet, there is no clear program to ensure enforcement of this policy amendment. The Nitaqat program incentivizes employers to improve the average salaries offered to Saudis (men and women) in the private sector. Additionally, the Wage Protection System (WPS) introduced under the General Organization of Social Insurance in 2013 is intended to ensure accurate reporting of salaries in the private sector for men and women. Although implementation of WPS is still under progress, and it does not specify requirements for equal pay, it may improve data collection and the ability to determine the wage gap in the labor market.

A key area of bias in compensation surfaces under the Council of Cooperative Health Insurance, where the policy states “*If both the husband and wife are living together permanently and are insured as workers, their children shall only be eligible for insurance as dependents of the husband.*” This may impact women's access to compensation and benefits because if women are counted as dependents by their employers, they may be excluded from health benefits or from extending coverage to their children.

CONCLUSION

Female participation in the labor force in Saudi Arabia is undergoing continuous growth and receives significant attention from policy makers across various tiers of government (Vision 2030, NTP 2020, MLSLSD, etc.). However, despite the wide range of policies that have been introduced over the years, large gender gaps remain. Reducing these gaps is critical for overall economic development. Reducing gender gaps will improve economic efficiency and reduce household poverty, especially considering that women constitute 57% of Saudi Arabia's college graduates (Ministry of Education, 2016); overall productivity gains will therefore increase if their skills and talents are used fully. Additionally, there is evidence that when women have greater control over household resources, a greater proportion of household spending goes towards improving the wellbeing of children, e.g., toward food and education (World Bank, 2012).

While closing the gender gap matters for overall economic development, economic growth does not necessarily result in gender equality. Reducing the gender gap requires changing the way institutions and markets function and addressing barriers across social, educational, economic and political spheres. In this report, we focus on addressing equal access to economic opportunities, namely, participation, career development and compensation. The recommendations below will inform the development and execution of the Takafu Advocacy strategy.

I. Policy Recommendations

Adoption of the Takafu Index and Redesign of NTP Objective 4.2.2

Towards promotion of equal opportunity in the labor market, there is a need to reconsider the initiatives and KPIs under NTP objective 4.2.2 and expand them to include targets beyond increasing female participation and address the share of women in leadership and reducing the gaps in compensation. Hence, the Takafu Index presents a framework for defining objectives that we recommend to be adopted by the NTP, as well as MLSLSD and MCS in order to measure performance and guide development of policies and programs that can improve equal opportunity in both the public and private sector across these three domains.

Advancement of GOSI Data Collection and Reporting

GOSI oversees the most comprehensive and centralized data resource on the private sector labor force, which informs policy design and monitoring of progress. While it includes critical data on participation, career progression and earnings, we have identified several areas for advancement, such as: better reporting of salaries and occupations (may be achieved through full implementation of WPS), more granular reporting of salaries, including full disclosure of the benefit package, more proactive collection of relevant determinants (e.g., number of contractual hours worked, education level), and connecting the database to others (e.g., MCS and MOE) to trace the movements of employees among the public sector, private sector and education.

Establishment of a National Equal Opportunity Survey

In parallel to improving the quality of data collected on the labor force, there is a need to also monitor and measure practices and perceptions in the market. Hence, we recommend establishment of an Equal Opportunity Survey that may be implemented by GaStat, as it is the official reference for statistical data and information in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with other relevant entities, that can be implemented across the public and private sectors. Such survey data will help explain findings from administrative data on the labor force (e.g. GOSI data, MLSLSD data) as well as determine areas where policy interventions are most needed. Additionally, this survey will promote a culture of transparency and proactive performance measurement in the labor market. The survey developed under Takafu offers a framework for the design and analysis of this survey. We also recommend that participation of firms in the National Equal Opportunity Survey be made mandatory in order to eliminate bias from survey data, considering that voluntary-based participation may result in low-performing sectors and companies opting out of taking the survey. This approach builds on Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard, carried out by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. In Australia, all nonpublic sector employers with 100 or more employees submit an annual report on 6 gender equality indicators, including gender composition, remuneration, and harassment.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces in accordance with the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012.

Under the Act, non-public sector employers with 100 or more employees must submit a report annually to the Agency. The report must address six gender equality indicators:

- Gender composition of the workforce
- Gender composition of governing bodies
- Equal remuneration between women and men
- Employment terms, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements
- Consultation with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace
- Gender-based harassment and discrimination.

The Agency's dataset is based on 4,670 reports submitted on behalf of 12,229 employers in accordance with the Act for reporting period April 2014 to March 2015. The dataset covers 3,974,792 employees – approximately 40% of all employees in Australia. Findings from the full dataset were released in November 2015.

II. Employer Recommendations

Setting targets for improving equal opportunity within organizations

In order to build a corporate culture around improving the work environment for men and women, employers must set proactive targets for achieving equal opportunity in the workplace across the three domains: participation, career development and compensation. The Takafu team has developed a tool, the Company Scorecard, that shares survey results with employers compared with the average performance of other participating companies. This tool is designed to offer a road map for private sector companies to improve their performance, and use their survey results as a baseline based on which it becomes possible to measure their progress and set targets for the coming years.

The testimonial below from Nesma Holding, is a useful example of how a company that participated in the Takafu Survey is using the Company Scorecard to measure its performance:

I wanted to share with you how we're approaching the survey results and what we intend to do with them. I'm sharing this with you because of my interest in having the Takafu Report serve as an important tool to encourage and promote gender equality in the workplace in the years to come. Your knowledge of how a participating company would use this tool, along with our impressions now that we have received the results, may be useful for future iterations. Of course, we also look forward to receiving the consolidated report to see the proposed recommendations. These recommendations can also serve as guidelines for us in the future.

1. Set targets to increase female participation and increase the representation of women in management within 2 years.
2. Develop an awareness presentation for company managers about how to prevent discrimination and harassment of women in the company and promote their harmonious employment. Presentation to include legal aspects (government regulations around women).
3. Investigate the statements of bias and discrimination in our policies to verify (and correct if true).
4. Investigate teleworking and part-time options to see how they are being used and how they could be used.
5. Study ways to support women's employment, promotion, and integration within our company.

Adoption of best practices within Private Sector Firms

In addition to setting targets for corporate performance, employers must reflect these targets within their internal policy. Below is a set of key policies that have been prioritized by Takafu that we recommend be adopted, based on a review of international best practices to improve corporate culture and enforce equal opportunity in the workplace, namely:

1. Policy for equal opportunity in recruitment
2. Policy for equal opportunity in promotion
3. Support mechanisms to improve retention
4. Policy for equal opportunity in training and development
5. Policy for equal pay for equal work
6. Flexible working arrangements
7. Policy for sex-based harassment
8. Policy for employee support for family caring responsibilities
9. Policy for collection and publication of gender-specific data indicating quantified values for male and female employees

Encouraging diversity and female representation on company boards

Considering the low rate of female participation on boards, 0.008%, we recommend that private companies set targets for improving representation and encourage diversity on their boards. Hence, selection would benefit from a revision of membership criteria to consider and cultivate candidates who have relevant expertise but are not current CEOs or do not have board experiences (McKinsey, 2017). We believe that the pursuit of greater diversity, not only in gender, but also in skills, experiences and backgrounds, advances discussion and decision making. "Studies show that diverse groups take better decisions but tend to believe they could have taken even better ones... whereas homogeneous ones take poorer decisions but believe they have taken the best ones. Diverse boards are probably more complex to lead, but more effective at what they do." (EY, 2019)

III. Local and International Organizations

Integration of Takafu Index within NOW

Last year, the National Observatory for Women (NOW) released an index to measure the role of Saudi women in development covering five themes: economic, educational, regulatory, health and social. Considering the alignment between the objectives set by NOW and Takafu, we recommend integrating Takafu indicators within NOW's economic theme considering that it focuses directly on women's participation in development and supporting the national economy.

Adoption of Takafu Regionally

To date there are no indices in the region that measure equal opportunity between men and women in the labor market, and most indices published by international organizations measure female economic participation at the national scale without measuring performance at the level of industries or firms. We believe that Takafu offers a model that can be replicated in other Arab countries. Hence, the Takafu team will present the index design and methodology to policy makers and research centers regionally that are able to adopt it and implement it in their own countries.

IV. Areas for Future Research

Policy Impact Assessment

Our review of the policy landscape uncovers a wide range of policies that have been implemented through the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, the Human Resource Development Fund, the General Organization of Social Insurance, and others. These interventions include enactment of quotas, delivery of subsidies, introduction of flexible and remote work arrangements, and provision of training and employment services. There is limited understanding of the extent to which these policies and programs have been able to achieve their desired results and whether they contribute to better employment outcomes. Research is needed to evaluate and define the success and limitations of these policies in order to propose adjustments to their design and implementation.

Institutional Bias

The review of labor laws and regulations identified a set of provisions that create institutional bias in the labor market, such as requiring greater benefits for women compared to men in paid leave, childcare and end-of-service awards. While the design of these provisions is intended to respond to female-specific needs, the disparity between men and women may create an opportunity cost for the employment of women instead of men. These provisions may limit female access to employment in some industries. Conversely, there are policies that favor men, such as the health insurance policy, which gives priority to men over women in coverage of dependents. In this instance, recruitment of women poses a smaller cost compared to men, yet it limits their access to benefits. Research on institutional bias is needed to determine the extent to which these policies impact the equal opportunity and employment of women and to identify how they can best be modified.

Employer Bias

Takafu survey data demonstrate that there is potential discrimination on the side of employers in the hiring, promotion and compensation of female employees. Research is needed to define the nature (statistical or taste-based) and determinants of discrimination. For example, it is essential to consider employers' perception vs. the actual fixed cost of hiring women and its impact on hiring decisions; informational failure related to the skills and productivity of females and its impact on their hiring, promotion and compensation; and the impact of the gender differential in work-related tasks and assignments expected from male and female employees.

Employee Bias

Responses to the Takafu survey indicate that women may have particular preferences when selecting among employment opportunities. They may also opt out of certain opportunities by prioritizing proximity of employment and short hours, or they may shy away from negotiating for promotion and better earnings. There needs to be greater understanding of the social, cultural and economic determinants influencing women's decisions and behavior in seeking employment or promotion. Hence, it is essential to conduct research that can assess the impact of normative expectations around gender roles and time allocation among household, care and market work.



920010816



@alnahda_ksa



www.alnahda.org



research@alnahda.org



Al-Abila Street, Al-Sulaymaniah