

# Convergence between theoretical perspectives in women-gender and development literature regarding women's economic status in the Middle East

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## Abstract

In this article, the women-gender and development literature is examined focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches in explaining the impact of development on women's economic status. My intention is to review the major theoretical orientations in order to compare their understanding of how development affects women's employment. The article starts with issues of development per se, then considers the specific questions related to women's status. The purpose is to identify convergence between the theories and to distinguish alternative interpretations incorporating the concepts of the major theories in the development literature, which could help to understand the evolving economic status of Middle Eastern women.

## 1. The women-gender and development literature

Development has a range of meanings. Many economists focus on gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP) as indicators of development. For sociologists, on the other hand, development is different from quantitative growth. It is a broad process of economic and social change. In general, the definition of development includes "the notion of a process of change from a less desirable to a more desirable kind of society - in short, the notion of *progress*" (Thomas and Potter, 1992: 116). However, there are different meanings in each of the dominant schools of development. For example, according to the modernization approach, the definition of development includes the notion of Westernization and

modernization. On the other hand, the Marxist theories focus on the notion of underdevelopment or dependent development.

In recent decades, there has been an increasing awareness that the impact of development or lack of development has been different on men and women. In an attempt to answer the question whether development improves the relative status of women in 'Third World' countries, social scientists focus on economic, social and cultural transformations. In general, the women-gender and development literature suggests that there are both positive and negative effects of development on women.

In the literature, the women-gender and development studies are basically categorized in two different ways, which may be labelled Model I and Model II. Rathgeber (1990) describes three main theoretical views in the first model: (1) Women-in-Development (WID), (2) Women-and-Development (WAD), (3) Gender-and-Development (GAD).

The WID approach is closely related to both Western liberal feminism and modernization theory, which will be discussed in the next section. This model does not address the existing gender structures. Rather it assumes that development leads to female liberation by increasing their involvement in social and economic life. In effect, the WID approach focuses on the relationship between modernity and tradition. Thus, it focuses on cultural themes — value orientations, religious and 'lay' ideologies — as determinants of the processes of social change of which women are a part. On the other hand, WAD is a feminist-Marxist approach that focuses on women's economic roles and class divisions<sup>1</sup>. However, Rathgeber (1990) argues that similar to WID, WAD also ignores women's domestic role at home and overemphasizes class. Finally, GAD represents the socialist-feminist approach, which involves a detailed review of the intersection of household and public structures to discover "why women have been systematically assigned to inferior and/or secondary roles" (Rathgeber, 1990: 494). According to the socialist-feminist or GAD approach, the solution to women's oppression depends on two major conditions. First, women should participate in non-home economic production under conditions of equality between the sexes. Second, men should be more involved in household activities (Rathgeber, 1990).

Tiano (1987: 216-8) classifies the women-gender and development literature in Model II into three major categories: (1) the *integration* approach, (2) the *marginalization* approach, and (3) the *exploitation* approach. Generally speaking, in this classification, the *integration* approach

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<sup>1</sup> In this article I do not consider the Marxist conception of exploitation among women of different classes.

corresponds to the WID approach. The *marginalization* and *exploitation* approaches are closer to the Marxist-feminist (WAD) and socialist-feminist (GAD) approaches. The *marginalization* approach stresses that the reproduction role of women hinders their involvement in production during the capitalist development process. In contrast, the *exploitation* approach suggests that women are involved in production as 'cheap' labour for capital accumulation. But, according to this approach, their reproduction role at home continues so that women's oppression and subordination do not come to an end. In sum, both approaches suggest that development is not beneficial to women but rather harmful.

Following largely this second model, I suggest a slightly different classification of the studies in women-gender and development literature. The ongoing debate between modernization and dependency/world-systems perspectives in development literature leads me to classify the predominant approaches in women-gender and development literature into two broad categories as modernization approach and conflict (Marxist) theories. The conflict perspective can be divided into three sub-parts: (1) *marginalization* approach, (2) *exploitation* approach, (3) women in dependency/world-systems approach. The next sections will elaborate these conceptual frameworks in detail, as alternative views regarding women's economic status in the Middle East. The advantage of this classification is that it starts with broad issues of development, and then considers the specific questions related to women's status.

## 2. The modernization approach and women's economic status

The modernization school, which emerged in the 1950s and was heavily influenced by evolutionary and functionalist theories, conceptualized modernization as a phased, irreversible, progressive, lengthy process that moves in the direction of the American/Western model (So, 1990: 33-7). According to this school, 'Third-World' countries should exhibit a pattern similar to that of developed countries in their move toward development. Accordingly, most of the classical modernization scholars proposed that 'Third-World' countries should copy Western values. They should rely on external loans and aid, and transform their traditional institutions (Levy, 1967; Rostow, 1964; Smelser, 1964).

So (1990) classifies modernization studies into two categories: the earlier classical modernization studies and the new modernization studies

carried out in recent decades.<sup>2</sup> We could say that classical modernization theory does not concern itself with women and development. This is partly because most of the writing was before thinkers were concerned about women in development. Thus, the literature on women's status in development starts with the new modernization studies and conflict theories.

The classical modernization approach would expect that things would change for women as they change for the whole of society, so that one need not pay particular attention to women. This school views women's relative 'backwardness' as a function of traditional attitudes and simple technology. According to this school, since industrialization expands job opportunities and social services, it should lead to improvement in the status of women. Thus, economic development brings female liberation by increasing the integration of women into economic life. For example, Rosen (1982: 34) argues that the industrial system, which stresses independence and individual achievement, helps each woman to stand on "her own two feet by providing income through employment". For Rosen, paid employment in an industrialized society provides a married woman not only the income to strengthen her hand in her conflictual relationship with her husband but also forming the basis of her freedom.

Furthermore, for the classical modernization approach, the women who choose not to work also benefit from economic development and the liberal values that support it (Tiano, 1987: 217). Industrialization changes traditional family relationships since it brings increased structural differentiation in modern society (Beaujot, 1995: 275). According to this school, this differentiation in modern society has a positive impact on women's status. As a result of structural differentiation, many functions of the family in traditional society are undertaken by different institutions in modern society. No longer does the family perform economic functions; most economic production occurs outside of the home. Nor is care of children and education primarily entrusted to the family (Rosen, 1982: 32). Kindergartens and schools undertake part of the care of children, providing married women with more time to increase their individual achievements. This is a key factor making industrialization a powerful source of change for women's status. Moreover, since important family functions pass into the hands of professionals, job opportunities for women can also be expanded. Thus, structural differentiation creates wage work for women, and consequently increases their financial independence. However, for the classical modernization approach, individual achievement does not weaken but rather

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For a detailed discussion on the differences and similarities between the classical and the new modernization studies see So (1990: 17-87).

under the impact of industrialization, the family becomes more egalitarian, emotionally freer, and less sexually stratified. When the difference in power between husbands and wives declines, traditional sex-role patterns also weaken. Thus, the structure of a rigid division of labour changes. While women increasingly participate in decision-making processes, men take part in household activities. According to the classical modernization approach, in modern, industrialized societies the spread of egalitarian norms undermines patriarchal control, and subsequently increases the power of women (Inkeles and Smith, 1974: 26; Kandiyoti, 1977; Rosen, 1982: 3-7; Taplin, 1989: 7). In sum, the classical modernization perspective assumes that the economic status of women will automatically improve when societies are transformed from traditional to modern.

By the late 1960s, however, the classical modernization school came under increasing attack by mainstream sociologists and neo-Marxists (Bendix, 1967; Eisenstadt, 1974; Frank, 1969). First, the critics have challenged the evolutionary assumptions of unidirectional development (So, 1990: 53-9). According to the critics, the belief in Western superiority is 'Eurocentric'. Second, the classical modernization school is criticized for ignoring the impact of traditional cultural values on development. It has been argued that traditional values are always present in the process of modernization. Thus, they hardly disappear completely. Indeed, tradition can play a beneficial role in development (So, 1990).

The classical modernization approach is also criticized for ignoring the crucial elements of foreign domination, the history of colonialism, and the impact of multinational corporations on the economies of the 'Third-World' countries. In effect, it is criticized for ignoring or downplaying the impact of different interests in society, including the different interests of men and women. By the late 1970s, modernization studies took some of these criticisms into account. They sought to explain how 'Third-World' development occurs mainly through internal cultural values and social institutions (Banuazizi, 1987; Huntington, 1984; Wong, 1988). The main difference between the classical modernization approach and these new modernization studies is that "the new studies avoid treating tradition and modernity as a set of mutually exclusive concepts" (So, 1990: 61). Instead of arguing that cultural values, derived from developed nations, bring modern thought and behaviour conducive to development, the new modernization studies try to display the beneficial role of tradition. Thus, they reveal the intricate relationship between tradition and modernity (So, 1990).

This new conception of tradition has opened up a new 'culturalist' modernization perspective not only in the development literature but also in the women-gender and development literature. Researchers have begun to

focus on cultural factors to explain women's position in the development process. For example, research by Turkish women scholars suggests that because of cultural factors the impact of development has been different on men and women (Berik, 1989; Kandiyoti 1977, 1984, 1988). These studies indicate that patriarchal control is not undermined when women enter employment. But in these studies patriarchy is treated as a culturally based phenomenon.

On the other hand, as Boserup (1970) and her followers argue, development may affect men and women of the same class in different ways, as will be elaborated later. This criticism was taken up by the conflict approaches in the women-gender and development literature. In particular, Marxist alternatives to modernization theory stress the negative aspects of modernity on 'traditional' societies. They emphasize the negative effects of capitalist industrialization by arguing that development programs, which are financed by Western societies, do not necessarily lead to industrial growth, economic development and equal distribution of social benefits (So, 1990). These Marxist views are considered in the next section.

### 3. Conflict (Marxist) theories in women-gender and development literature

Some theorists take a Marxist approach to analyzing women's employment status in the developed countries (e.g., Armstrong and Armstrong, 1994; Benston, 1972; Connelly, 1978; Hartman, 1976; Mackie, 1991). Similarly, other social scientists in the women-gender and development literature follow the same approach for analyzing women's economic position in the 'developing' world (Boserup, 1970, 1977; Chinchilla, 1977; de Miranda, 1977; Finlay, 1989; Joekes, 1987; Moghadam, 1992; Schmink, 1977; Safa, 1983; Saffioti, 1978; Ward, 1984). Conflict theories combine 'agency and institutional constraint' as well as historical materialism. They also analyze 'social actors with conflicting interests' (Moghadam, 1992: 217).

Within the conflict school, the viewpoints regarding women-gender and development can be classified into three categories: the *marginalization* approach, the *exploitation* approach, and the *dependency/world-system* approaches (Elliot, 1977: 1-8; Taplin, 1989: 7-45; Tiano, 1987: 216-218).

#### 3.1. *The marginalization approach*

In general, Marxists argue that the position of women reflects the class relations that emerge within a capitalist mode of production. In other words, the position of women is linked to the relations of capitalist production and accumulation. Women have different relations to the means of production than men. That is, conflict studies regarding gender issues first consider the economic factors and the work that women do. They examine the work of women both in the home and in the labour force, and the needs of both employers and families. According to this perspective, the domestic mode of production in which women interchange their unpaid domestic services for their living is the origin of patriarchy. Capitalism, for Marxists writers, has always developed out of previously patriarchal societies and preserved patriarchy as a part of a system of control (Hartman, 1976). Thus, in this literature, patriarchy is a materially based phenomenon.

Following such an approach, the *marginalization* thesis in the women-gender and development literature says that women are isolated from production and political control. Women are integrated as ‘use value’ in household production since they *reproduce* the labour force while men are drawn into the labour force to *produce* commodities in exchange for wages. However, women’s isolation from production outside the home, and consequently their economic dependence on men, limit their autonomy and access to resources. This leads to a disadvantaged status for women.

According to the *marginalization* thesis, despite the ideology of egalitarianism, development has generally increased women’s economic and social marginality. Furthermore, when women work in employment, the combination of work at home and outside the home tends to increase women’s work loads. In this respect, women’s relative welfare and status would not necessarily improve with development (Boserup, 1970).

Although Boserup is usually associated with the modernization approach — since she sees patriarchy as a cultural rather than material phenomenon — there is utility in discussing some of her ideas within a Marxist perspective. In the women-gender literature, she is the first writer to argue that development is harmful to women rather than beneficial. Boserup also stresses class differences. In these respects, I think that her approach is different from the modernization perspective and resembles the conflict perspective.

In the *marginalization* approach, material conditions are of foremost importance. However, this approach recognizes that an economic analysis alone is not sufficient for an investigation of production relations since these are also based on ideological systems.

In sum, the *marginalization* thesis argues that development has generally increased women's economic and social marginality partly because women reproduce the labour force in capitalist development.

### *3.2. The exploitation approach*

Similar to the *marginalization* approach, the *exploitation* perspective also argues that the position of women is linked to the relations of capitalist production and accumulation. However, according to the *exploitation* approach, these relations exploit women as workers in the labour force, and oppress them as a form of property and source of unpaid labor in the family institution (Ecevit, 1991; Elliot 1977; Taplin, 1989; Tiano, 1987). Unlike the *marginalization* thesis, the *exploitation* approach assumes that "development makes women in the developing countries more central to industrial production". However, this involvement is "more harmful than beneficial to the actual status of women" (Tiano, 1987: 217). In this perspective, the tasks that are performed by women at home are moved into the wage-labour sphere in a commercialized form. However, the cost of employing female labour is mostly lower than that of employing men. Thus, women provide a 'cheap' labour supply for the sex-segregated labour markets. Moreover, since women rarely organize effective workers' unions, they are often powerless to change their working conditions. In sum, according to the *exploitation* perspective, capitalist development provides jobs for women since women figure as a crucial factor for capital accumulation.

According to the *exploitation* approach, women usually form a 'reserve army' of labour for the market since women's primary work is in the home. The most obvious function of this reserve army is to lower the general level of wages. In capitalist development, the search for cheap labour, the manipulation of reserve armies of labour, and the persistence of poverty have been an integral part of the process. Capitalism and patriarchy serve as effective mechanisms of exploitation of women workers. Patriarchal ideas and structures attempt to place women in a subservient position at home and at the work place. These patriarchal features also operate to legitimate the exploitation of women workers.

In sum, the *marginalization* and the *exploitation* approaches have made considerable contributions to the women-gender and development literature. However, they have been criticized by other Marxist schools, such as dependency and world-system approaches, since they do not focus on the new international division of labour. Briefly, the dependency and world-system theorists add another dimension to the explanation of the position of women in 'developing' societies. This approach will now be discussed.

### *3.3. Women-in-dependency and world-system approaches*

Drawing heavily on neo-Marxist theories, the dependency school and world-system approach argue that the international division of labour and the world market affect the status of women in the underdeveloped world (Chinchilla, 1977; de Miranda, 1977; Saffioti, 1978; Schmink, 1977; Ward, 1984).

For the dependency and world-system approaches, 'a new international division of labour is taking shape in which low-skill, low-paying jobs are being relocated to the underdeveloped countries to be performed predominantly by women, while high-skill, high-paying jobs continue to remain in the developed countries where they are performed predominantly by men' (Fuentes and Ehrenreich, 1984; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Robert, 1983 cited in Porpora *et al.*, 1989: 269). The relocation of jobs is particularly noticeable in the electronics and textile industries. The low-skill, low-paying jobs associated with these industries can be relocated because this cuts the costs associated with labour, taxes, and environmental regulations. Generally speaking, the dependent status of the peripheral societies affects women differently than men. The most deskilled tasks with low wages, for instance in assembly, are assigned by core capitalists to women mostly in the periphery, and the most technical jobs are done in the core. In other words, women workers in the periphery are 'super-exploited' (Kandal, 1991). Dependency and world-system theory has brought a new dimension to the women-gender and development literature since it takes into account the exploitative side of international relations.

Beginning around 1970, the dependency school and world-system theory effectively proposed a more complex pattern for women's experience in development. For the dependency and world-system approaches, the type of industrialization strategy is the key factor that explains the relationship between women's economic position and development. It is useful to differentiate two strategies: import-substitution industrialization and export-led industrialization. Import substitution focuses on reducing specialization in primary commodity production and dependence on the importation of finished products. Export-led industrialization seeks to achieve a better position in the world market by focusing on the production and export of products where the country has comparative advantages. In the 1970s, various scholars emphasized the *marginalisation* of women, who were excluded from capitalist development in import-substitution industrialization. Later studies have emphasized women's *exploitation* by inclusion and segregation into labour-intensive sectors with 'low-wages' and

'low-skills' in export-led industrialization strategies (Berik and Çağatay, 1991: 156). Furthermore, according to these perspectives, capital-intensive production processes require skilled labour, while labour-intensive export-led production processes use unskilled labour. In this process, women constitute mostly the unskilled and men the skilled labour force.

However, the marginalization of women from capitalist development in import-substitution industrialization and the association of increased female employment with export-led industrialization is not universally valid. Moghadam (1992), for example, observes that many Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and Algeria pursued import-substitution industrialization rather than export-led industrialization in the 1960s. In state-run factories, or in industrial plants in the private sector that were receiving state support, some employment opportunities were created for educated women (Moghadam, 1992). In other words, in the context of import-substitution the state did promote the policy of hiring educated women in the public sector.

On the other hand, according to the world-system perspective, women's status has been directly and/or indirectly shaped by the emergence of the global capitalist economy (Ward, 1988). Ward argues that as a consequence of the global capitalist economy, the peripheral regions have experienced socioeconomic dependence on core nations along with underdevelopment and a lowered status of women. She claims that the process of underdevelopment brings stagnation to women's status because they are relegated to subsistence agriculture or enter the service or informal sectors. They join the migratory or urban labour force under poor conditions (Deere and Leon, 1987; Nash, 1988). Furthermore, according to the world-systems approach, women are excluded from industrial employment until the arrival of transnational corporations specializing in light industries (Ward, 1988). This latter employment is short term and many women are once again displaced into service or informal economic sectors where they are poorly paid with no social security benefits. A review of case studies also indicates that the growth of the informal economy receives the support of national and international agencies. Export industrialists are protected by the government. They have privileges such as easy access to bank credits and tax exemptions. The governments also allow these industrialists to hire women workers with very low wages in the informal economy without paying their social security and health benefits. An example can be given from Turkey. Since the 1980s export industrialists were protected and subsidized by the governments. Creating jobs for women in the informal, particularly in home-based employment appears to be one of the implicit objectives of the Ministry of Labour. Women face a gender-based division of labour in this informal

economy. Thus, confirming the dependency/world-systems argument, many women remain concentrated in highly disadvantaged economic activities in the informal sector and lack access to many formal sectors that are available to men.

Although the dependency and world-system perspectives make a considerable contribution to the women-gender and development literature, they can be criticized on two grounds. First, they are highly abstract and tend to treat all women in peripheral areas as if they live under the same conditions. Second, they do not pay attention to the role of political ideologies and cultural factors while elaborating women's status in development. These criticisms have led to other recent perspectives that attempt alternative explanations.

#### 4. Alternative views regarding women's economic status in the Middle East incorporating the concepts of grand theories

We have so far discussed the modernization approach and the conflict perspectives on women's economic status in development. This section will provide a different view specifically for understanding women's economic status in the Middle East since neither the modernization school nor the conflict perspective can solely explain women's economic status in the Middle East.

As elsewhere around the world, Middle Eastern women are operating under the ideology of patriarchy. However, patriarchy in Middle Eastern studies is a problematic concept. Technically speaking, patriarchy is 'rule by father'. But, the notion of 'patriarchy' in feminist literature is usually defined as a dual system in which men oppress women, and men oppress each other (Mackie, 1991). There is considerable debate on whether patriarchy is culturally or materially based. The liberal, functionalist perspective interprets patriarchy only as a cultural or religious phenomenon. On the other hand, as discussed in the previous section, Marxists studies in the women-gender and development literature see patriarchy as a structure leading to economic oppression. Thus, according to the Marxist perspective it is assumed that patriarchy in the Middle East is materially based, whereas according to the liberal perspective it is culturally based. In fact, there are two main ongoing interwoven debates in Middle Eastern studies regarding this issue: (1) is patriarchy in the Middle East culturally based or materially based; (2) is it indeed Islam that is producing the effects on women, or could it be Mediterranean culture?

Turning to the second issue, according to Moghadam (1993: 99) Islam came into being in a patriarchal society. Tillion suggests that the origin of women's oppression goes back to the agricultural revolution. Long before the rise of Islam, the practice of marrying within the lineage formed basis for the oppression of women. Even today in some parts of the Middle East, the tribal structure, which is based on blood ties (for example, cousin marriage) and 'classical-patriarchy' (which can be defined as rule by father) still exist (Kandiyoti, 1991). Within this tribal structure, women are strictly controlled to maintain family property. Keddie and Baron (1991) argue that cousin marriage, which has long been a practice in the Middle East, encourages family integration and cooperation. Although these women are not secluded and not veiled, they are under strict male control. According to this view, it is not Islam that is responsible for women's status. Rather, it is some kind of Mediterranean culture in which women's 'purity' and the 'honour' of the family are closely connected. Moghadam explains this view as follows:

Long before Islam, ... endogamy kept the property (land and animal) within the lineage and protected the economic and political interests of the men. Quranic reforms provided women with certain legal rights absent in Judaism and Christianity and also corrected many injustices in pre-Islamic Arabian society. For example, Islam entitled women to the right to contract marriage, receive dower, retain control of wealth (Moghadam, 1993: 107).

However, although women gained some relative rights through Islam, the religious law also gave male members of the kin group extensive control over key decisions affecting women's lives (e.g., it allowed polygamy, it brought unequal inheritance rights). Thus, on the one hand, Islamic law provided some rights to women; on the other hand it reinforced the existing patriarchal social structures. As Moghadam (1993: 109) and Kandiyoti (1991: 38) suggest, classical-patriarchy should not be identified with Islam. That is, this patriarchy pre-dates Islam and may have been reinforced and reinterpreted by Islam. While these ideas are significant, it is impossible to understand women's status in Middle Eastern societies without taking the role of the codes of political-Islam into account.<sup>3</sup> In fact, almost all women-

<sup>3</sup> Here, I should note that the political ideology of Islam (or political-Islam), which is a relatively recent concept in the literature, is different from cultural-Islam. Cultural-Islam refers to the sum of all beliefs and rituals associated with the Muslim community or 'Umma'. For example, someone is defined as culturally Muslim if they assume the Islamic religion as a personal belief (something between (s)he and God) and keep some (or all) of the 'Pillars of Islam' (the declaration of faith, daily prayers five times a day, the observation of fasting during the month of Ramadan, the giving away annually of two and half per cent of savings to poor people, and pilgrimage to Ka'ba, in Mecca). However, the political ideology of Islam (or political-Islam) has a somewhat different meaning. According to the political ideology of Islam, Islam is a way of life. It is not just a declaration of faith, or observance of a series of rituals. It does not leave any room for

gender and development studies regarding Middle Eastern countries stress the impact of the political ideology of religion on women's position in society. Women in Middle Eastern countries are affected not only by 'classical-patriarchy' but also by what Moghadam (1993) calls 'Islamic-patriarchy'. Islamic-patriarchy refers to the cultural norms (reinforced by the political ideology of Islam) wherein family honour is maintained by ensuring, principally through veiling and seclusion, that the women of the extended family do not have contact with 'strange' men.

According to the modernization perspective, patriarchy refers to male dominance, in which a patriarch (the senior male) holds authority. Women's oppression is linked to the patrilineal extended household structure, which is more widespread in rural areas than urban centres. This view suggests that there are social gaps between the patriarchal countryside and urban centres, where gender and family relations are more egalitarian. The modernization ideas, however, would have difficulty explaining these patterns within the concept of classical-patriarchy in Middle East. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century Ottoman society, Muslim women in rural areas were rarely veiled and secluded in their daily lives. They worked together with the male household members in farming activities. But, these peasant women could not go outside the village without the accompaniment of a male relative. Peasant daughters' rights to inheritance was subordinated to that of sons'. Their veiled sisters in urban areas, on the other hand, could go into public places by themselves and had property rights. However, polygamy and segregation of sexes had more impact on the lives of city women in the higher class settings of the larger urban centres than in the countryside. Consequently, the segregation of the sexes depended on the availability of poorer women to perform the "public work of upper-class households (such as carrying dough to the baker or shopping) and to provide service to their homes (hence female peddler, barber and so on)" (Pierce, 1993: 271).

Turning to the Marxist interpretation of patriarchy, we need to pay more attention to material conditions. According to Kandiyoti (1991: 25) male farming systems are more characteristic of Asia and the Middle East. Plow agriculture is the part of this system where the labour of the landless class may be hired. In this system, Kandiyoti suggests that:

women of landed households are released from agricultural work in the fields and confined to domesticity, often actually secluded as a symbol of prestige and family honour (as in Muslim veiling or the purdah system).

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secularism. The political ideology of Islam encompasses every aspect of life: social, political, economic, legal, spiritual and personal. According to political-Islam, all Muslims should obey the rules of *Sheria*, religious law, which takes the *Koran* as its base. Here, my focus is not on cultural-Islam but rather on political-Islam and its impact on women's social and economic status.

They increasingly come to depend on men for both economic support and symbolic shelter (Kandiyoti, 1991:25).

Furthermore, when peasant women migrate to urban areas, veiling usually accords them (who, in some cases, were even unveiled in village life) a sort of ‘respectability’ and a ‘redefinition of status’. Thus, for some ‘modern’ women seclusion and veiling are more a question of social status. The Marxist interpretation of patriarchy has difficulty in the case of the Middle East since these viewpoints underemphasize the cultural themes — e.g., religious ideologies, social status, honour of the family. Hence the Marxist explanation borrows some Weberian concepts from modernization theory such as “social status” and “honour”. In fact, conceptual exchanges of this kind are quite common in Middle Eastern studies. Therefore, we can conclude that in the Middle Eastern countries the ideology of both classical-patriarchy and Islamic-patriarchy are based on a combination of material and cultural factors. That is, neither material nor cultural explanations are sufficient by themselves and these two sets of ideologies are far from being mutually exclusive. Rather, they have coexisted and reinforced each other. Consequently, the ideologies of classical-patriarchy and Islamic-patriarchy are significant factors in shaping women’s work.

The relationship between development and women’s employment status in Middle Eastern countries also depends on other factors. Women’s disadvantaged position in this region cannot be attributed solely to classical-patriarchy and Islamic-patriarchy. While religious and cultural specificities shape gender relations in the Middle East, they are not the most significant determinants. As in other peripheral countries, upper-class women in the Middle East also benefit more from development than do working-class and peasant women. For example, in Turkey women’s economic position varies significantly across urban/rural and class positions. On the one hand, a group of educated professional women occupied high-status jobs in white-collar occupations, resulting partly from the modernization attempts of the country at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While women have had a considerable share of certain high-status, male-dominated occupations like law, medicine, judgeship, and teaching, agriculture also remains more important to women than men as a source of employment mostly as unpaid family workers. Over the last thirty years, women in Turkey have shifted from unpaid family work in the rural areas to low-paid work in the urban informal economy (which consists of informal mobile and/or home-based economic units). Urban women are employed mostly in labour-intensive industry with significantly lower wages and substantially ‘unskilled’ positions compared to men. Thus, women’s employment status in Turkey has been affected not only by ideology but also by social stratification and

economic policies, and the economic position of Turkish women shows increasing divergence. These observations are consistent with the *exploitation*, dependency and world system approaches. But, they have difficulties in explaining the positions of educated professional women, who are occupied in high-status jobs in white-collar occupations. This can be clarified by the help of the modernization theory.

Similarly, Moghadam suggests that the relationship between development and women's employment status in Middle Eastern countries depends on several factors (including class, industrialization strategies, state policies). But she also incorporates some concepts of modernization theory (such as the relevance of culture and religion) to explain women's economic position in the Middle Eastern countries (Moghadam, 1992: 217). Moghadam calls her own approach Marxist-feminist. For example, in the article entitled "Development and Women's Emancipation: Is There a Connection?" Moghadam (1991: 217) states that "...this article examines the emancipatory content of development from a Marxist-feminist perspective, and focuses on its implications for women...". As discussed, the Marxist view suggests that development has a negative impact on women's economic status. But, in her article, Moghadam states that "the process of development in general has contributed to the dissolution of classical patriarchy". Borrowing from modernization thinking, she claims that "socio-economic development, including paid employment for women, contributes to gender equity and emancipation of women" (Moghadam, 1992: 217). In Moghadam's work, we also observe convergence between the modernization approach and Marxist perspectives. In this respect, I suggest that amalgamation of grand theories can be seen as an alternative approach in the women-gender and development literature.

## 5. Conclusion

The review of theoretical perspectives in the women-gender and development literature suggests that there are mainly two broad approaches: the modernization approach and Marxist perspectives.

According to the modernization approach, women lag behind men in the modernization process. However, development leads to female liberation by involving women more in economic and social life. Furthermore, modernization studies focus on cultural factors when explaining women's position in development. According to the modernization theorists, values are part of what needs to change in order for society to become modern. Instead of arguing that cultural values derived from developed nations bring modern ideas conducive to development, the new 'culturalist' modernization

perspective argues that modernization involves modern and traditional values. This is the strength of the modernization approach, that is, it pays significant attention to cultural factors. In contrast, Marxist theories treat ideological questions as emerging out of, and re-enforcing, the relations of production. At the same time, the weakness of the modernization approach is the lack of focus on the social and structural variables, and on relations of production.

On the other hand, the Marxist viewpoint in the women-gender and development literature can be classified into three categories: the *marginalization* approach, the *exploitation* approach, and the dependency/world-system approaches. The emphasis of the *marginalization* approach is on the transformation to a wage economy. This perspective claims that in the early stages of capitalist development the economic and social marginality of women increase partly because they also reproduce the wage earners and consequently are not as involved in earning wages themselves. The *exploitation* approach asserts that women are involved in capitalist production as 'cheap' labour supply for sex-segregated labour markets. According to this perspective, women's involvement as cheap labour is not beneficial but rather harmful to their status. Finally, dependency school and world-system approaches emphasize that women are marginalized from capitalist development in import-substitution industrialization; however, women are included in labour-intensive sectors with 'low-wages' and 'low-skills' under export-led industrialization. Thus, according to this perspective, the world economy and the new international division of labour have a crucial impact on women's economic status.

In general, Marxist studies in the women-gender and development literature seek to analyze women's position in peripheral countries. Women are especially disadvantaged by the lack of access to equal opportunities with men. Patriarchal ideas and structures also serve to place women in a subservient position at home and in the work place. This means that women's status in development could be enhanced if women's economic and social status improved, and if patriarchal ideas were eliminated.

Although Marxist theories in the women-gender and development literature provide stronger economic explanations than the modernization approach, they pay insufficient attention to political ideologies and cultural factors that can restrain or enhance the status of women.

In sum, taken separately, none of these approaches provides a complete analysis to understand women's economic status in development. I believe that conflict theories are generally better able to account for historically specific forms of women's subordination within capitalist development. However, because they have more difficulty in recognizing the role of

cultural and political ideology, which may be particularly relevant factors for understanding the position of Muslim women, these Marxist approaches do not provide the whole picture. Portes (1980) suggests that in the development literature there is convergence between the modernization and Marxist theories. Following his approach, I argue that the 'structuralist' perspective also needs to borrow some 'cultural' concepts in order to account for the evolving economic status of women.

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### Özet

#### Orta Doğu'da kadınların ekonomik statüsüne yönelik kadın-toplumsal cinsiyet ve kalkınma yazısında kuramlarası yakınsama

Bu makalede kalkınmanın kadının ekonomik statüsü üzerindeki etkisini açıklaması açısından kadın-toplumsal cinsiyet ve kalkınma literatürüünün güçlü ve zayıf yönleri tartışılmaktadır. Çalışmada amaç, kalkınmanın kadın istihdamını nasıl etkilediğini anlamaya yönelik belli teorik tartışmaları gözden geçirmektir. Makale öncelikle kalkınmaya ilgili konuları irdelemekte, ardından kadınların statüsü ile ilgili sorunları ele almaktadır. Çalışmanın bu biçimde tasarılanmasının nedeni, teoriler arasındaki yakınlaşan görüşleri belirleyerek, kalkınma literatüründeki kavramlarla birleştirmek ve Orta Doğu'da kadınların değişen ekonomik statüsünü anlamaya yardımcı olacak farklı yorumları irdelemektir.