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THE PARTICIPATION OF KUWAITI WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE
AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION IN JOBS

by

Khalid Ahmad Al-Shallal

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ABSTRACT

THE PARTICIPATION OF KUWAITI WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION IN JOBS

by

Khalid Ahmad Al-Shallal

This study, which is mainly descriptive in approach, examines the participation of women in Kuwait's work force within the framework of a changing society and a developing economy.

Using data supplied by the Kuwait Labor Force Census for the period 1965, 1970, and 1975 the study examines the influence of societal changes upon the kinds of jobs held by women, increases in their numbers in specific jobs, and their relationship to the overall labor force.

An increasing population with increased governmental interest in education has channelled the largest percentage of women into teaching and related positions, secondarily into clerical and related jobs, and next into service categories. These jobs provide work in an environment separate from men and are hence acceptable in the society. Increased educational opportunities may admit women to higher echelon jobs.

Compared to developed countries, Kuwait's women work force seems insignificant. In Kuwait the progress is substantial.

Dedicated to
My Wife and Children

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The participation of Kuwaiti women in the labor force has sharply increased in the past ten years. Far-reaching structural changes have become the results of this increase of women's activity outside the home. As women have entered the labor force, however, their responsibilities in the family setting have continued. Thus a two-fold implication can be noticed: the role in the organization of work as well as the role in the family.

As in most Arab societies, the issues are not only related to women's emergence into a creative and productive role but also are linked to the conditions of their immediate reality. The developing countries still persist in the glorification of the female role as mothers and housewives without accompanying investment in their societal world of production. Furthermore, women's stereotyped role insufficiently ensures their rights in their roles, since society does not provide them with the necessary guidance and service to improve positions.

In Kuwait, the welfare of the majority of women has generally been ignored. Changes have been instituted only for a minority of women, such as those in the elite upper class who have already acquired positions

while women in the lower classes remain ignored. The desire of women for more equality and participation on all levels of human activity and expression have generated pressures for social change.

This study will investigate the participation of Kuwaiti women in the labor force, delineating their distribution in jobs, while the implications of this change will be analyzed. Chapter I presents the situation today, in regard to the economy of Kuwait. Chapter II discusses the structure of the Kuwaiti labor force and changes that are taking place. Chapter III analyzes the current status of women as to educational opportunities, professional demands, job distribution and, in relation to all this, the influence of the persistent traditional norms, values, and attitudes. Chapter IV concludes with a discussion of the implications which will involve the further exploration of the changing role of women in the Kuwaiti labor force.

Portrait of Kuwait

Kuwait is situated on the Northwestern shore of the Arabian Gulf, being the most northerly, the largest, and the most populous of the Arab sheikdoms and communities of the area. It is bounded on the east by the Gulf, on the north and west by Iraq, and on the southwest by Saudi Arabia. To the south, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia jointly own the Neutral Zone, which also borders the Gulf (Illustration I).

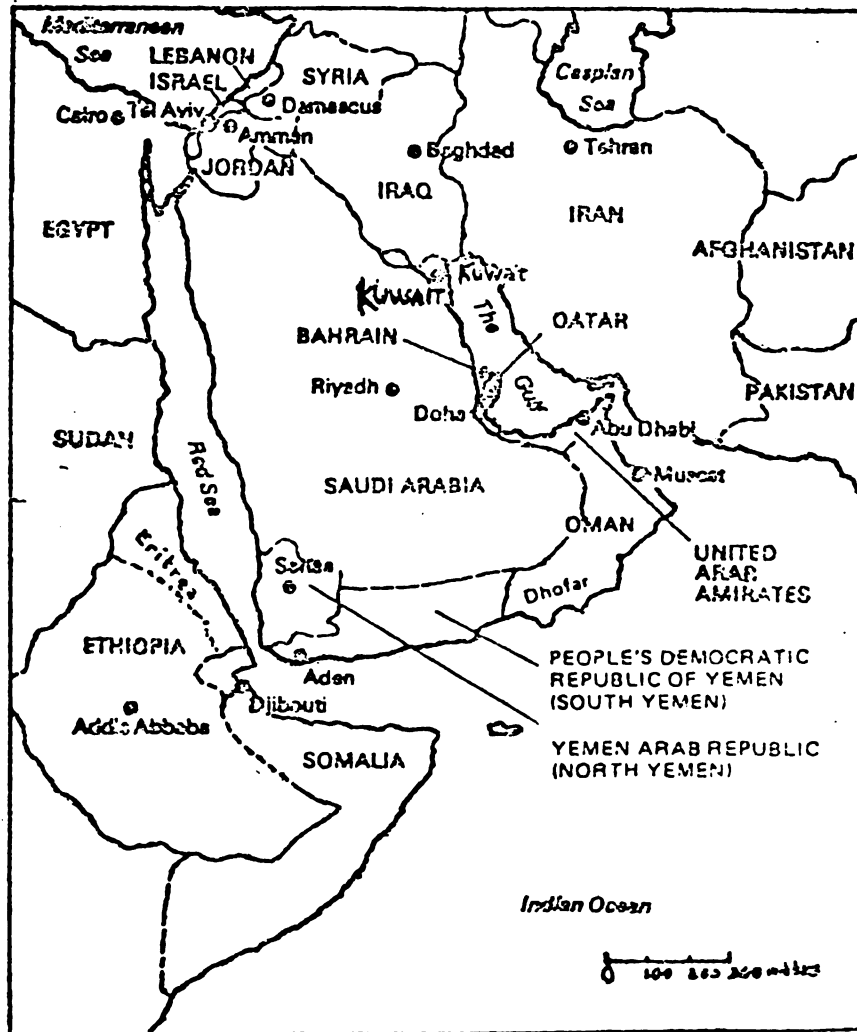


ILLUSTRATION I: MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST
AND KUWAIT (in darker letters)

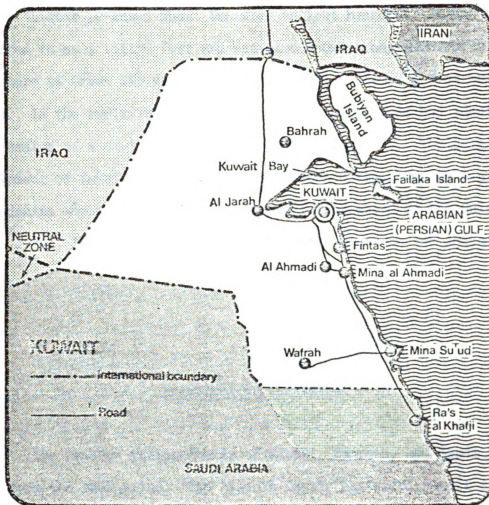


Illustration II: Map of Kuwait, showing the islands and the major cities.

The State of Kuwait consists of an area measuring approximately 5,800 square miles, comparing it to the size of the State of New Jersey. There are also a few islands with a combined area of about 400 square miles (Illustration II).

Little is known about Kuwait's ancient history. It has been referred to as a little fort and was also known among such early travelers as Graen who was a Danish archeologist (Zahra & Winstone, 1972). In the early 1950s, a Danish archeological team had identified the remains of a civilization dating back to 2300 B.C. The original settlement of Kuwait is believed to have been established by a group of Bedauins who came from central Arabia to the shore of the Gulf about 1710. The majority of the inhabitants belong to the Aniza tribe.

Political Organization

The present ruling family of Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia stem from the same tribe. The Alsabah family has ruled Kuwait since 1796, when Sheik Sabah I became Kuwait's ruler or Emir.

In January, 1961 the government announced that Kuwait was now fully responsible for her own foreign policy. By June, 1961 the 1899 agreement between the British and Kuwait was replaced by a treaty of friendship and consultation with the United Kingdom. Kuwait has since joined the Arab League, the United Nations, and other international agencies.

The present political system is a constitutional monarchy. The constitution was drafted in 1962, and the country's first national assembly came into existence after general elections (excluding women's vote) in January, 1963. The National Assembly was disbanded in 1976 by the government.

The Economy

Kuwait is considered by many economists as one of the most rapidly developing countries. The economy before World War II was based on trade, pearl expeditions, and fishing.

The phenomenal increase in oil production has caused a major change in Kuwait's economy. The first important transformation was, of course, the increase in the total population comprised of foreign as well as native labor who were attracted first to employment opportunities in the oil industry itself and second by positions in the greatly expanded government service, as well as employment in the mushrooming construction industry.

The oil story began when the first production well was discovered and Kuwait granted concession to the Kuwait Oil Company in 1938 (Al-Tarrah, 1978). The drilling continued up to the start of World War II; it was then suspended. Explorations were resumed after the war, and the first shipment left Kuwait in June, 1946. Six oil companies, one of

which is a national company, are currently engaged in oil exploration and production in Kuwait and the Neutral Zone. The most important and largest is the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), which handles about 92 percent of Kuwait's output. Over 80 percent of its production comes from the Greater Burgan field, which is probably one of the largest oil fields in the world. Kuwait occupies the third position among the Middle Eastern countries in the production of oil. It is ranked the seventh in world production, and fifth among all the oil exporting countries. In 1975 the total output of crude oil reached 760,729,000 barrels, which works out to a daily average of 2,084,189 barrels. Production of oil refineries amounted to 106 million barrels, i.e., 289,619 barrels per day. Production of liquified gas amounted to 18 millions barrels, i.e., 48,342 barrels per day. The KOC contributes the highest proportion of the total production of crude oil for exportation. Next in order are the Arabian Oil Company (Japan) and the American Oil Company, respectively.

The total export of crude oil reached 652,716,000 barrels in 1975, equivalent to a daily average of 1,788,263 barrels. Export of refined products amounted to 107,608,000 barrels, i.e., at the rate of 294,816 barrels per day. In addition, a total of 15 million barrels were delivered to bunkers for fuel. Export for liquified gas reached 17.2 million barrels.

Kuwait probably represents the highest development of the oil economy and therefore the greatest degree of social change. In fact, at the end of World War II, Kuwait was a poor, traditional kingdom whose people earned their living from fishing, pearling and trading with the

Gulf neighbors. By the 1970s Kuwait boasted the world's highest per capita income and a system of social services - including public education, free medical care, government housing and pensions - that placed it among the most advanced welfare state in the world. A number of government programs circulated oil revenues to the people in the form of social services. Kuwait's population had become one of the world's fastest growing, and the country annually attracted large numbers of immigrants from the neighboring countries, elsewhere in the Middle East, South Asia, and beyond. The enormous wealth derived from Kuwait's single valuable natural resource - oil - has financed not only the remodeling of government services and the armed forces but also the physical modernization of the state's infrastructure as well as stimulating massive foreign investments, loans, and gifts. In addition to new roads, ports, schools, hospitals, and industrial facilities, the government has supervised the reconstruction of much of Kuwait's cities and the construction of large, modern residential suburbs.

The most modern equipment money can buy has been purchased for the state health facilities and for the new University of Kuwait. The dramatic transformation has not been without problems, however. Foremost among them in the mid-1970s was the challenge of absorbing foreign workers, drawn mainly from surrounding Arab Countries, who constituted more than half the population. In fact, the present construction program is a continuation of nearly every phase of the earlier program, but with greater emphasis on development of outlying communities, airports and low-income housing. For these reasons and many others, Kuwait developed

faster than other countries in the area, besides, Kuwait has a free trade and the strategic location made her a main port in the area which connects Asia with the rest of the world. In fact, to appreciate Kuwait's current attitude to its neighbors and to the rest of the world it is necessary to understand the social and political genesis of the Kuwaiti people. Kuwait was never a colony, but for around sixty years was a British protectorate. However, even under the protectorate, the British presence was minimal and at no time were there any British troops or other forms of imperial presence in the country.

The discovery of oil has been an influential factor in creating structural changes in the social institutions of Kuwait. Women have also gained from the wave of western technology now entering the country (Al-Tarrah, 1978).

Statement of the Problem

This study is to discuss the Kuwaiti women labor force and what factors are affecting their distribution and concentration in certain jobs.

Objectives

1) To discuss the development of Kuwaiti women participation in the labor force.

2) To discuss the distribution of Kuwaiti women in different jobs and the effect of social factors in their distribution.

Review of Literature

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

The course of development in underdeveloped countries articulates the emergence of women from the world of non-production into the world of production. However, underdeveloped countries which are developing toward capitalism provide an ambiguous line of development for women's access to jobs: Employment and education are provided but without the accompanying legislation or services which liberate women from their traditional roles. Changes are tolerated only when they are extensions of female activities and perpetuations of women's subordinate status.

Irene Tinker in the book, Women and World Development says that:

"During much of the last quarter century development has been viewed as the panacea for the economic ills of all less developed countries: create a modern infrastructure and the economy will take off, providing a better life for everyone. Yet in virtually all countries and among all classes, women have lost ground relative to men: development by widening the gap between incomes of men and women, has not helped improve women's lives, but rather has had an adverse effect upon them. The main reason is that planners generally men have been unable to deal with the fact that women must perform two roles in society, whereas men perform only one. Development planners must begin to recognize women's dual roles and stop using mythical stereotypes as a base for their development plans. A first step is to recognize the actual economic contributions of women.

Recent studies recording women's roles in subsistence economies show a panoply of traditional roles, both economic and familial. In subsistence economies, the process of development has tended to restrict the economic independence of women as their traditional jobs have been challenged by new methods and technologies. In the developed 'modern' world, women continue to experience restricted economic opportunities while at the same time finding increased family obligations thrust upon them. Planners must not only consider and support women's economic activities but must also find ways of mitigating the drudgery of house work and the responsibility of child rearing. The role assigned each sex must again be made more equal - with men as well as women accepting their dual functions of work and family." Tinker, BoBramsen, and Buvinic, 1976, pp. 22 & 24.

Kuwaiti society provides an example of the effect of the development of capitalism and the position of women in underdeveloped countries. Kuwait as a developing country is presently living through a phase of abundance in oil, a natural resource which the

advanced capitalists countries need. However, Kuwaiti women stand at the lowest scale of this development system. The issues confronting Kuwaiti women are basic and fundamental. As in most Arab societies, the issues are not only related to a woman's emergence into a creative and productive role, but are linked to the conditions of her immediate reality. The first contradiction that faces women in developing countries is the glorification of their roles as a mother and housewife, without any accompanying investment in their societal world of production. Furthermore, women's stereotyped roles insufficiently insure their right in this role, since society doesn't provide them with the necessary guidance and services to improve their position. As Sheila Rowbothaw in her book, Women, Resistance and Revolution explains, "the liberation of women in developing countries requires the emergence of the colony within a colony."

It is clear that women have, during every period in history, been good producers, craft workers, laborers, construction workers, and traders. Some social structures have required more elaborate arrangements than others to carry out their economic roles. The activity itself of women, however, has been a constant, though the formats have varied. As societies have become more complex and more centralized, the women's sector has become progressively less visible, particularly as urbanization has created a class of female clerics and decision makers out of touch with the production system of the male sector of their economics.

In fact, in theorizing the status of women or indexing the number of economic and political rights that accrue to the women, it has only recently been emphasized that female solidarity groups devoted to female political and economic interests constitute an important criterion of female status in any society. Previously it has often been assumed that there is a direct correlation between women's participation in social production and their degree of participation in political decision making. That is where women are in social production long enough and in sufficient numbers it was thought that they would automatically move from dependent to independent and from powerless to powerful.

In the book, Women in the Third World, the writer discusses the woman's place in a society which is passing through rapid changes in all spheres of national life. In fact, it is universally accepted that the status of women determines, to a vast extent, the level of culture and civilization that a particular society has attained. The status is judged in the light of rights, privileges and the esteem in which a woman is held in the social system. How much education is imparted to her, what opportunities of economic independence are available for her, what kind of role is assigned to her in public life, how she is treated in such vital matters as marriage, divorce and inheritance, are some of the yardsticks by which the importance of woman's role is judged in a modern society.

"Socioeconomic and political modernization of the Third World is a subject of serious concern among scholars of all disciplines. There are, however, numerous insurmountable barriers which hinder the achievement of this objective. One

of the major hinderances is the acute shortage of human resources, which are needed for the development of various sectors of national life. It is in this connection that special efforts are being expended to regenerate the lot of women who have been traditionally incapacitated to effectively participate in national life. It is a matter of common knowledge that women in the new nations suffer from countless legal, political, economic, educational and social inabilities. In most cases their participation in economic activities and politics is almost negligible. In recent years there has been a growing realization that unless women are given due rights and freedom and some positive steps are taken to emancipate them from traditional shackles, the problem of human resources in developing societies would never be solved. The question of the status and role of women in national development of new states is a difficult and complex one. Each nation has to adopt means and measures in this direction which are in consonance with its religious and social climate." Ali, 1975, Pg. 1.

The situation of women in Kuwait immediately affects the opportunity, the status, and the roles of Kuwaiti women. To understand the mechanics of her present identity, one would have to approach it from the vantage point of the traditional position of a Kuwaiti woman, the present characteristics of underdevelopment in the woman's population, and the emergence of the Kuwaiti woman into work outside the home.

THE LABOR FORCE

The labor force includes all persons who are employed or who are unemployed but looking for work; it excludes those who are unwilling or unable to work. The portion of the labor force classified as employed

includes all noninstitutional persons 16 years or older who holds a job during the week of enumeration, even if they are temporarily absent from work due to illness, vacation, etc. The unemployed classification includes all noninstitutionalized persons 16 years or older who are not at work but who are actively seeking employment during the week of enumeration. (Kreps, Somers, Perlman, P. 45, 1974.) According to the above definition the rate of growth of the labor force depends upon the rate of growth of the population of working age and upon participation rates, i.e. the proportion of people in different sex and age groups who are employed or are seeking work or available for work. (Mouly and E. Costa, P. 30, 1974.) Changes in any one of the determinants - population size and composition, participation rates, immigration will, in turn, affect the size of the labor force.

The effects of changes in labor force participation rates are less easy to anticipate than those of the other determinants. Long term trends would seem to indicate a continued growth in the participation for men. The net effect is a gradual increase in the overall rate. When combined with the growing population, the rise in the proportion of adults who work necessitates a growing economy in which the aggregate demand for goods, and hence for labor, is sufficient to prevent unemployment and underemployment. (Kreps, Somers, Perlman, P. 60.)

Source of Data

The research material will be drawn from three sources. One statistically chosen from the 1975 census and the annual statistical abstract. Second, published materials and library sources. And my study will be mostly descriptive.

Importance of the Study

Because Kuwait is a very young developing country and undergoing rapid changes (due to oil production) the main problem is lack and shortage of such studies. Since this country is so similar to other developing countries there is a need for these and more studies. To accommodate to the dynamics of such rapid changes in one hand, and maintain stability and continuity on the other, every effort should be made to undertake extensive studies in various aspects of these changes and the impacts that such changes may have on the circumstances conditioning the lives of individuals and groups.

CHAPTER II

LABOR FORCE STRUCTURE OF KUWAIT

Introduction

In Kuwait the labor force is the prime indicator of social and economic development. Its structure and distribution are but reflections of the country's population and manpower. This force is one of the most, if not the most, important determining factor of development directions. By and large, changes in the economic sectorial activities of the labor force would show the relative trends of the country's economy. However, there are some exceptions, the most obvious of which is the oil sector, where it is highly capital intensive.

The government employs about 41 percent of the labor force. This segment is controlled by the Civil Services Commission. The private sector employs the balance under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The Ministry of Education and Kuwait University are the major suppliers of Kuwait manpower. The participation of Kuwaiti women in the labor force has increased in the past ten years from 2.5 percent of the total labor force in 1965 to 8.1 percent in 1975. But this increase is conservative in comparison to the present demands of Kuwait for labor power and in light of the fact that non-Kuwaiti women are being imported to fill required jobs. Kuwaiti women

today are not involved in any of the production jobs. In fact, among women there has been a movement since 1957, and particularly in the past ten years, toward the professional and the related technical occupations. The shift from service workers into professional fields occurred between 1965 and 1970 (Al-Tarrah, 1978).

Recent Changes in the Labor Force

The growth of Kuwait's labor force during the fifties and early sixties has been remarkable, averaging about 9 percent annually during 1946 through 1957, and over 16 percent annually in the following eight years, reaching by 1965 a total of 184,298 people (Table 2.1). This incline was largely due to the rapid growth in construction and infrastructure development rather than in the growth of the oil industry. Also, the development phase of the oil industry ended during this period so that the requirements of a large labor force for oil-related construction gave way to the much lower requirements for the more capital intensive production phase. Thus, in comparison to other countries, the labor force continued to increase during the second half of the sixties and early seventies, while the growth rate came down to lower levels, averaging in the mid-sixties to about 6.5 percent annually. Reasons for this decline were the decline in economic growth and the increased restrictions on entry into the country.

According to the 1975 census (Table 2.1), the Kuwaiti labor force numbered 304,582, of which host nationals represented about 30 percent and non-Kuwaitis 70 percent. The corresponding figures for 1970 are 27 percent and 73 percent, and for 1965, 23 percent and 77 percent. Apart from the inordinately high percentage of non-Kuwaitis, there are a number of significant points concerning the size and structure of the labor force evident in Table 2.1 and explained as follows:

1. The relatively small labor force participation rate (about 40 percent in the sixties and less than 30 percent in the seventies) is due to three principle reasons:

- 1) Social and cultural factors that normally discourage women from seeking employment. Evidence of this is the very low percentage of women in the labor force, amounting to about 2.5 percent in 1957 and 11 percent in 1975.
- 2) The large proportion of people under the age of 15 relative to the total population, particularly in recent years. This group constituted almost 45 percent of the population in 1975 compared to 40 percent in 1965.
- 3) The relatively high percentage of economically inactive people among host nationals. This percentage for the total population was estimated at 42 percent in 1975 and more than 85 percent for the Kuwaiti population alone.

Because of the limited role of women mentioned above, a calculation of the male inactive proportion is more meaningful, giving a percentage of 12.1 percent. Also, the definition of the working-age group in Kuwait includes people between the ages of 15 and 60, whereas elsewhere the definition normally excludes people under 17. Yet in the case

TABLE 2.1
Changes in Labor Structure

	Kuwaitis			Non-Kuwaitis			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1957 Census									
*Population	55,111	52,135	107,246	66,680	16,868	83,548	121,791	69,003	190,794
Population 15-60	29,503	27,014	56,517	58,968	10,570	69,538	88,531	37,584	126,115
Labor force	24,218	384	24,602	53,993	1,693	55,686	78,211	2,077	80,288
Inactives	5,345	26,630	31,975	4,975	8,877	13,852	10,320	35,507	45,827
Labor participation rate	43.9%	0.7%	22.9%	81.0%	1.0%	66.7%	64.2%	3.0%	42.1%
Proportion of inactives	18.1%	98.6%	56.5%	8.4%	84.0%	19.9%	11.7%	94.5%	36.3%
1965 Census									
Population	112,569	107,490	220,059	173,743	75,537	249,280	286,312	181,027	467,339
Population 15-60	52,254	49,352	101,606	135,854	58,823	194,677	188,108	88,175	276,283
Labor force	41,926	1,092	43,018	133,603	7,676	141,279	175,529	8,768	184,297
Inactives	10,328	48,260	58,588	2,251	31,147	33,398	12,579	79,407	91,986
Labor participation rate	37.2%	1.0%	19.5%	76.9%	10.4%	57.1%	61.3%	4.8%	39.4%
Proportion of inactives	19.8%	97.8%	57.7%	1.7%	80.2%	19.1%	6.7%	90.1%	33.3%
1970 Census									
Population	175,513	171,883	347,396	244,368	146,898	391,266	419,881	318,781	738,662
Population 15-60	79,688	78,472	158,160	166,792	73,754	240,546	246,480	152,226	398,706
Labor force	63,314	2,055	65,369	162,286	14,542	176,828	225,600	16,597	242,197
Inactives	16,374	76,417	92,791	4,506	59,212	63,718	20,880	135,629	156,509
Labor participation rate	36.1%	1.2%	18.8%	66.4%	9.9%	45.2%	53.7%	5.2%	32.8%
Proportion of inactives	20.6%	97.4%	58.7%	2.7%	80.5%	26.5%	8.5%	89.1%	39.3%
1975 Census									
Population	236,600	235,488	472,088	307,168	215,581	522,749	543,768	451,069	994,837
Population 15-60	109,497	111,271	220,768	196,990	110,183	307,178	306,487	328,956	527,946
*Labor force	84,367	7,477	91,844	185,009	27,729	212,738	269,376	35,206	304,582
Inactives	25,130	103,794	128,924	11,981	82,459	94,440	37,111	293,750	223,364
Labor participation rate	35.7%	3.2%	19.5%	60.2%	12.9%	40.7%	49.5%	7.8%	30.6%
Proportion of inactives	22.9%	93.3%	58.4%	6.1%	74.8%	30.7%	12.1%	89.3%	42.3%

SOURCE: The Kuwait Annual Statistical Abstract, 1976. Tables 25 and 54.

*Age 12 years and over
**Age 15 years and over

of an affluent society, where there is considerable emphasis on education, this should be further restricted to exclude all people under the age of 20. Therefore, a large proportion of those classified as inactive are obviously students in secondary schools and university students. While it is true that a large number of Kuwaitis receive unearned income in the form of rents, dividends, and interest payments, there are clear indications that the overwhelming majority of them are also engaged in productive activities which are not caught within the definitions used in compiling the census.

2. The decline in the labor participation rate from about 40 percent in the late sixties to just over 30 percent in 1975 can be largely attributed to the increasing tendency among non-Kuwaiti men to bring their wives and children to settle in Kuwait. This is evident from the rise in the percentage of people under the age of 15 in the total non-Kuwaiti population as well as the increase in the percentage of females: about 40 percent and 41 percent, respectively, in 1975, compared with 17 percent and 20 percent in 1957.

3. Some positive developments with regard to the role of women in the economy can be inferred from Table 2.1. In percentage terms the active female population rose from 5.5 percent in 1957 to almost 11 percent in 1975, consisting of increases from 1.4 percent to 6.7 percent in the case of the Kuwaiti female population and from 16 percent to over 25 percent in the case of the non-Kuwaiti. The overall situation

concerning the male population has changed only slightly since 1957, but an upward trend in the percentage of inactive Kuwaiti males had developed in recent years. This has been due to such factors as increased interest in higher education, a substantial rise in rents and dividends, and a growing feeling of security associated with the welfare state.

Non-Kuwaiti Labor

The explosive development of the economy of Kuwait created a demand for labor that exceeded the Kuwaiti labor capacity. Labor had to be "imported" from outside. This was done by assimilating the nomad tribesmen and by allowing the immigration of non-Kuwaitis on a job-by-job, or need, basis. The labor force of Kuwait became overwhelmingly reliant on these non-Kuwaitis; a reliance that was aggravated by the willingness of the Kuwaitis to use their wealth to hire others to perform work that would otherwise be unattractive to Kuwaitis.

The policies that have been developed to counter the over-reliance on non-Kuwaitis are threefold: (1) education and training of Kuwaitis to prepare them for areas of work now held out of necessity by non-Kuwaitis; (2) Kuwaitization, or the replacement of non-Kuwaitis by newly available or newly qualified Kuwaitis; and (3) the diffusion of the Kuwaiti labor force from the government sector into the private sector. At this time these policies appear to be little more than hopes.

Though education has developed at a rapid pace, the quality and focus of the education must raise doubts about its effect on the role of Kuwaiti labor in the economy of Kuwait. However, certain imperative constraints do relate to this problem: for example, the non-Kuwaitis are to have second priority in the allocation of jobs and promotions.

Labor Supply and Demand

There are several characteristics of the labor supply or factors that affect the labor supply, that are somewhat typical to Kuwait - as well as - to some other Gulf nations. Kuwait, and its demand for expatriate labor, is one sub-element in a much larger regional labor supply and demand system. There are several countries in the Middle East in which the indigenous population cannot fill all the jobs demanded by the economy. Sometimes this is a matter of sheer scale, where the growth of the economy outstrips the natural increase of the indigenous labor force. Quite often, the deficit arises partly because certain occupations are rejected by the indigenous population, either because the wages are too low or the working conditions too difficult. The main demand countries are Saudi Arabia - probably the biggest demand country because of its relative size combined with an expanding oil-based economy - Kuwait, and other Gulf states like Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and Dubai, where there are also vast oil reserves being developed.

The labor-exporting countries experience the reverse of the above mentioned situation: the natural increase of the labor force outstrips the ability of the economy to provide jobs. The result is a high level of unemployment, underemployment, and relatively low wages. Given a suitable differential in wages for available employment between his own country and a labor-importing country, a laborer becomes a member of the international labor force. There are many countries in the Middle East in this labor-supply position: Iran, Iraq, Syria, North and South Yemen, and Egypt. Lebanon used to be a supply-country but has today almost dropped from this role because of its own economic growth and increase in wage levels and job opportunities. India is also considered as a large supply-country.

In comparison to many demand-countries, Kuwait has one relative advantage and at least two disadvantages. The advantage is that its immigration regulations are relatively simple. One disadvantage is that it offers fewer rights to expatriates, such as the right to own land and a home, or to invest. Another disadvantage is Kuwait's relatively high cost-of-living. Saudi Arabi, for example, gives a 17.5 percent subsidy to importers of food products and consequently helps to keep food prices relatively low. From the point-of-view of attracting labor, Kuwait has another advantage, that its wage rates have been much higher, on the average than wage rates in most other demand-countries (Stanford, 1974).

Employment Factors

Unlike any other facet of the economy, the employment structure in no way reflects Kuwait's true dependence on the oil sector. Due to increasing capital intensity, employment in the mining and quarrying sector, which in effect is the oil sector, fell from 7,200 in 1965 to 4,800 in 1975. Its share of the labor force declined from 4 percent to 1.6 percent in the same period. In terms of employment, service has consistently been the leading sector in the economy, with such activities as public administration, trade, transport; finance, and communication accounting for the greater bulk of the labor force. The service orientation of the economy has become more pronounced in recent years as the percentage of the labor force employed in this sector rose from 60 percent in 1965 to about 64 percent in 1970 and almost 73 percent in 1975. The second most important sector in terms of employment has been construction followed by manufacturing industries, with, respectively, 10 percent - 6 percent, and 8 percent of the labor force.

The second observation regarding employment is concerned with the concentration of the work force in government services, i.e., public administration, defense, and social services, which represent 52 percent of the people employed in the services sector and almost two-fifths of the total labor force. This is largely explained by the government policy of maximizing employment among Kuwaitis, which is evidenced by the high proportion (about 54 percent) of employees in government service

being of Kuwait nationality. In addition, Kuwaitis have, until recently, generally favored administrative jobs in government service to most other types of employment; hence 52 percent of the Kuwaiti labor force is employed by government. However, with salaries and wages in the private sector rising more rapidly than in the public sector, an increasing number of Kuwaitis have been opting for more challenging and lucrative nongovernment jobs. Self-employed among Kuwaitis has also expanded in recent years, constituting in 1975 over 10 percent of the Kuwaiti work force. On the other hand, non-Kuwaitis are more evenly distributed among such major activities as government service, trade, manufacturing, services, and construction.

Finally, as shown in Table 2.2, the unemployment problem is of minor importance, with the overall rate estimated in 1975 at 2 percent. This is to be expected in view of the rapid development of the country and the labor shortages experienced in many economic sectors. In addition the exceedingly low rate of unemployment (0.6 percent) among non-Kuwaitis, is due in large part to the restriction of entry of non-Kuwaitis to those who had been promised work before coming into the country. On the other hand, the relatively high rate of unemployment as conventionally measured among Kuwaitis (5.3 percent) is considered to be mainly due to their reluctance to accept low paid or unattractive jobs because they can depend on other sources of income. Hence, the relatively high rate of unemployment reported among Kuwaitis is not necessarily an indication of involuntary unemployment in the Keynesian sense.

TABLE 2.2
Labor Classification by Economic Activity (1975 Census)

	Kuwaitis			Non-Kuwaitis			Total	%
	M	F	T	M	F	T		
Agriculture and fishing	3,970	13	3,983	3,522	9	3,531	7,514	2.5
Mining and quarrying	1,767	12	1,779	2,953	127	3,080	4,859	1.6
Manufacturing industries	2,237	21	2,258	21,889	320	22,209	24,467	8.0
Electricity, gas and water	2,029	5	2,034	5,230	7	5,237	7,271	2.4
Construction	1,755	1	1,756	30,357	143	30,500	32,256	10.6
Wholesale and retail trade	6,297	30	6,327	32,364	868	33,232	39,559	13.0
Transport, storage and communications	4,305	262	4,567	10,853	265	11,118	15,685	5.2
Finance and insurance	1,295	82	1,377	4,548	598	5,146	6,523	2.1
Government								
and other services	56,011	6,879	62,890	72,203	25,188	97,391	160,281	52.6
Total employment	79,666	7,305	86,971	183,919	27,525	211,444	298,415	98.0
Unemployment	4,701	172	4,873	1,090	204	1,294	6,167	2.0
Active labor force	84,367	7,477	91,844	185,009	27,729	212,738	304,582	100.0
Unemployment rate (%)	5.6	2.3	5.3	0.6	0.7	0.6	2.0	

SOURCE: Kuwait Annual Statistical Abstract, 1977

CHAPTER III
WOMEN AND THE KUWAIT LABOR FORCE

Introduction

It is difficult to point to only one factor as the cause for change when searching for the reasons that have led to social change in Kuwait. There are many factors that bring about social change such as "the role of individuals, and the relative influence of material factors and of ideas" (Bottomore, 1963: 278).

External influences (cultural contact or conquest) and the emergence of a common purpose were mentioned by Bottomore as important conditions which lead to social change, the most important being the growth of knowledge and the occurrence of social conflict. He writes that "the growth of knowledge has not been continuous, nor has it occurred at the same rate in all societies" (Bottomore, 1963: 278). This growth in knowledge has significantly affected the segment of Kuwaiti women who are educated, young, and middle to upper class in status. Conflict, as a condition of social change may be perceived in a variety of aspects, but most importantly, conflict between the traditional old values and modern values within the society has resulted in social change.

A major factor in bringing about socio-economic change in Kuwait was the discovery of oil. In particular, the new wealth affected the social structure and social relations in the society. Bottomore explains that the alteration within the production process in the society will cause a change in the social relations and therefore produces the emergence of new values. It is extremely important to understand the life styles and the varieties of social relations that existed before the discovery of oil in Kuwait in order to understand the nature of social change there.

Social Change in Kuwait

Traditional social relations that are primary in nature, such as kinship relations, dominated the society. Social codes and laws were based on the customary religious law of Islam. However, not all customs had a religious origin; some codes were traditionally acquired, such as the ritual killing of a female child, i.e., female infanticide.

The individual's status was very much tied to family status and to an individual's membership in a tribe, where the act of every individual was taken as an act of the whole tribe and/or family; for instance, in an act of revenge taking place among the tribes whenever any crime was committed. The role of the older male members in an extended family was to be responsible for all actions by the family or by the community. The family unit was responsible for all of its own economic expenses, as well as for all educational and medical expenses.

The traditional status of women was influenced by traditional values and roles expected of women in a society that is highly protective of its women. That is, women were not allowed to participate in any activities outside the home. Women were looked upon as inferior and treated as second-class citizens.

Polygamy was common, and marriage was arranged between husband and father. With all the pressures put on Kuwaiti women, they nevertheless played a major role within the family, holding responsibility entirely while the husband was away, sometimes for months, traveling on the seas, searching for pearls, or making commercial trips to India and Africa.

With the discovery of the natural resource of oil, newly established institutions gave cause for great change in the status and role of women. In fact, the change is so dramatic that it often causes conflict between old and new generations. The influences of other societies, mainly western, come often channeled through communication systems like television. Changes have consumed a great deal of energy on the part of both men and women, but particularly the latter.

Islam is seen by some to be the main obstacle in the emancipation of women. Others, however, see women's inferiority as a result of social rather than religious conditions. It is, however, very difficult to separate the two, Islamic traditions and Islam itself, in society as they overlap each other. It would be quite wrong to assume that Islamic religion is the only factor responsible for the debased role of women in the Arab world.

In fact, with the coming of Islam the position of women in Moslem society advanced to certain degrees. For instance, Islam prohibited female infanticide, a widespread and common practice prior to Islam. Islamic law also reduced the number of wives a man could have to four at a time, and provided that they all received equal treatment. It also changed previous inheritance laws to include daughters, who until that time had no share in the family inheritances (Al-Tarrah, 1978).

Nevertheless, Islam continued to discriminate against women in society. Islam gives preference to the male, and this approach still influences the attitudes of modern Muslims. Islam compels a woman to obey her husband, and in some instances, custom demands the most severe and extreme enforcement of this religious edict.

However, fundamental changes have taken place in the last generation. In nearly all Arab countries the percentage of women in schools, out of the total student population, has risen considerably at all stages of schooling. Furthermore, in the last generation the Arab countries of the Middle East have witnessed certain changes in women's social, legal, and political status. The forces behind these changes are due to the natural resources of the countries that enabled rapid economic growth and resulted in modernizing as well as forming closer contacts between the Arab Middle East and the West.

Women and Employment

Labor laws, whether that of civil or private service, are not discriminative against women. Legally speaking, women are supposed to be treated on an equal basis with men. However, by the law, women are barred from assuming a judicial position or an administrative position because the social tradition does not allow women to occupy a high position. This is the only significant discrimination in the Civil Service law and related legislation.

In practice, the situation is somewhat different. At the entrance, middle, and managerial levels, women stand equal chances of promotion to relevant posts. As for pay, it seems that women overall receive the same, for all practical purposes. In the private sector, employers are, however, reluctant to hire or retain married women, obviously to avoid costs of the extra fringe benefits due to married women. For instance, women can take maternity paid leave of absence from work. Before passing any judgment on this subject, one must not forget that women's entrance into the labor market in significant numbers is rather recent, as early as the 1960s.

Women and Legislation

Inspired by teachings of Islam and by human rights, Kuwaiti laws guaranteed to woman equality of right and opportunity. It laid down the

basis to organize means of care of women in the society so as to make every citizen, male or female, feel active in the service of the nation. Its labor laws gave women the required benefits to play a part in development and production, besides undertaking her home responsibilities as a wife and mother.

The constitution of Kuwait states "family is the foundation of the society, as it is based on religion and morals. The law maintains its existence and strengthens its links and protects, in its shadow, maternity and childhood" (Art. 9 of the constitution). "All persons are equal in human dignity, as well they are equal in public duties and rights before the law, without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion." (Art. 29). Also, in the labor law (private sector), it states that "no woman should be employed in dangerous industries and trades harmful to the health as specified by an order issued by the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor" (Art. 14). "A female worker shall obtain equal remuneration to that of a man provided she does the same work" (Art. 27). Kuwaiti women find guaranteed employment in government civil jobs. The 1955 employment law provides for equal pay for men and women; That Kuwaiti women and men start at the same salary in their jobs. Labor law in Kuwait constitution has guaranteed in word and spirit, to women special benefits enabling her to perform her work without being exposed to hazards arising from it and paving the way to assume her home responsibilities. Now I will give briefly the constitution of Kuwait, drafted by a committee of five members of the Assembly, which is in many ways a remarkable document. After laying down some

obvious principles, such as the sovereignty and Arabic character of the state, the pre-eminence of Islam and Islamic law, the priority of Arabic as the official language, and the obligatory use of the flag, emblems, national anthem and other symbols of nationhood, it goes on to set out principles of action and behavior which many a country has taken several hundred years to evolve, and not always with so much conviction. Personal liberty, the freedom of the press are guaranteed, and the care and protection of the young and old are the subject of specific requirements under a section labelled "Basic Constituents of Kuwait Society." Discrimination on grounds of race, social origin, language or religion invites severe penalties. Freedom to form or join trade unions and other associations, and to contract out of them, is another constitutional guarantee, as is the right to assemble without notification or approval. Police are forbidden to attend private meetings. The Amir alone enjoys constitutional immunity. The constitution specifically forbids participation in offensive warfare. Most importantly, these freedoms and limitations on the executive power, are watched over by an independent judiciary.

Female Participation in the Labor Force

Female participation in the labor force has been increasing. As found in the Annual Statistical Abstract (1975), the 1975 census shows the total Kuwait population to be 991,392, of which 470,123 are

Kuwaiti nationals (see Table 3.1). Data compiled by the Kuwait Planning Board from the Census of the Labor Force for the years 1957, 1965, 1970, and 1975 show that Kuwaiti women nationals, according to the 1975 census, number 234,594, non-Kuwaiti women number a fraction less, totalling 214,351. Of the total female population, the percentage participation rate in the labor force is 7.8 percent (see Table 3.2), fairly low in a country which imports its labor power.

The problem in developing countries is not simply one of legislating women's rights to work outside the home or increasing their numbers in employment. The utilization of woman power requires a re-organization and appraisal of woman's traditional role of reproduction and child rearing. If that does not occur then no matter how benevolent and generous the laws and opportunities, women will not participate because of sheer exhaustion in fulfilling their traditional roles.

(Al-Tarrah.)

Al-Tarrah in his study (1978) mentioned that in Kuwait the experience has been that such legislation has taken place since 1955 (The Employment Law), but without adequately activating the potential woman power. The participation of Kuwaiti women in the labor force has increased in the past ten years from 2.5 percent of the total labor force in 1965 to 8.1 percent in 1975 (see Table 3.2). But this increase is conservative in comparison to the demands of Kuwait for labor power, and in light of the fact that non-Kuwaiti woman labor is being imported to fill required jobs.

TABLE 3.1
KUWAIT POPULATION BY SEX IN THE CENSUS YEARS 1957, 1965, 1970, 1975

Years	Kuwait			Non-Kuwait			Total Population					
	Male	Female	Total	% of Fe- males to Males	Male	Female	Total	% of Fe- males to Males	Male	Female	Total	% of Fe- males to Males
1957	59154	54468	11362	92.08	72904	19947	92851	27.36	132058	74415	206473	56.35
1965	112569	107490	220059	95.49	173743	73537	247280	42.33	286312	181027	467339	63.23
1970	175513	171883	347396	97.93	244368	146698	391266	60.11	419881	318781	738662	75.92
1975	235529	234594	470123	99.60	306918	214351	521269	69.84	542447	448945	991392	82.76

Sources: Annual Statistical Abstract 1975

TABLE 3.2
Participation of Kuwait and Non-Kuwaiti Women in the
Labor Force for Census Years 1965, 1970, 1975

Years	Numbers	Average Participation	Percentage of Women in the Labor Force
KUWAITI			
1965	1092	1.0	2.5
1970	2055	1.2	3.1
1975	7477	3.2	8.1
NON-KUWAITI			
1965	7676	10.4	5.4
1970	14542	9.9	8.2
1975	27729	12.9	13.0
TOTAL			
1965	8768	4.8	4.8
1970	16597	5.2	6.9
1975	35206	7.8	11.5

Source: The Kuwait Planning Board

DISTRIBUTION IN JOB CATEGORIES

In terms of numbers, the present Kuwaiti female labor force of 7,477 is insignificant, and its distribution into the different categories of work is governed by traditional female activities and present trends in the Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti labor force. As in the past, Kuwaiti women today are not involved in any of the production jobs. In fact, since 1957, and particularly in the ten years prior there has been a movement by women into professional and related technical occupations. (See Table 3.3A.)

PROFESSIONAL AND RELATED TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS

Eighteen years ago, the largest number of women were in service occupations. The shift from service work into the professional fields occurred between 1965 and 1970. In 1965, 21.3 percent of Kuwaiti women in the labor force were in the professional and related technical occupations. In 1975 they comprised 54.3 percent, or half the female labor force (see Table 3.3A). Non-Kuwaiti women in the labor force show a slight drop from 51.5 percent in 1957 to 36.7 percent in 1975 (see Table 3.4). Kuwaiti men in the labor force also show an increase in the numbers entering professional occupations, and in 1975 there were 5,677 men (see Table 3.3B) in comparison to the 4,062 Kuwaiti women. The male labor force doesn't show a similar leap. Instead, they have shifted from the occupations of production and mining into service and clerical occupations.

TABLE 3.3A

Kuwaiti Women in the Labor Force by Major Groups of
Occupation in the Census Years 1957, 1965, 1970 & 1975

Occupation	1957		1965		1970		1975	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional Technical & Related Workers	34	6.9	232	21.3	981	47.7	4062	54.3
Administrative & Managerial Work- ers	-	-	35	3.2	3	0.2	21	0.3
Clerical & Re- lated Workers	10	2.6	238	21.8	446	21.7	2049	27.4
Sales Workers	42	10.9	12	1.1	19	0.9	23	0.3
Service Work- ers	298	77.6	437	40.0	507	24.7	1102	14.7
Agricultural, Animal Hus- bandry & Fisherman	-	-	7	0.6	6	0.3	13	0.2
Production & Quarrying, Min- ing & Related Workers	-	-	26	2.4	54	2.6	33	0.5
Workers Not Classified by Occupation In- cluding those looking for Work	-	-	105	9.6	39	1.9	174	2.3
TOTAL	384	100.0	1092	100.0	2055	100.0	7477	100.0

Source: Kuwait Planning Board 1976

TABLE 3.3B

Kuwaiti Men in the Labor Force Distributed Into Major Groups
of Occupation - For Census Years 1957, 65, 70, 75

Occupation	1957		1965		1970		1975	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional Technical & Related Workers	450	1.6	1031	2.5	2753	4.6	5677	6.7
Administrative & Managerial Work- ers	527	1.9	1434	3.4	608	1.0	1024	1.2
Clerical & Re- lated Workers	3224	11.5	6393	15.2	11028	18.5	15804	18.7
Sales Workers	3607	12.9	4614	11.0	6529	10.9	6162	7.3
Service Work- ers	3931	14.0	19372	46.2	22709	38.1	31798	37.7
Agricultural, Animal Hus- bandry & Fisherman	612	2.2	747	1.8	887	1.5	3884	4.6
Production & Quarrying, Min- ing & Related Workers	11183	40.0	5588	13.3	13331	22.4	15315	18.2
Workers Not Classified by Occupation In- cluding those looking for Work	4449	15.9	2754	6.6	1815	3.0	4703	5.6
TOTAL	27989	100.0	41933	100.0	59660	100.0	84367	100.0

Source: Kuwait Planning Board

TABLE 3.4

NON-KUWAITI LABOR FORCE ACCORDING TO MAJOR GROUPS OF OCCUPATION
& SEX FOR THE CENSUS YEARS 1957, 1965, 1970 & 1975

Major Occupation	Sex	1957		1965		1970		1975	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional & Technical Workers	Male	2428	4.4	8631	6.5	15373	9.5	22002	12.0
	Female	871	51.5	3460	45.1	6215	45.0	10095	36.7
	Total	3299	5.8	12093	8.6	21888	12.4	32097	15.2
Administrative & Managerial Workers	Male	763	1.4	2340	1.7	1162	0.7	1787	1.0
	Female	-	-	154	2.0	7	0.1	22	0.1
	Total	763	1.3	2494	1.8	1169	0.7	1809	0.8
Clerical & Related Workers	Male	4343	7.8	12137	9.1	15670	9.7	17960	9.7
	Female	80	4.7	376	5.0	1060	7.3	2205	8.0
	Total	4423	7.7	12521	8.9	16730	9.5	20165	9.5
Sales Workers	Male	2440	4.4	10545	7.9	14430	8.7	17618	9.6
	Female	3	.2	52	0.7	115	0.8	290	1.1
	Total	2443	4.3	10597	7.5	14545	8.3	17908	8.5
Service Workers	Male	4441	8.0	27453	20.6	28406	17.6	30719	16.7
	Female	691	40.8	3227	42.0	6115	42.2	14681	53.3
	Total	5132	9.0	30670	21.8	34521	19.6	45400	21.5

(Continued)

TABLE 3.4 (Continued)

NON-KUWAITI LABOR FORCE ACCORDING TO MAJOR GROUPS OF OCCUPATION
& SEX FOR THE CENSUS YEARS 1957, 1965, 1970 & 1975

Major Occupation	Sex	1957		1965		1970		1975	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agricultural, Animal Husbandry, Fisherman & Hunters	Male	673	1.2	2885	2.2	3045	1.9	3805	2.1
	Female	-	-	2	-	5	-	-	-
	Total	673	1.2	2887	2.0	3050	1.7	3805	1.8
Production & Related Workers and Laborers	Male	38440	69.3	68060	51.1	82928	51.3	90028	48.9
	Female	48	2.3	308	4.0	653	4.5	232	0.8
	Total	38448	67.2	68368	48.5	83581	47.5	90260	42.7
Not Adequately Defined	Male	1961	3.5	1160	0.9	570	0.4	-	-
	Female	-	-	97	1.2	19	0.1	-	-
	Total	1961	3.4	1257	0.9	589	0.3	-	-
TOTAL	Male	55489	100.0	133211	100.0	161584	100.0	183919	100.0
	Female	1693	100.0	7676	100.0	14489	100.0	27525	100.0
	Total	57182	100.0	140887	100.0	176073	100.0	211444	100.0

Source: Kuwait Planning Board

Non-Kuwaiti men have been concentrated in the production and mining occupations since 1957, with their even distribution in other occupations. One of the most spectacular changes in contemporary Kuwait is the establishment of widespread educational facilities for women. Education has become a means of security for women as well as for men.

CLERICAL AND RELATED WORKERS

The second group of occupations which show a concentration of Kuwaiti women is that of the clerical and related worker's sector (see Table 3.3A). In 1975 they formed 27.4 percent of the female labor force.

SERVICE WORKERS

The third group of occupations where the Kuwaiti women labor force is found is that of service workers. There has been a major decline in the percentage of women in service occupations although there has been an increase in the absolute number of women in these occupations. The decline in percent of women in these occupations is because most women entering the labor force since 1957 have gone into professional or clerical jobs.

OTHER CATEGORIES

The occupations of production and of agriculture have not included women in the past, and in 1975 they included only 0.5 percent and 0.2 percent of the female labor force, respectively. At present, Kuwaiti women have almost lost interest in sales jobs as evidenced in the shift from 1957, 10.9 percent, to 1975, 0.3 percent.

Women of means, who have capital, prefer to invest it in establishments which are related to wholesale and retail trade. In 1975, of the total 335 establishments owned by Kuwaiti women, 245 were of the wholesale and retail trade category, or 73.1 percent.

Women and Education

The state has defined its educational role in the following constitutional provisions:

Article 13: Education is a fundamental requisite for the progress of society, assured and promoted by the state.

Article 40: Education is a right for Kuwaitis, guaranteed by the state in accordance with law and within the limits of public policy and morals. Education in its preliminary stages shall be compulsory and free in accordance with the law.

Education in the modern sense actually started after the discovery of oil (in the late thirties) and its full exploitation which has changed the face of the country. Another important development in the field of education was achieved in Kuwait in the late sixties. The

policy of education took then its distinct shape in cohesion with the nature of Kuwait, its national aims, its local circumstances and the demands of its economic and social development. The following table illustrates the considerable increase in the numbers of schools, students, and teachers between 1945/46 and 1975/76:

Table of Number of Government Schools,
Student, and Teachers (1945/46 - 1975/76)

Scholastic Year	Number of Schools	Students	Teachers
1945/46	17	3,635	142
1960/61	134	45,157	2,255
1970/71	230	138,747	9,085
1975/76	326	201,907	15,472

Source: Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Planning,
Annual Statistical Abstract, 1976.

The total expenditure on public education in Kuwait in 1975/76 was around K.D. 87 million, which comes to about 9.4 percent of the total government expenditures.

The educational system includes the following stages and institutes:

1. Kindergarten: A 2-year course
2. Primary Stage: A 4-year course
3. Middle Stage: A 4-year course
4. Secondary Stage:

- A. General secondary education: A four year course. In the third year, students either go to the arts section or to the science section, and they continue until the fourth year.
 - B. Technical School: A four year course.
 - C. Religious School (Institute).
5. There are also some institutes:
- A. Teacher Training Institute
 - B. Technical and Vocational Institute
 - C. Commercial Institute
 - D. Health Institute
 - E. Special Education Institute
6. University of Kuwait

Kuwait is keen to provide free education on all levels for all. For that, the state has encouraged girls to have their share of education on an equal footing with boys, especially at the University level whether at home or abroad. The state has, without discrimination, sent men and women on educational missions and scholarships to other Arab states and foreign countries. This has helped women to hold technical, administrative, and leadership posts in various departments of the government. It is also a recognition by the state of the society's contribution to the building of the country's foundation, and the importance of education in developing responsibility, feeling, and consciousness.

ILLITERACY

In the past ten years, the following trend is apparent: a drop in the illiteracy among Kuwaiti women in employment from 47.8 percent to 10.0 percent in 1965 (see Table 3.5). The correlation between education and the participation of women in the labor force is high at every level and has been increasing since 1965. For the three census years, 1957, 1965, and 1975, the highest participation rate has come from university graduates and the lowest from those with intermediate school certificates (see Table 3.6). Formal education for girls was not established until 1937, twenty-five years after the first boy's school. Whereas men were literate, Kuwaiti women were illiterate and ignorant. Before the establishment of the first school and until the 1950s, Kuwaiti girls could only learn to recite the Koran and attend some religious classes. These classes were held by religious women in their homes and were probably taught by their fathers.

DISTRIBUTION IN PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS

Until 1960, when the first group of Kuwaiti women graduates returned with University degrees, they were unqualified for Kuwaiti professional occupations. Today the following three characteristics are obvious in the professional distribution of Kuwaiti women. First, they are and have been since 1957, heavily concentrated in the professions of

TABLE 3.5

KUWAITI WOMEN ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL
STATUS IN THE CENSUS YEARS 1965, 1970, 1975

Occupation	Census Year	Certificates							Unclas- sified	Number	Percent
		Illit- erate	Reads Writes	& Pri- mary	Inter- mediate	Secondary		Univer- sity & Higher Studies			
						& Higher Than Secondary	Secondary				
Professional, technical and re- lated workers	1965	-	50	17	29	126	10	-	232	21.2	
	1970	7	13	19	103	649	190	-	981	48.5	
	1975	3	5	94	305	2752	903	-	4062	55.6	
Administrative & Managerial Workers	1965	-	4	-	7	17	7	-	35	3.2	
	1970	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	3	0.1	
	1975	-	-	-	2	4	15	-	21	0.3	
Sales Workers	1965	11	1	-	-	-	-	-	12	1.1	
	1970	14	3	-	-	1	1	-	19	0.9	
	1975	10	-	-	1	10	2	-	23	0.3	
Clerical and Related Workers	1965	-	92	59	64	20	2	1	238	21.8	
	1970	-	60	126	166	66	28	-	446	22.1	
	1975	-	99	330	1068	461	91	-	2049	28.0	
Service Workers	1965	396	34	4	3	-	-	-	437	39	
	1970	376	67	41	17	5	-	1	507	23.1	
	1975	697	128	120	91	42	4	-	1102	15.1	

(Continued)

TABLE 3.5 (Continued)

KUWAITI WOMEN ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL
STATUS IN THE CENSUS YEARS 1965, 1970, 1975

Certificates										Total
Occupation	Census Year	Illit- erate	Reads Writes	Pri- mary	Inter- mediate	Secondary		Unclas- sified	Number	Percent
						& Higher Than Secondary	Univer- sity & Higher Studies			
Agricultural, animal husbandry & Fisher- man	1965	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	7	0.6
	1970	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0.3
	1975	12	1	-	-	-	-	-	13	0.2
Production and re- lated workers, trans- port equipment operators laborers	1965	19	3	-	4	-	-	-	26	2.4
	1970	52	2	-	-	-	-	-	54	2.7
	1975	15	4	4	6	4	-	-	33	0.5
Workers not classi- fied by occupation	1965	90	9	4	2	-	-	-	105	9.6
	1970	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	6	0.3
	1975	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	0.0
TOTAL	1965	522	194	84	109	163	19	1	1002	100.0
	1970	457	146	186	286	723	220	4	2002	100.0
	1975	737	237	588	1473	3275	1015	-	7305	100.0
	1965	47.8	17.8	7.7	10.0	14.9	1.7	0.1	100.0	
	1970	22.6	7.2	9.2	14.1	35.1	10.9	0.3	100.0	
	1975	10.0	3.2	7.8	20.2	44.8	13.9	-	100.0	

Source: Kuwait Planning Board

TABLE 3.6

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION & PARTICIPATION IN THE
LABOR FORCE FOR KUWAITI WOMEN IN THE CENSUS YEARS 1965, 1970, 1975

	1965			1970			1975		
	No. of Women With Formal Educa- tion	No. of Women In The Labor Force	% In The Labor Force	No. of Women With Formal Educa- tion	No. of Women In The Labor Force	% In The Labor Force	No. of Women In The Labor Force	% In The Labor Force	
Educational Status									
Intermediate	1769	109	6.2	7284	286	3.9	14496	1473	10.2
Secondary	551	163	29.6	2321	723	29.9	6797	3275	48.2
University	38	19	50.0	273	220	80.6	1227	1015	82.7

Source: Kuwait Planning Board

teaching and the professions related to medicine (see Table 3.7). The educational status of women workers in the professional and related technical occupations in 1975 still displays a few unqualified and illiterate women. Of the total university graduates in the labor force of 1,015 in 1975, 903 were in the professional occupations, while the others were distributed between clerical occupations, administrative jobs, and other occupations. Of the total professional Kuwaiti women, 4,062 in 1975, 3,052 are in teaching professions. Two-thirds of the professionals and almost half of the labor force of Kuwaiti women are in the teaching profession (see Table 3.7).

Al-Tarrah, in his study, (1978), stated the following: "1975 showed an explosion in numbers of women in the teaching profession in comparison to 714 in 1970 and only 21 in 1957." The reason for this magnetic congregation is the fact that teaching provides work in a separate environment from men. Since not all Kuwaiti women have emerged from the veil, women are found in jobs where their work relates to other women. There is no coeducation in Kuwait. Girls' schools are separated from boys' schools, and each is staffed by its own sex.

Following the teaching profession, the largest number of women is found in the medical occupations and in jobs such as librarian and social worker. All three categories represent fields where the work is not integrated with men (see Table 3.7). Health service facilities are separate, with separate clinics for men and women, usually on the same premises. Highly qualified staffs treat both men and women, otherwise professional nurses and nursing personnel work in separate wards.

TABLE 3.7

DISTRIBUTION OF KUWAITI & NON-KUWAITI WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL
TECHNICAL & RELATED OCCUPATIONS FOR THE CENSUS YEARS 1957, 65, 70, 75

Profession	Kuwaiti Female				Non-Kuwaiti Female				Total (Kuwaiti & Non-Kuwaiti) Females			
	1957	1965	1970	1975	1957	1965	1970	1975	1957	1965	1970	1975
Physical Scientists & Related Technicians	-	-	6	54	-	3	36	183	-	3	42	237
Architects, Engineers & Related Technicians	-	-	-	11	-	2	16	22	-	2	16	33
Surveyors, Draftsmen & Technical Assistants	-	-	3	4	-	-	7	9	-	-	10	13
Aircraft & Ships Officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Life Scientists & Related Technicians	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	7
Medical Doctors, Dentists & Veterinarians	-	1	7	42	-	70	137	233	-	71	144	275
Other Medical Occupations	12	48	62	178	376	1222	1711	2703	388	1270	1773	2881

(Continued)

TABLE 3.7 (Continued)

DISTRIBUTION OF KUWAITI & NON-KUWAITI WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL
TECHNICAL & RELATED OCCUPATIONS FOR THE CENSUS YEARS 1957, 65,70, 75

	Kuwaiti Female				Non-Kuwaiti Female				Total (Kuw & N. Kuw) Females			
	1957	1965	1970	1975	1957	1965	1970	1975	1957	1965	1970	1975
Profession												
Statisticians, Mathematicians, System Analyst & Related Technicians	1	-	1	5	-	-	2	26	1	-	3	31
Economists	-	-	1	26	-	-	1	8	-	-	2	34
Accountants	-	-	3	42	-	-	42	149	-	-	45	191
Jurists	-	-	6	25	-	13	6	8	-	13	12	33
Teachers	21	143	714	3052	488	2075	4432	6433	509	2218	5146	9485
Members of Religious Order	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Authors, Journalists & Related Workers	-	13	4	8	-	44	11	14	-	57	15	22
Sculptors, Painters, Photographers & Related Creative Arts	-	-	-	3	-	10	4	5	-	10	4	8

(Continued)

TABLE 3.7 (Continued)

DISTRIBUTION OF KUWAITI & NON-KUWAITI WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL
TECHNICAL & RELATED OCCUPATIONS FOR THE CENSUS YEARS 1957, 65, 70, 75,

Profession	Kuwaiti Female					Non-Kuwaiti Female					Total (Kuwaiti & Non-Kuwaiti) Females				
	1957	1965	1970	1975		1957	1965	1970	1975		1957	1965	1970	1975	
Composers & Performing Artists	-	-	19	20		-	-	40	51		-	-	59	71	
Athletes, Sportsmen & Related Workers	-	-	-	1		-	-	2	3		-	-	2	4	
Other Professionals as Librarian, Sociologists, Social Workers, Translators, Etc.	-	27	155	578		7	21	68	245		7	48	223	832	
Total of Professionals, Technical & Related Workers	34	232	981	4062		871	3460	6515	10095		905	3692	7496	14157	
Total Female Labor Force	384	1092	2055	7477		1693	7676	14489	27525		2077	8768	16544	35002	
Percentage of Professionals to Total Female Labor Force	8.9	21.2	47.7	54.3		51.5	45.1	44.9	36.8		43.6	42.1	45.3	40.4	

Source: Kuwait Planning Board

The year 1970 shows the conservative entry of the Kuwaiti woman in the following professions according to priority: composers and performing artists, scientists, draftswomen, statisticians, economists, accountants, and jurists. In 1975 Kuwaiti women entered the professions as architects, engineers, life scientists, biologists, and creative artists. Non-Kuwaiti women showed the same concentration in teaching, medical jobs, social work, and library work (see Table 3.7).

Conclusions

Conclusions that can be drawn from an analysis of the work force tables are as follows:

1. The participation of Kuwaiti women in the labor force is less than that of non-Kuwaiti women. This may be accounted for by the fact that non-Kuwaiti women migrate to Kuwait for the purpose of work.
2. Only 2 percent of Kuwaiti women participate in the labor force. As a result of this low rate of participation, the general ratio of women to men in the labor force is decreased.
3. Most working Kuwaiti women are concentrated in the education sector. Approximately 2,640 women work as teachers. This concentration is the result of (a) social pressure, and (b) educational needs of the state:

Social. Most parents want their daughters to work as teachers. They refuse to allow them to work at a variety of other jobs because in most others women must mix and work with males.

Educational. As a developing country Kuwait has an increasing need for teachers. Because of increased student numbers, the government has instituted a two-year, elementary teacher training program for women beyond the high school level. The total number of students in 1965 was approximately 20,945 as compared to 122,185 in 1975. In 1957 the total number of female students was 317, in 1975 the number was 48,716. The teacher training program, combined with social pressures that prevent them from taking other kinds of jobs, have attracted more and more women into the teaching profession.

4. The next largest sector where women find acceptable employment is clerical and related categories.
5. The third sector employing a fair percentage of women is services.
6. In the remainder of the census classified occupations, the number of women employed is very small. These are the occupations that are traditionally held by men, with the top echelon jobs requiring a high degree of training and education and the lower echelon jobs requiring training and/or

physical stamina. These occupations include administrative and managerial workers; sales; agricultural, animal husbandry, and fishermen; and production and quarrying, mining, and related workers.

Finally, the data in this chapter make obvious the fact that, compared to preceding decades, the increased number of women in the labor force reflects the social changes that have occurred in Kuwait society during the past twenty years. The numbers may seem insignificant compared to those in highly developed countries, but for Kuwait, they point to social progress.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Kuwaiti women stand at the lowest scale of development in Kuwait. The issues confronting Kuwaiti women are basic and fundamental. As in most Arab societies, the issues are not only related to a woman's emergence into a creative and productive role, but are linked to the conditions of her immediate reality. The first contradiction that faces women in developing countries is the glorification of their roles as mothers and housewives, without any accompanying investment in their occupational role. Furthermore, women's stereotyped role insufficiently ensures their rights, since society does not provide them with the necessary guidance and services to improve their position.

In Kuwait the welfare of the majority of women has been ignored. Changes have been instituted for only a minority of women, such as those in the elite upper classes who have achieved positions in the Ministry of Education and Planning. But women in the lower classes remain ignored.

Out of the minor changes, the professional Kuwaiti woman has emerged; a rare phenomenon in a developing country. The role that professional women in Kuwait can play is closely connected with the degree of their emancipation and with the general social situation of women

in the country. Most professional women in developing countries come from privileged backgrounds, i.e., the upper class, so that they rarely recognize the shortcomings in their status as women and do not identify with the course of development in their countries.

In Kuwait today, the professional Kuwaiti woman represents the first generation of women to be educated; the first generation to acquire personal privileges such as discarding the veil, having a job, or driving a car; the first generation to experience a social metamorphosis: she does not accept the network of customs, laws, and attitudes which makes her and other women totally dependent and subordinate to men.

The situation of women in Kuwait immediately affects the professional opportunities, the professional status, and the professional role of Kuwaiti women. To understand the mechanics of her present identity, one would have to approach it from the vantage point of the traditional position of a Kuwaiti woman, the present underdevelopment of skills in the women's population, and the emergence of the Kuwaiti woman into the work force outside the home.

Arab societies in general, and Peninsular Arab societies in particular, are at present going through a rapid transformation which may necessitate further study in order to determine the exact nature of concomitant problems and implications. This limited investigation regarding Kuwaiti women's status and roles provides a basis for several general recommendations for the future development of Kuwait. These recommendations, of course, assume a commitment to the value of equality of the sexes.

Recommendations

Two programs both educational in effect, should be implemented to improve the status of women in Kuwait. First, a state-wide program to educate the public and mold public opinion to a point where the present crippling traditions, customs, and mores, which influence men and in turn, limit the activities of women, are relegated to the past. The mass media should be employed to help in this effort. Leaders in government, industry, and education should lend their support. Educated women among the elite groups should contribute their influence, knowledge, and prestige. Such a program may be visionary in the extreme, but it could have a significant impact.

The second recommendation has to do with the education system itself, which should make it possible for any woman to achieve her potential in the society if she so desires.

Revisions might include:

1. The enforcement and strengthening of the recent law requiring mandatory education for both sexes.
2. A definite relationship between one stage of education and the next.
3. An optional, but fully developed technical training curriculum for women, with rewards such as diplomas, degrees, or certificates to be received upon completion of the program.

4. The utilization by teachers of outside assistance and experience in vocational job training.
5. Job training centers subsidized by businesses and government, respectively, for their own particular needs.
6. Education day care centers for the children of student and/or working mothers.
7. An equitable salary scale that can be anticipated in different types of employment and at definite job levels.

and finally:

8. The promotion of general equality between men and women by the full integration of women in a total development effort.

SUMMARY

Many view the status of women in the Arab world as inferior to that of their male counterparts. However, in recent years the status of women in some of the Arab countries has improved. Women are given the opportunity to go to school and to enter the labor force. Some feel that women's inferiority is due to Islam and still others feel it is a results of social conditions. Women in Kuwait society had an inferior status in the past. The women's role was seen as housewife and mother and her place was at home. By the age of 10-12 years girls were asked to stay home. Parents arranged their marriages and women were expected to obey their husband's wishes.

Widespread education, an increased proportion of non-Kuwaitis in Kuwait, and Westernization in general have been the main factors in improving women's status in recent years. The veil is no longer worn by Kuwaiti women nor do they see themselves as prisoners at home. Many women are taking advantage of the new opportunities in the field of education and employment. During 1945-46 there were only 820 girls enrolled in public schools, compared to 71,334 girls enrolled in 1972-73. The number of women in the labor force has risen by 2,596 from 1966 to 1972. These jobs are mostly in the clerical field or are teaching positions in public schools. The position of Kuwaiti women has improved but still has not reached equality with men.

Kuwaiti women do not hold the decision-making positions that men hold. Civil Service does recruit women on an equal pay basis, however, these are for the lower level positions. Women do not have the right to vote or run for public office. There are women's organizations, supported by the well-educated and wealthy, that are holding public debates on the laws, values, and norms which have prevented women from taking an equal position in the society. As the number of educated women increase, the traditional norms and patterns are expected to disappear.

Changes in attitudes toward women are expected to take place as their position changes. These attitudes are expected to vary from one section of the population to another. Establishment of widespread educational facilities for women has been one of the most outstanding changes in modern Kuwait. Education is a means of security for women as well as men. An educated woman will be more secure economically. Education will also enhance a woman's chance of finding a husband. It was taboo for women to work outside the home two decades ago. Now education and economic necessity have made it possible for many women to work outside the home. The class of the Kuwaiti women that are in the labor force or professional occupations must be such that they can afford to hire servants to care for their children. The number of women in the labor force is increasing rapidly, but most of them are in positions where there is little interaction with the opposite sex.

A study done by Al-Thakeb about Kuwait families showed that an overwhelming majority approved of education for women and a lesser majority approved of work for women. It is preferred that women are educated and work if there is need; even then government jobs are preferred, such as teaching. But Kuwait society is a man's society now and what has been accomplished in improving women's position are privileges given by men. Kuwaiti women will enjoy social equality more readily once they have achieved political equality.

In summary, the status of Kuwaiti women has improved in the last two decades. The improvement stems from new opportunities for women in education and employment. This coming decade will likely see greater changes in the achievement of women's rights - political, legal and social. The improvements of her status in society will contribute to the improvement of her position at home and vice versa. Widespread education and openness to other cultures are seen as the prime movers behind women's freedom.

FINAL COMMENTS

This study provides needed information about Kuwait women in the labor force and their participation in a changing society. It provides information about women's status, education, employment and their participation in the labor force. There is a need for further studies in Arab countries especially those on the Arab Peninsula where rapid changes are taking place. The need is for systematic research which will utilize all data available as well-designed field studies become more common in that part of the world. In Kuwait, the unavailability of census data for the pre-oil era is unfortunate. In Kuwait the present study provides a first step and general description about women in contemporary Kuwait. Future research should focus on such issues as:

1. The relationship between women's income and employment.
2. Social class differences in relation to women's employment.
3. Social factors affecting women's distribution in the jobs.
4. The differences in educational attainment related to differences in labor force participation.

What is needed are field studies analyzing all these factors and issues, taking into consideration the role of traditions, customs and religion in women's employment. These studies should be comprehensive, including all segments of the society. This means the sample should be derived from all classes in the society. We should also study the similarities and dissimilarities between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis in work force participation, population structure, educational attainment and employment in different economic activities.

The importance of studies of this kind is that Kuwait is a developing country and is undergoing accelerated economic expansion and rapid social changes. To accommodate the dynamics of such rapid changes on the one hand and maintain stability and continuity on the other, every effort should be made to undertake extensive studies in various aspects of these changes and the impacts that such changes may have on the circumstances conditioning the lives of individuals and groups. Unfortunately not many studies of this nature exist at the present time.

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