

The Impact of Social Media on the Involvement of Palestinian Arab Women in the Labor Market in the State of Israel

Abu Ahmad Redan

Sociology Department, South-West University, Bulgaria.

Влиянието на социалните медии върху включването на палестинските арабски жени на пазара на труда в Израел

Абу Ахмад Редан

Катедра Социология, Югозападен университет, България.


Author Note

Abu Ahmad Redan  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1884-8556>

The author has no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Abu Ahmad Redan, Sociology Department, South-West University, Bulgaria, Email: redan_25@hotmail.com

Бележки за автора

Абу Ахмад Редан  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1884-8556>

Авторът няма известен му конфликт на интереси за разкриване.

Кореспонденцията относно тази статия трябва да бъде адресирана до Абу Ахмад Редан, Катедра Социология, Югозападен университет, България, email: redan_25@hotmail.com

Abstract

The current article aims to shed light on the impact of social networking sites on Palestinian women in the State of Israel. It began researching the extent of women's involvement in work, the consequences of women's work, and the obstacles they face in the labor market. Then it highlighted the impact that social media has had on the labor market in general, and then the effects of social media on women's work in particular. Finally, it highlights the impact of social media on the work of Palestinian women in Israel, and how these sites helped them gain income and self-realization in addition to education and awareness, all from within their homes.

Keywords: social media, working women, Palestinian women, the Israeli labor market

Резюме

Настоящата статия хвърля светлина върху въздействието на социалните мрежи върху палестинските жени в Израел. Проучва се степента на участие на жените в работните процеси, последствията от работата на жените и пречките, с които се сблъскват на пазара на труда. Подчертава се влиянието, което социалните медии оказват върху пазара на труда като цяло, и върху работата на жените в частност. В крайна сметка се подчертава въздействието на социалните медии върху работата на палестинските жени в Израел. Откроява се как сайтовете за социални мрежи помагат на палестинските жени в Израел да получават доходи и да се себerealizират от собствените им домове в допълнение към образованието.

Ключови думи: социални медии, работещи жени, палестински жени, израелски пазар на труда

ARTICLE INFO:

Original Article

Received: 28, 05. 2024

Revised: 27, 06. 2024

Accepted: 21, 07.2024

The Impact of Social Media on the Involvement of Palestinian Arab Women in the Labor Market in the State of Israel

Introduction

Media and communication technology across the world is witnessing tremendous developments due to the widespread and rapid progress made in the level of its technologies, which has helped in bridging the temporal and spatial distances between parts of the world, despite the presence of a clear disparity in cultures between developed and underdeveloped countries. The wave of change has accelerated in recent years thanks to a new wave of developments witnessed in the world of communication, where the expansion of the use of the Internet in the process of social communication has recently emerged. Social media is one of the latest media products produced by communication technology and the most popular among different social groups. Although these sites were created for social communication between individuals, their use has extended to include all aspects of activity (Izmaku, Gashi, 2023).

Social media networks have had profound impacts on the global communications arena over the past decade, as they have become one of the main sources of information, and play a pivotal role in educating and making individuals and communities more aware of sustainable development plans, and encouraging all members of society, especially women, to change and achieve a more sustainable future. The use of social media is changing the lives of people everywhere, including large and small villages. The Internet and smartphones have become necessary for communication within and between local communities, bringing about a set of rapid, successive changes in many social, cultural, economic, political, and intellectual aspects (Park, et al., 2023).

Social media provides a real opportunity for women to express their issues and rights and contributes to gradually changing the image of women, transforming them from just housewives into more independent women while strengthening and supporting them economically, socially, psychologically, and culturally. These means have become responsible for supporting women alongside governments and society. Civil society, as it constitutes a large part of women's lives, and is rich in addressing ideas and goals for their empowerment, gender equality, improving their image and their impact on decision-making, and holding public and leadership positions in light of sustainable development plans, which makes them an effective and interactive member who takes and gives within an integrated framework. A woman who enjoys social support from others, whether at home, in the village, or from society as a whole, becomes a self-confident person who can provide social support to others (Liao, et al., 2022).

However, does this apply to women in all regions of the world? Regarding the impact of social media on Palestinian women in the State of Israel, some studies have found that social media sites are only a tool and a means, and their optimal use leads to empowerment. Social media sites have also contributed greatly to achieving Palestinian women's self-, social, economic, and cognitive empowerment, enabling them to Enter the Israeli labor market (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Women and the labor market

Women played a pivotal role in the renaissance of ancient and modern societies and through this role they demonstrated their ability to bring about positive change in those societies. Their remarkable presence in various aspects of life and their insistence on standing beside men and supporting them is evidence that they are an essential element in bringing about the process of change in society.

The positive change that societies seek depends largely on the reality of women and the extent to which they can carry out their roles in society, as they play an essential role in building their families and caring for them, through the responsibility that falls on them as a mother to raise the generations, and what she bears as a wife in terms of managing the family. With the progress and development of societies, we find that women have not only committed themselves to their duty towards their families and raising their children but have also played a major social role in various fields. Based on their scientific, cultural, and social qualifications, their roles in society have varied at various levels. (Elder, 2010). Below are some of the important roles that women occupy in society:

- The role of women in care and support: Women have a major role in the foundations of community care and support in many fields, as they exert their utmost energy in caring for children and the elderly.
- The role of women in education: Women contribute greatly to the development of various educational foundations in countries of the world, through basic teaching that includes the rules and concepts of reading and writing at home and in various educational institutions.
- The role of women at work: Women have a major and global role in developing ways of working in various practical fields and sectors, and they also contribute to spreading positive influences on society and its components.

Development of women's participation in the labor market

Different societies have witnessed a remarkable development in the level of ambition among women, as the growing flexibility in work environments has greatly contributed to enhancing their desire to develop their abilities and skills. Despite the remarkable progress and serious efforts made to achieve remarkable achievements, there are still major challenges that stand in the way of women's representation in various fields. Women do not record the progress that befits the developments of the times in contemporary society (Field, et al., 2023)

Studies and statistics for the year 2023 found that 10 professions are considered the most prominent in attracting the female workforce during the year 2023, which are: sales, hairdressing, beauty and related work, sales in stores, nursing and midwifery, and other support jobs in offices, business services, administration managers, and secretaries. Administrators and specialists, customer information services, financial professions, sales management, marketing, and development. The labor market witnessed a growth in women's participation in the private sector during 2023 compared to 2022, by 23.1%. The percentage of the young workforce amounts to 50.52% of the total workers in the labor market (Al-Jamal, 2024).

Regarding senior management positions in companies, the level of representation of women in the positions of directors and CEO increased at rates ranging from 3% to 4% only. This slight advance in professional advancement creates an unstable managerial middle class, which poses a major challenge. Women CEOs continue to resign in unprecedented numbers. This trend is called "multiple resignations" and appeared for the first time last year. This group of women was on the cusp of occupying senior leadership positions. This means that women in this job leave at higher rates compared to previous years and at a higher rate than their male counterparts in the same job. In light of these two influential factors, we are witnessing a clear decline in the number of women holding senior positions in companies (Field, et al., 2023).

Advantages of women's work

A woman's work increases her self-esteem, her constant desire to learn, develop herself and her skills, think about important matters and draw up plans, and stay away from the superficial problems that emptiness, loneliness, and isolation at home produce, and the most important point is that it helps her overcome the idea of discrimination between men and women. Another difference that occurs in a working woman is her interest in humanitarian issues, charitable institutions, and helping others, and her ability to transfer and communicate complex information simply and easily, which reflects positively on her home and her relationship with her husband and children. Indeed, through this balanced personality, her

children become more aware of life matters. It builds within them an independent personality that is not completely dependent on the mother (Tam, 2011).

Another advantage that increases the importance of women working for the same job is improving the work environment, as studies have shown. Increasing the proportion of women in the workplace leads to achieving a higher percentage of loyalty at work, job satisfaction, and purposeful work because women have an important role in encouraging employees. To work, and raise their efficiency, by creating an interactive work environment that motivates employees to exert their utmost effort to develop the organization (Mammen, Paxson, 2000).

Obstacles to women's participation in the labor market

Despite the progress women have made in the labor market, evidence suggests that many women are still unable to achieve their goals. The income gap between women and men, although smaller than it was years ago, is still large; Women are still underrepresented in some industries and professions; Many women struggle to combine work and family ambitions. Further progress is hindered by barriers to equal opportunities and workplace rules and norms that fail to support a reasonable work-life balance (Yellen, 2020). Among the factors that contribute to hindering women's participation in the labor market are the following:

❖ As recent literature has emphasized, culture and social norms play a crucial role in shaping women's activities. Society's ideas, norms, and values about women's movement and work may influence a woman's decision to leave the home to work (Tansel, 1986).

❖ Fertility and marriage affect women's work, as married women and mothers face greater difficulties, first in terms of finding job opportunities, and second in terms of reconciling work with their duties as a mother and wife (Nazier, Ramadan, 2016).

❖ The level of women's participation in the labor market is greatly influenced by the extent of the progress of the country and the government. Developing countries have higher employment rates than underdeveloped countries, as underdeveloped countries may not allow job opportunities for women. Some studies have found that some underdeveloped countries do not even allow women to receive education or leave the home in general. (Yellen, 2020)

❖ Gender bias and discrimination followed by most countries' governments affect women's work. Women suffer from discrimination in most areas of work, which is reflected in the work environment, low salaries, and an uncomfortable work environment. (Tansel, 1986)

❖ The different ways in which women engage in economic activity is a factor that further complicates the job search process. Participation in economic activities takes various forms, such as paid work in the public and private sectors, self-employment outside the home,

work in family projects, home production for market exchange, and production for home consumption in primary activities. Recent literature on developing countries emphasizes the different forms of work that women can engage in and how each of these forms can have different consequences for women's ability to combine productive work with childcare (Nazier, Ramadan, 2016).

The impact of social media on the labor market

Over less than two decades, social media has created a remarkable cultural boom. Its impact on society cannot be underestimated, starting with changing the way people interact with each other, and not ending with the noticeable increase in the amount of time they spend with their digital devices. Although their role has diminished in the minds of many in the changes that have occurred in social relations, social media platforms have a significant impact on people's professional lives. Gaining a deeper understanding of how these platforms impact different sectors will give one a more accurate understanding of how the world is evolving. (Khan, Lehrer, 2013)

A large body of research suggests that social networks play a crucial role in the job-matching process. Although estimates of the proportion of people who find their jobs this way, rather than through formal job search methods, vary widely, it is clear that this method is popular. Social networking plays a central role in searching for and finding jobs. (Stoloff, et al, 1999). However, few empirical studies have analyzed the relationship between social networks and labor market participation, and it has been shown that larger and better-quality networks do indeed positively influence labor market participation. To date, there is no systematic theoretical analysis of the interactions between labor market participation and social networks (Horváth, Zhang, 2021).

The ways social media impacts industries and professions

In our current era, social media has become an integral part of human life and has become important in most daily life activities. The benefits of social media in the labor market are highlighted by Afridi, Dhillon (2022), Wahba, Zenou (2004), and Breza(2016).

Broad reach: Social media platforms bring together billions of active users around the world, giving businesses the ability to reach a global audience quickly and efficiently.

Cost-Effective Marketing: Compared to traditional advertising, social media marketing can be more cost-efficient. Even small and medium businesses can reach a wide audience without needing huge advertising budgets.

Real-time communication: Social media enables businesses to interact with potential customers in real-time. This allows businesses to provide instant updates and respond to inquiries and concerns, which is crucial in difficult times when customers may be in urgent need of information.

Building and strengthening relationships: Social media platforms provide a space for companies to interact with their audiences on a personal level, and this helps in building and strengthening relationships with customers. This contributes to enhancing loyalty and building trust, which is especially important during times of economic fluctuations.

Market Research: Social media platforms offer tools and data that allow companies to conduct market research and understand customer sentiment, preferences, and behavior. This is crucial for companies to adapt to changes in the market.

Communication in crises: In situations of crisis or difficult events, social media can be a platform for businesses to communicate important updates, safety measures, and changes in operations. This transparency is essential to maintain customer confidence and ensure their safety.

Adaptability: Social media platforms enable businesses to quickly adapt to changes in circumstances. For example, if physical stores are closed, businesses can use social media to promote online sales, delivery services, or virtual events.

Content Sharing: Businesses can share valuable content on social media such as useful articles, videos, and resources. This can put them in a position of authority in their industry and provide valuable information to the public.

Targeted Advertising: Social media platforms offer advanced targeting options that allow companies to reach precise segments of the population and specific customers with their products or services. This comes in handy in difficult times when it is necessary to utilize resources efficiently.

The impact of social media on women's involvement in the labor market

A large body of economic and sociological literature shows that social connections play an important role in job matching and influencing individuals' labor market outcomes, including the probability of finding a job, wages, and job satisfaction. Differential access to social contacts leads to inequality in opportunities to find a job and wages. For example, devoting more time to household chores, such as raising children, significantly reduces the time a person spends building a social network that later helps him find work. There is extensive evidence that women still contribute more time to housework and participate fewer hours in the labor

market than men, and, at the same time, benefit less from social networks because they are not well connected to job information sources. A lower rate of engagement with a job tag in this way reduces networking opportunities, which reduces the chances of finding work. Labor market participation and communication also interact in the other direction: lower chances of finding a (good) job via social networks reduce the expected benefits from labor market participation, and thus lower incentives to participate in the labor market (Horváth, Zhang, 2021).

There is no doubt that the use of social media has made it easier for some female employees to balance work and home work, and has allowed them to build a harmonious atmosphere with other colleagues. Women employees who work through online platforms or websites can manage their time well and take care of their home and children, in addition to earning financial income from home. Most studies have found that mothers and married women prefer the online work environment, as they tend to work from within their homes, and thus do not feel any kind of neglect towards their children (Afridi, Dhillon, 2022).

The Corona pandemic (Covid-19) has helped create online job opportunities. Since the pandemic, many people found themselves forced to leave their jobs. The idea of working online has become prominent, especially for women, as their level of awareness has increased thanks to the influence of social media. Women found many jobs that they could do to generate income from just their homes. After the pandemic ended, many women continued to follow the same methods of working online. As many companies have provided remote work opportunities, the concept of the freelancer has also spread greatly after the pandemic (Liao, et al., 2022).

Benefits offered by social media platforms to working women

Improving income and savings: Women service providers can generally charge higher rates of income for the services they provide. This is because they are hired because of the abilities they possess, and their bill may be either hourly, daily or at the expense of the project. Payments are agreed upon based on the agreement and are paid each time the project is completed (Kusumawardhani, et al., 2023).

Freedom and flexibility: Self-employment gives women sovereignty in choosing the place, date, and method of work. Self-employment provides women who provide services with a lot of freedom, especially if they do not want to remain restricted to a specific work format. Independent women have the freedom to choose their work hours and method of service (Stoloff, et al., 1999).

Family time: The best advantage of self-employment for a woman is that it enables her to spend more time with her children and family members. Women often face the problem of choosing between service and family, and as workers on an online platform, they are not in this situation, because women can stay at home and enjoy the best of both worlds in regular work (Kusumawardhani, et al., 2023).

The impact of social media on the involvement of Palestinian women in the Israeli labor market

Despite the high rates of educational attainment among Palestinian women, their access to employment remains severely restricted. Since the unemployment rate across the Palestinian Territory is one of the highest in the world, women's participation in the labor force remains among the lowest levels in the world. In 2018, the vast majority of women remained out of the labor force. In terms of its economic participation, it has increased significantly, although it is low compared to regional and global standards (Marantz, et al, 2013).

When Palestinian women enter the Israeli labor market, they face much more difficulties than their male counterparts in finding work. This has led to a female unemployment crisis over the past decade. Unemployment among women has increased significantly. Women are also more likely than men to suffer from long-term unemployment. This is particularly harmful to women's ability to work because most employers will not consider hiring job seekers who are inactive or unemployed. (International Labour Organization, 2020)

In general, Israeli obstacles in the Palestinian territories have stifled the private sector's ability to generate growth. In the West Bank, the physical, geographical, and social fragmentation caused by Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement has negatively affected women's ability to move and reduced their access to work and income opportunities. In Gaza, the blockade affects the entire population, but its impact on women's employment is particularly severe, largely due to the segmentation of the labor market based on gender. Women cannot develop a competitive advantage to secure a job or advance in the labor market without being able to study or travel abroad to obtain critical professional skills not available in Gaza. Women in Gaza rarely meet Israeli standards for exit permits or permits to transport products from Gaza: since women's work in Gaza is concentrated in the public sector, non-profits, or very small businesses, few women can obtain the permits that Israel restricts on merchants (Marantz, et al., 2013).

A few studies have shown that Palestinian women resorted extensively to social media platforms, especially after the 2014 Gaza War, as a tool for freedom of expression in the Arab

world. These women live in a dynamic where they struggle for power because they belong to a traditionally conservative society, live in a state of intractable conflict, and are under the control of the state as a minority group. In 2016, studies found that Palestinian women are among the largest users of the Internet and social networks around the world. Studies also showed that Facebook is one of the most preferred sites among Palestinian women. Statistics showed that Palestinian women constitute 46.8% of social media users in Palestine out of the total. It also constitutes 46% of the total Facebook users in Palestine (Vries, Majlaton, 2021).

Social media has proven to be an effective and powerful means of raising awareness. These sites have been able, with their potential, to draw attention to various Palestinian women's issues, such as discrimination, gender inequality, negative stereotypes, and feminine poverty. In addition, women were able to mobilize campaigns and raise public opinion about their rights and problems that were absent in traditional media. The aim of all of this was to reach politicians and decision-makers to change the policies that are unfair to them. As for the economic aspect; These networks provided job opportunities for women and opened the way for entrepreneurs and businesswomen to launch on a local and global level, as these social sites changed the traditional work patterns for Palestinian women, and helped them to obtain work and provide an income without the need to leave the home and be exposed to the Israeli labor market.

Recently, many pages have spread in Palestine on the social networking site "Facebook", as it is the most famous in Palestine, promoting pictures, links, and videos that show women's skills. These pages display various products, including food and sweets, makeup and perfumes, accessories and clothes, as well as shopping. Some pages provide educational services such as drawing, graphics, languages, and blogging, all without the need to buy a traditional store (Vries, Majlaton, 2021).

Social media pages were the solution that some recent unemployed graduates resorted to to make a living, to earn money from it, for entertainment, and for other motives. In light of the restrictions imposed by Israel on Palestinian female graduates. Social networking sites have provided an opportunity for Palestinian women to achieve a balance between the requirements of the home, caring for children, and devoting themselves. The woman has also contributed, through the proceeds of her project marketed through social networking pages, to family expenses. This means that the woman, through these sites, has been able to balance her reproductive and productive roles.

Conclusion

We find in the end that in light of the developments taking place thanks to successive technological revolutions, social media are no longer only tools and sites for communication and entertainment, but rather have opened the way for many people and helped them obtain jobs with sufficient income to obtain a decent life. Among the people who benefited most from social networking sites were women, as they found a golden opportunity to work from within their homes in addition to taking care of their homes and children. Palestinian Arab women had a great opportunity to benefit from social networking sites, as these sites allowed them to find jobs away from contact with the Israeli labor market.

References

- Afridi, F., & Dhillon, A. (2022). *Social networks and the labor market*. Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). (IZA. Discussion Papers, No. 15306). <https://docs.iza.org/dp15774.pdf>
- Al-Jamal, A. (2024, February 18). 23.1% growth rate of women's participation in the labor market during 2023. *Emarat Al Youm*. <https://www.emaratalyoum.com/local-section/other/2024-02-18-1.1827919>
- Breza, E. (2016). Field experiments, social networks, and development. [https://www.academia.edu/77257585/Field Experiments Social Networks and Development](https://www.academia.edu/77257585/Field_Experiments_Social_Networks_and_Development)
- International Labour Organization. (2023, December 16). *Women in the informal economy: A statistical picture*. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/informal-economy/publications/WCMS_869188/lang--en/index.htm
- Field, E., Krivkovic, A., Coghill, S., Robinson, N., & Ye, L. (2023). Women in the work environment. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>
- Horváth, G., & Zhang, R. (2021). The impact of social networking on labor market participation. *Bulletin of Economic Research* 74(5). DOI:[10.1111/boer.12297](https://doi.org/10.1111/boer.12297)
- International Labour Organization. (2023). *Women in the informal economy: A statistical picture*. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/women-and-men-informal-economy-statistical-update>
- Izmaku, X., & Gashi, R. (2023). The impact of social media on the development of women, especially in transition states. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(3), 1–34. Doi: [10.28991/IJH-2023-04-03-07](https://doi.org/10.28991/IJH-2023-04-03-07)

- Khan, A. Q., & Lehrer, S. F. (2013). The impact of social networks on labor market outcomes: New evidence from Cape Breton. In *Social networks and the labor market* (pp. 1-34).. NBER Working Paper No. 18786. JEL No. C93,J08,Z18. Emerald Group Publishing Limited https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w18786/w18786.pdf
- Kusumawardhani, N., Pramana, R., Saputri, N. S., Suryadarma, D. (2023). Heterogeneous impact of internet availability on female labor market outcomes in an emerging economy: Evidence from Indonesia. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 37(1), 145-174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.106182>
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X22003722>
- Liao, G., Li, Y., & Li, M. (2022). Effects of Social Media Usage on Job Crafting for Female Employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic Evidence from China. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 874497. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912413>
- Mammen, K., & Paxson, C. (2000). Women's work and economic development. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14(4), 141–164. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.14.4.141>
- Marantz, E. A., Kalev, A., & Lewin-Epstein, N. (2013). Israeli-Palestinian women in the retail industry: Social boundaries and job search techniques. In *Social Boundaries and Job Search Techniques* (Chap. 7). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137336453_7
- Nazier, H., & Ramadan, R. (2016). Women's participation in the labor market in Egypt: Constraints and opportunities.
<https://ideas.repec.org/p/erg/wpaper/999.html>
- Park, K., Ging, D., Murphy, S., & McGrath, C. (2023). The impact of the use of social media on women and girls. European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU\(2023\)743341](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2023)743341)
- Stoloff, J. A., Glanville, J. L., & Bienenstock, E. J. (1999). Women's participation in the labor force: The role of social networks. *Social Networks*, 21(1), 91-108. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-8733\(99\)00003-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-8733(99)00003-9)
- Tam, H. (2011). U-shaped female labor participation with economic development: Some panel data evidence. *Economic Letters*, 110(2), 140-142.
https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeeecolet/v_3a110_3ay_3a2011_3ai_3a2_3ap_3a140-142.htm
- Tansel, A. (1986). Economic development and female labor force participation: A reconsideration. *ERC Working Papers in Economics* 1(5)

https://www.academia.edu/17191799/Economic_Development_and_Female_Labor_Force_Participation_A_Reconsideration

Yellen, J. L. (2020). The history of women's work and wages and how it has created success for us all.

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-history-of-womens-work-and-wages-and-how-it-has-created-success-for-us-all/>

de Vries, M., & Majlaton, M. (2021). The Voice of Silence: Patterns of Digital Participation Among Palestinian Women in East Jerusalem. *Media and Communication*, 9(4), 309-319. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v9i4.4391>

Wahba, J., & Zenou, Y. (2004). Density, social networks, and job search methods: Theory and application to Egypt. *Journal of Development Economics*, 78(2), 443-473. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2004.11.006>