

Qatari Women's Participation in the Labor Market: The Role of the Family and Empowerment Factors

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Qatari women's participation in the national development and advancement of Qatar, in the last two decades, is noteworthy. The representation of Qatari women in the labor market, in business, academia, and government sectors, has risen exponentially. This should come as no surprise since one of the main pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2033 is promoting 'gender equality', which materialized in a set of government initiatives aimed at empowering women. For instance, the Education City initiative, founded in 1997 had granted women world-class education, opening the door for Qatari women to ascertain their significant imprint in the workplace. This research aims to examine the extent to which the Qatari family is an enabler through providing support and embracing women's aspirations rather than being an impediment. Similarly, religious norms empower women to enact a religious agency, fostering their involvement in the job market. This research analyzes two interviews conducted by the platform Women of Qatar, a project dedicated to narrating success stories of pioneering Qatari women to inspire other female Qataris, and to showcase the role of family and religion in supporting women in their educational and professional achievements. The first interview delves into the success story of a famous Qatari Endocrinologist while the second recounts Qatar's first female entrepreneur.



Family support

The first female Qatari interviewee is a well-known physician who was inspired by her uncle, an esteemed medical practitioner. As she mentioned, she was symbolically influenced by his stethoscope. This tangible experience reinforces how familial influence and materialistic symbols often intertwine to construct ambition. She reinforces this through her lexical focus on proximity and belonging as she navigates to live closer to him. The linguistic framing reinforces the centrality of family through the possessive pronouns: “my parents”, “my work”, and “my job”, reinforcing her emotional connection and personal anchoring to her family, mirroring their support and understanding of her. She uses evaluative adjectives like “supportive,” intensified by “very,” to create empathy and a positive attitude towards her family. The interviewee framed the support that she received from her family as the source that enables her to persevere and stand in the face of different challenges, creating a form of familial solidarity that she is not struggling alone, and that she is protected through the scaffolding care of her family. The second female interviewee, the first Qatari businesswoman, found it hard to initially win over the

family, as she states that her “...family members were opposed to me standing in front of people to sell my products...”. Similarly, she shares her struggle as a mother who has to balance multiple priorities, saying “I became busy with my children and housework” multiple times in the interview. Her father, however, has been her backbone, the emblem of family support to her. She says she remembers how he had once said to her, “In my eyes, you are worthy of 100 men! I’m proud of you. Keep working.” The repetition of evaluative adjectives like ‘worthy’ and ‘proud’ conjures up a frame of value and strength. Additionally, her father comparing her to ‘a 100 men’ reflects the linguistic reversal of gender hierarchy, affirming her social status. She gained her strength through her father and the admiration of her grandmothers, who supported each other when she was still a child, saying, “I hope that the current generation of women would support each other the way our grandmothers used to do”. In her interview, she asserted that her family later came around to support her with full force.

Enactment of Religious Agency

The first Qatari female interviewee anchors on the importance of her religion, Islam. She reiterates how



being thankful to Allah has helped her: “He guides me to help my patients”, constructing an agency where profession becomes an act of faith and service. She reframes traditional expectations by asserting that being “a working woman, wife, mother” does not belittle your value as a woman; it is a gift from Allah. Similarly, the second Qatari female entrepreneur anchors on to her religion; she consistently thanks Allah in her interview, saying ‘Alhamdulillah’, ‘Subhanallah’, “with the help of Allah”, reiterating how thankful she is to Allah, and how deep rooted her beliefs are in divine agency that supplants her with the moral attributes necessary to create a diligent and determined female character.

Ambitions and achievements

Struggle is another crucial frame in the female physician’s narrative. This is expressed through lexical sets that convey endurance and adapting to “challenge”, “learned to be independent”, and “trials”. This change in perspective constructs a fighter frame, revealing how hardship is a site for personal growth. Her articulation of dreams intertwines balance and ambition: “There are no limits to your ambitions. You can be a working woman, a wife, and a mother, and excel in all these roles.” The use of the modal verb “can” expresses the possibility of empowerment and multiple inclusions; that female identity is integrated, not fragmented. She represents a modern Qatari woman, creating an equilibrium that respects cultural roots as well as individual aspiration. Through her linguistic choices, she constructs an identity that is grounded in religion, family, and resilience.

The female entrepreneur also structures her identity and agency, using a combination of linguistic markers,

like the personal pronoun ‘I’ and action verbs, saying “I supervise the preparation of the spices in the factory”, “I decided to do, start from scratch, that is, to collect money”, ‘I used to prepare the mixture of spices with my own hands.’ “... I called the manager and introduced myself.” Constructing herself as the grammatical subject and the active initiator of her own narrative, linguistically positioning her as the doer, commanding her own trajectory, rather than a passive recipient.

Conclusion

Both female Qatari interviewees ascertain the significant impact that their supportive and caring families had on them during their journey to realize their ambitions. Their stories reveal that true progress starts with supportive units that turn obstacles into opportunities for growth. By reconstructing inherited limitations into vessels of moral and emotional strength, they redefined empowerment as a collective pursuit that is rooted in compassion and perseverance. Both interviewees advance their vision of a balanced and prosperous society that is founded on familial support, compassion, and unity, which turn out to be vehicles for women’s empowerment and determining factors to achieve female Qataris’ goals.

The interviews are transcribed into English and can be accessed via the following link:

<https://womenofqatar.com/about/>.

Or scan the QR code:

