
Job opportunities and women's empowerment in Egypt

Clémentine Sadania*¹

¹Groupement de Recherche en Économie Quantitative d'Aix-Marseille (GREQAM) – Université de la Méditerranée - Aix-Marseille II, Université Paul Cézanne - Aix-Marseille III, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales [EHESS], CNRS : UMR7316, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) – Centre de la Charité, 2 rue de la Charité, 13236 Marseille cedex 02, France

Abstract

This paper provides a better understanding of the determinants of a woman's participation in the household

decision-making process, by focusing on the role of women's economic participation. If women's employment

is considered as a major source of empowerment, existing evidence suffers from several limitations, which I

attempt to address. First, I develop an instrumental variable strategy to take into account the endogeneity of

the decision to work. Second, because the Egyptian female labor market is highly segmented, I allow for a

heterogenous impact of work by distinguishing between the public sector, outside work in the private sector

and home-based work. Third, I measure women's empowerment as the probability to have the final say in a

household decision in two ways. Using the 2006 and 2012 rounds Egyptian Labor Market Panel Survey, I

run both probit and recursive bivariate probit regressions of the impact of different types of work on women's

involvement in decision-making. I find that working outside home enhances a woman's autonomy in personal

decisions, and joint decision-making over major economic and children-related decisions. Interestingly, home-

*Speaker

based work positively affects joint decision-making. My results suggest that, beyond remuneration, women's

work acts as a signal on women's abilities in non-domestic spheres of competence.

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