

## Privatisation Policies Effects on Sudanese Women's Economic Position

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### Abstract

This study examined the privatization policies effects on Sudanese Women's economic position. In a qualitative analysis the study found that Women's economic positions were strongly influenced by these redundancies. Both groups of respondents from the bank and the factory have shouldered the impact of privatization policies in a similar way, as the issues emerging were related to the roles undertaken by women at family/household level before redundancy. Major groups in the sample were from the female heads of households (FHH) group, particularly, women bankers. The other group is women sharing equally in the household budget, while sole breadwinner in the big family represents a core group.

The FHH group emerged as a feature among professional women in the sample of women bankers; redundancy led these women to impoverishment in some cases, and in others to severe deterioration in their economic conditions. As the government embarked on its decision, based on the male breadwinner notion, in the implementation of privatisation policies, women employed in the public enterprises were the first to go.

**Keywords:** Privatization policies; Women; Economic position; Sudan; Qualitative analysis

### Introduction

Sudan was the largest country in Africa before the separation of the southern part in July 2011. It was colonized by the great Britain and condominium, [Egyptian and British] Sudan gained independence in 1956. A country with diverse ethnic, cultural and religious realities, such diversity accompanied with economic inequalities shaped the theme of instability and changes in political history of the country [1].

It has been explained by Limiaa and Elsadig [2], that the Sudanese economy witnessed different periods of transformations and changes influenced by political instability. These periods can be summarised as follows. The period between 1956 and 1978 witnessed the implementation of an expansionary policy to transform the backward economy. However, these policies resulted in fiscal and monetary imbalances. During 1978-1985, the country achieved economic recovery, and was the period of the beginning of the involvement of the IMF in the Sudanese economy. In the 1990s, the situation was aggravated by the IMF declaration of Sudan as a non-cooperative country. Consequently, economic sanctions were imposed on Sudan. In view of this situation, the regime declared its intention to reform the economy as the first priority. Accordingly, a set of measures, including the introduction of liberalisation and privatisation, was announced in the early 1990s as part of the government's Three-Year Programme (1992-95), which is a broader programme for economic restructuring, liberalisation and public enterprise reform including privatisation. The privatisation process has continued to the present day. In a similar fashion, in most African countries, privatisation has been included as part of a broader programme of public enterprise reform. Objectives have been set collectively for liberalisation, restructuring and privatisation, for example, in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania. In other countries, such as Zambia, the privatisation programme is self-standing, and has its own set of objectives.

It should be recalled, the government followed privatisation and aimed to increase government revenue and reducing government expenditure by selling state-owned enterprises, attracting more domestic and foreign investors, reducing the balance of payment deficit, and providing more employment opportunities [3].

Some Sudanese economists have argued that privatisation was not the best solution for Sudan's economic problems, while others have commented on the implementation process and the motives behind the use of privatisation policies. Awad [4] argued that the "Sudanese economy is known as an agricultural economy where privatisation is more applicable to more industrialised or modernised economies". Others, like Suliman [5], argued that: "Motives behind privatisation are complex and controversial, the ruling regime in Sudan expediently used privatisation of State-owned enterprises to acquire more economic and political power for its followers/affiliates".

Others regarded it as politically motivated, but at the international relations level; Elbeely "perceived that the government of Sudan has implemented privatisation to find acceptability in the eyes of international [sic] community". Meanwhile, Musa [6] argued that: "the motives are merely economic ones but the implementation was really problematic".

While economists debated the suitability of privatisation given the nature of the Sudanese economy, the applicability of privatisation to economic structures, or the motives behind it, seeking an answer for these questions has remained important. Regardless of whether the goals of this programme were primarily economic or political; what are the socio-economic impacts of privatisation on women made redundant from the public sector enterprises (i.e. banking and manufacturing).

In this respect, changes resulting from redundancy have led to a considerable transformation in women's economic positions, at the

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Received April 06, 2017; Accepted May 02, 2017; Published May 04, 2017

**Citation:** Khalfalla LA, Ahmed EM (2017) Privatisation Policies Effects on Sudanese Women's Economic Position. Int J Econ Manag Sci 6: 425. doi: 10.4172/2162-6359.1000425

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personal and family/household levels; as reflected in the insights of the respondents. Throughout this chapter, discussions will focus on the respondents' accounts of their economic situations before privatisation and before redundancy. This is followed by an exploration of the changes that have taken place in women's economic roles at the family/household level: as women-headed households, as equal sharers in family/household budgets, and as economic dependents. Moreover, the adaptive responses undertaken by women in order to cope with their new lives after privatisation are also explained.

## Choice of Methods

In the case study, the study focuses on a particular case, including its background and respondents, through which the more detailed aspects of the case itself can be known. We reviewed a wide range of literature relevant to privatisation policies during the 1990s and onwards, and its impact on the redundant employees, especially women. Different conditions and forms of privatisation have been discussed as well in the literature. The experience with privatisation has been explored on a global extent, including the advantages and disadvantages related to privatisation. Privatisation in Sudan has been explored, as well as considering patriarchy as the major cause against the women working in a successful manner. In this context, I found that very few studies were undertaken, and they appeared to be gender blind. However, to address my specific research questions, we decided to conduct an empirical research on redundant women from two privatised public institutions.

It should be mentioned that there are a number of ways to conduct qualitative research, ranging from ethnography to observation. As these are not suitable for our study, we chose in-depth unstructured interviews with individual women as our research method, in addition to the use of focus group discussion.

In this respect, secondary information was collected from different sources as part of the study fieldwork when visiting related ministries, offices and university libraries. Information collected included official documents, policy statements, national strategies, reports, and conference papers published by the government in relation to privatisation policies. In addition, we referred to newspapers, magazines and academic research and studies (i.e. postgraduate theses).

In addition to the interviews conducted with women made redundant, managers of the Bank of Khartoum and the Friendship Textile Factory were interviewed to understand the point of views of those who implement privatisation. Other interviews were conducted with Bank of Khartoum staff, the head of the Public Banks' Pensioners' Union, and the head of the Benefits Fund for Displaced Employees; finally, interviews with trade union members were carried out as well. The outcome of these interviews was the gathering of important information and figures that were not available in reports, or papers written about the privatisation experience of the two institutions. This was also valuable additional information to the secondary information, as it supported the analysis of the primary data as well. It is evident from the data generated from women's respondents made redundant from the Bank of Khartoum and the Friendship factory that they represent two extremes of working women in the urban setting in Sudan; women from the banking sector present a model of professional middle-income women, while women from the manufacturing sector reflect the model of poor working-class women.

Meanwhile, women's personal characteristics, i.e. age, marital status, number of children, level of education, monthly income, jobs

grades are very different if we compared the two groups. The similarities appeared in their roles in the households and extended families; as equal sharer and head of households, or as contributors towards the budget of extended family.

Additionally, they also shared the changes in their employment status after privatisation; the majority of both women from the bank and factory were unemployed (i.e. half of factory workers, and 76.6% of women in the banking sector); they also had similar responses to the decision of redundancy, a considerable majority of women from the two institutions, either refusing the decision or protesting against it (i.e. two thirds of women from the bank, and the factory).

## Women's economic status before privatisation

The data presented below are the findings of the discussions and reflections given by women who were interviewed from two institutions: the Bank of Khartoum and the friendship factory for ready-made clothes.

The responses of women respondents who had been redundant by the bank of Khartoum are slightly different from those of the respondents from the factory. Although similarities between the two groups are a common feature of the data, yet there are some variations in relation to certain issues. Themes arising from discussions in relation to women's economic positions in the household/family before privatisation can be organised into five groups as indicated by the respondents' reflections: 1) women as heads of family/households; 2) women as equal sharer towards the family/household budget; 3) women as sole breadwinner of the big family; 4) women as economic dependents.

### Women as heads of households

The first category of the respondents is women as heads of households. Some definitions of the term Female (women) Heads of Households (FHH) need to be presented first. Rogers [7] argued that the term is linked to the model of the nuclear family as the basic unit of society, and the concept of headship. In his definition of 'heads of household', the main breadwinner is perceived to be the financial supporter, with all other members defined as 'dependents'. Based on this definition, Moser [8] illustrated the definition of the concept of FHH among a wide range of households, and two main types have been identified. First, *de jure* female-headed households, in which the male partner is permanently absent due to separation or death, and a woman is legally single, divorced or widowed. This is a common situation in urban poverty. Second, *de facto* female-headed households, in which the male partner is temporarily 'absent'. Moser's definition is one of the conventional definitions, which attracted many development researchers and planners. Moghadam has given a contemporary definition of the term, which is broader [9]. She states "the definition of female heads of households (FHH) distinguishes between two types: the *de jure*, where FHH maintain their household alone, while *de facto* FHH may include men who are unable or unwilling to work" [10,11]. This study opt to use the *de facto* FHH definition of Moghadam, which is broader, as the sample of the study includes FHH, including single women and men who are unable to work.

The core sample of women bankers revealed that one-third (14) of the respondents are female heads of households; nine are married (including second wives, and women responsible for families with disabled men); five are divorced and two are widowed. According to Moghadam "the majority of women FHH in developing countries are widowed, and to a lesser extent divorced or separated, while in developed countries FHH are mainly single unmarried women".

According to the National Census of 2008, the highest percentage of households headed by women is the households headed by married women, estimated at 73.0% as seen in Table 1 (i.e. 69.2 in urban setting, and 74.5% in rural ones).

Consequently, and unlike Moghadam's account, the national statistics and the study sample indicated that married women comprise the highest percentage of FHH, and only two are widowed, while a new group has emerged, which is the group of second wives and the households that include men who are unable to work. However, a few years ago widowed women in Sudan comprised the highest percentage of FHH, and they are respected and accepted by society. More recently, and following the socio-economic changes in society, rates of divorce are growing, coinciding with the hard economic conditions. As a result, married women, in a new trend, tend to assume the responsibility for their nuclear and extended families. The cases cited below reflect the situations of some women, who are FHH. Ekhlas is 52, with three children. She states: 'my salary is the only source of income for my family; I spend all my income on household needs, starting from food up to house amenities.' She continued "my husband is a mechanical engineer; he was affiliating with the opposition against the regime and was dismissed on grounds of public interest in 1991" (employees who lost their jobs during the 1990s are most likely to have been made redundant either because of job cancellation or are made redundant on grounds of 'public interest'). Mr Ali said: "Ekhlas not only supports the family financially, but she also holds the responsibility for taking care of all family aspects as I was not always available at home because of the prosecution of the security people."

Alshoul is 54 years old with five children, and her husband was a government official. She said: "at the end of each month, my husband gives me his salary to spend on household needs, so I put my salary with his salary and then set priorities for our expenditure for each month." Mr. Taha, the government official, has been retired since 1994. He states: "I normally called my wife the minister of finance of the family as she is household manager." Maryam, (a 65-year-old) divorcee, can best explain this: "I returned to work after I got divorced; I am responsible for my two daughters." She adds: "Since I have no one to support my family I decided to join the bank, in a junior job when I was 32 years old." Fiaza, a 48-year-old divorcee with one daughter, explains "my husband left me when my daughter was only four years old; since then I took the responsibility of taking care of her."

Another example is a woman who mentioned that the main reason leading her to hold responsibility for her family is her marital status as second wife. As stated by Nadia is an example of a second wife. She said: "I took the responsibility for my two children, because my husband has another wife with nine children." She continues: "we agreed beforehand that I will assist him in covering our family needs; therefore I spend all my income towards the household budget with a very minor contribution from his side." Polygamy is one form of marriage in Muslim societies. However, in Sudan over the last two decades, it has not been popular as a type of marriage despite the fact it is culturally unacceptable, especially in urban settings. However,

polygamy in Sudanese society has flourished again due to two main reasons: the recent government is acting as an advocate for it in the media, mosques, and even in the public events of the ruling party. This reflects the influence of the patriarchal states on women's lives as they control them through legislation or through the practices they enhanced; the second reason is related to late marriage of women due to education and work.

As for the women respondents from the factory the situation is different as the majority of the FHH are single unlike women bankers all of FHH are married, one- third of the core samples are FHH of their extended families. Most of the cases are either the elder daughter or the only daughter.

This was presented by Sitalnissa, a single woman, living with the extended family. She said: "she is the elder daughter in the family, she has got five sisters and brothers, her father is a retired worker. Her income was the main source of income, in addition to the pension of her father."

Bothiana is a single woman living with the big family. She said "she is number three among eight sisters and brothers; she left education to go for a job to help her extended family, as her father has retired nine years ago."

The increase of FHH numbers emerged as a pattern among middle-class families in the last two decades. However, as poverty rates rose to 49% of the population living in poverty conditions, this has affected people's financial capacities bringing deterioration in the standard of living of the majority of families; which in turn resulted in an increase of FHH to 25% in 2002 and 28% in 2008. This phenomenon is not restricted to Sudan only, but there is evidence in other countries, for example, in Kenya, 40% of households are headed by women, in Ghana, almost one half, in Zambia, one-third [12]. Stewart also has mentioned that 'it is estimated that women are the sole breadwinners in one-quarter to one-third of the world's households'.

Moghadam pointed out in her study about feminisation of poverty in the developing countries that "expansion of FHH is one of the dimensions of the feminisation of poverty". This is the situation in Sudan, where the growing numbers of FHH among low income families correlate positively with the increase of poverty.

It is also evident elsewhere developing countries that FHH are among the poorest, according to Buvinic and Gupta, who addressed the issue of female headship as an indicator of poverty, they found that during the 1990s, women-headed households are over represented among the poor in Latin America, Caribbean, Asia and Sub-Saharan countries. For example in Kenya, the national report indicated that the highest absolute poverty rates were among households headed by single women, namely 52%, compared with 44.3% of men; this is similar to Cost Rica, where in 1988, 37% of destitute households were headed by women, compared with 13% of male-headed household.

The over representation of women- headed households among the poor, is mainly due to 1) women's higher dependency; 2) gender-related economic gaps, and because of the greater time and mobility of women's work. In this respect, the data of the study indicated that only four women respondents from the factory are FHH, while a large number of women respondents from the bank, are FHH. These findings dispute the prevailing notion that women from the poor section of society are most likely to be FHH. However, it is evident that professional women have high incidences of FHH.

%	Divorced	Widowed	Married	Never married	Mode of living
100.0	5.4	18.1	73.0	3.5	Total
100.0	6.4	19.3	69.2	5.0	Urban
100.0	5.0	17.5	74.5	3.0	Rural
100.0	5.5	21.9	69.7	2.9	Nomad

Source: National Population Census [24].

**Table 1:** Female-headed households.



## Women as equal sharers of the household budget

This category of women represents around 26% of the sample of women bankers, and 31% of women factory workers: those women contribute an equal share towards the household budget, and in some cases their contribution exceeds that of their male partners.

The women bankers' husbands initially worked as professionals, eight of them are unemployed; five were dismissed from their jobs due to job redundancy; one of them was dismissed due to public interest (political reasons); and the other two reached the age of retirement. While the other four are still in a job, they work as government officials who have low wages, as the highest salary in government does not cover their subsistence needs. According to Moghadam and Elshowya [11,13] "government officials are known as the new working poor."

Thus, due the circumstances of unemployed husbands, and low salary of husbands women's incomes appear to be the main source income for family subsistence. This point is supported by Badri [14] study about women's work in Sudan; "75% of the women reported that their income was vital to the economic well-being of their families".

In response to the question about women's contribution towards the household budget, the large majority of respondents said that they contribute equally to the budget of the households, either because their husbands were made redundant, currently receive pensions, or work in casual jobs, or because their husbands work within government institutions where they earn low salaries that are not enough to cover household expenses.

Samira, who is 58 years old with four daughters whose husband was made redundant due to privatisation, can describe this, she was spending all my salary on the basic needs of my family, which includes food and education, she was also responsible for house decoration or maintenance." Her husband, a banker employed by the French and Sudanese bank, adds: "my wife was really very supportive to our family; her support is becoming rather important as I left the bank in 2003." He mentioned that: "We succeeded in supporting our daughters until they finished their university studies; one of them is an engineer and the other one is a dentist, the third one is a computer programmer and the fourth one is an economist who got married and now lives in the United Arab Emirates."

The one exceptional case is a respondent who makes an equal contribution towards the household budget, and her husband is a business owner. Da'ad is married with four sons and one daughter. She was spending all her income on the basic needs of her family, although her husband has got a business but it does not provide enough for subsistence."

In Stewart's acclimate, 'women's role as producer fulfils two functions; it contributes to the national product and national welfare, and it generates income for the household'. Women's contribution to household budgets on such a considerable scale implies the importance of women's economic activity, not only to support family subsistence, but also to support the national economy as a whole.

Meanwhile, this change in the economic position, towards income earner and as equal sharer with the male partner, eventually refutes the claim of the male breadwinner. Many economic and development planners rely heavily on this notion, which leads not only to excluding women from entitlements, but also supports discriminatory practices against women in the policies of recruitment and entitlements. Elson and Pearson [15] indicate "Male bread winner bias: A bias which

operates with a norm in which men are assumed to be providing subsistence for dependent women and children. Such bias constructs the ownership of rights to make claims on the state for social benefits 'access to services, cash transfers, working age participation in the labour market', the result has been exclusion of many women from entitlements". Another argument that discussed the decline of the male breadwinner was made by some feminists [16] who mentioned that the rise of multiple breadwinner or dual breadwinner at the household level in Sudanese society has reversed the notion of males as bread winner an assumption held by policy makers, as a scenario on which to build their privatisation policy.

These arguments not only refute the issue of the male breadwinner, with biases or the decline, but also raised the issue of 'multiple' breadwinner or dual earner at the household/family level. Despite evidence supporting new emerging changes in women economic role, yet decision-making authorities have not accounted it in the process of policy making and formulation.

Accordingly, various key institutions do not recognise this role: the state, the labour market and the family. The effects have become apparent in the implementation of privatisation policies, and in their consequences. Part of these social consequences is employment retrenchment, which affected women to a greater extent. Walby [17] argued that patriarchal ideology operated in six areas, including paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence, and the state.

This has been reflected in an interview conducted with the national manager of the Bank of Khartoum, Mr Salah M, who states: "When we started the process of job cancellation, we thought that women were most likely to be supported by their husbands or any one of their relatives. Depending on this assumption the bank management tended to cancel most of the jobs that were occupied by women. The decision was based on the following criteria: headship of households, age factor, job rank, mobility, and the level of productivity." He adds: "Women in senior jobs need to be promoted either to be head of department or to be transferred to the regions as heads of local branches. The recruitment of women as heads of department is a decision of the board of trustees who prefer to have males in such senior positions, so it was difficult to recruit women as head of department as they have their male colleagues in the same job rank. Regarding women's mobility, it is very difficult to transfer women to the regions; it is constrained by cultural factors as the local community does not accept women who live on their own, especially the bank manager position if the region is a prestigious one. Moreover, he explains, women's productivity normally declines after they get married and have family responsibilities.

He gave an example, when a child or the husband or the woman herself is getting sick, the woman needs to be absent from work to take care of whoever is not feeling well. Another point was raised by the head of the Bank of Khartoum trade union, who said, when we started negotiation with the management, we made an appeal in order to exempt women who are widowed or divorced and it has been accepted in the early phases of privatisation. But later on exemptions were not acceptable. He continued the bank management took into account the interest of its employees; therefore it tried to avoid making men redundant as they are the family breadwinner. Mr Ahmed, the husband of Samira, gave another reflection mentioning that, I was working as the head of the administration and personnel department; in terms of promotion and recruitment I always preferred to give the chances to males rather than females. He also adds, if I were asked about job cancellation, I would lay off women first and then men.

He mentioned an incident that happened to him when he was first employed in the bank, when I was first recruited, my boss was a lady; although she was very competent I could not accept the idea of being headed by a woman, so I went to the bank manager and I asked to be transferred to another department, but he managed to convince me to stay and after a short period I would be in charge, and it happened.

The reflections given by the bank's general manager, the head of the bank's trade union, the director of the friendship factory, and even one of the respondent's husbands, who was a banker, confirm two things: 1) that the planners and policy makers base their decisions on the prior assumption of the male breadwinner notion (this is also reflected in the interview of the head of the trade union as well); and 2) the patriarchal structure deeply rooted in the public enterprise institutions at the level of organisational structure, and at the level of personal behaviour, as well as the national legislation support such practices.

Another noticeable remark is that a new trend among women respondents showing their concentration on their nuclear families in terms of income spending rather than the extended family, as distinct from the past when women employees used to devote considerable care to their extended families. This trend is a newly emerging phenomenon in the pattern of the family in Sudanese society, as the nuclear family structure becomes the norm in urban settings; the extended family pattern in the last two decades. This point is supported by Hoodfar [18], who states that "the change of the blood kinship group as an extended family to the nuclear family based on marriage kinship emerged as an important characteristic of the urban family.

As far as women respondents from the factory are concerned, it was found that more than 31% of the sample was equal sharers in the budget of the household. They spend all their income on the basic needs of their nuclear families, as their husbands are either casual workers or self-employed with low and unstable incomes.

Zehour is 42 years old, married with five children. She has said she was spending all her income towards the family subsistence; it became rather important after the dismissal of her husband from the factory."

A basic finding in that for the factory group of respondents, the highest percentage of the women appears to be equal sharers in the household budget, while respondents from the bank, the highest percentage of the respondent FHH. This also confirms that the decline of the notion of the male breadwinner has become a reality, even among poor families; the notion of 'multiple' is growing instead.

It is evident that a considerable degree of socio-economic transformation has taken place in Sudanese society in the last two decades. This has led to changes in family life styles and structures in urban settings, including the following: 1) The increase in the numbers of FHH, not only for families headed by those are married or divorced, but also families with no working men; 2) The increase in the numbers of females who are equal sharers in the household budget; and 3) The emergence of a new trend of women who are sole breadwinners of their extended families. These changes in the economic position of working women within the nuclear and extended family have shifted women's position from economic dependence to income earner, and challenged the notion of male breadwinner with the new notion of dual or multiple earners. They also resulted in changing power relations at the household/family level, and positively influenced the gender division of labour in the labour market, and in society in general.

### **Women as economic dependents**

Only four respondents rely on their husbands to cover all the family

expenses. This might be due to the high incomes of their husbands. However, these women also contribute towards their children's education, as they are studying in private schools and universities. These women also spend on their own personal expenses, on clothes, beauty therapies and participation in social occasions.

It is apparent from this data that only around 16% (four respondents) are dependent on their husbands as the family breadwinner, while the majority (84%) are either FHH, equal sharers in the household budget, or are the sole breadwinner of the extended family.

For women factory workers only two respondents mentioned that they are completely dependent on their husbands for their living. This reflects how far women's economic dependency has dramatically diminished and become nearly invisible.

### **Women as contributors to the budget of both nuclear and extended family**

Only one case of the respondents spends her income on her nuclear family and extended family. Zeinb is 48 years old, and married with no children. She said usually spend part of her income in the expenses of her household, as her husband is self-employed with small investment, which also needs subsistence. She also took part of her extended family responsibility, especially her widowed sister who has five children. And it is difficult for her to find work as she has very low level of education. Six of the respondents from the factory contribute to the extended family, as they are single, and still live with their extended families. The extended family and low income are important factors behind the need for contributions of all family members towards the family income, as one income does not cover all the family expenses.

When privatisation came, and a redundancy decision was implemented, it was found that the majority of the women made redundant were from female-headed households, and nearly half of them were equal sharers in the household budgets, additionally, considerable number of the respondents is contributors towards extended family budget, while few number are economic independent.

### **Privatisation and women livelihoods**

Redundancy has imposed itself at both personal and family levels. The effects at family level include: the adverse effect on women heads of households, the cut in women's contribution towards the household budget, the diminishing level of women's spending on children's education, the limitation of women's contribution to their big family budget, and the limitation of women's participation in social activities, besides another new added burden of heal and entertainment spending.

The subsequent policy of redundancy has not taken into account the different composition of households and the intra-household inequalities, where men and women undertake different roles according to the prevalent gender division of labour in the Sudanese cultural context. Also men and women have different needs and interests, sometimes conflicting, and at other times complementary [19]. Moreover, policy makers not only do not consider the gender differential of roles and interests, but also do not consider the changes in those roles and positions, which convert women from economically-dependent persons to active economic participants in the labour market, and in the family/household. These two important parameters had not been taken into consideration by the decision makers in the two institutions (Bank of Khartoum, and cloth factory).

**Privatisation and female heads of households:** Since the majority of the women are heads of households, the impact was very negative

on the family's standard of living. Amna from the banking sector is a widow with five children. Her husband died in 2003, and she has taken responsibility for her children who were at different levels of education. The redundancy situation forced her to go to relatives, asking for assistance and support for family's survival. Moreover, two of her sons have suspended their schooling as they cannot pay exam fees. Ekhlass has a different story as a married woman, not like Amna who is a widowed FHH.

Ekhlas is married with an unemployed husband and three children; her family depends entirely on her income. She said the redundancy makes us live in a tragedy as there is nowhere to go to; she stopped the children going to school, and started to borrow some money from friends and family to provide subsistence for her family, then afterwards she began to sell cookies and pastries."

The expansion of FHH is one of the dimensions of the feminisation of poverty, privatisation has not only made women redundant, but led women into the situation of destitution of poverty, and this in turn led to deprive their families from the basic services of health, education and the decent living standard.

#### **Cut the contribution of women as equal sharers in the household budget**

The other group of women, who are equal sharers in the household budgets, represent 26% of the respondents. The redundancy decision leads to cut backs in their contribution towards their nuclear family, which in turn affects their living conditions as they restrict their spending to the basic needs of food and education.

Da'ad is married with four sons and one daughter. She said after the loss of her job, she found herself as a great loser, without a job, income and a husband."

Moreover, she has been forced to transfer her children from private schools to public ones. She also convinced her daughter to leave her university studies to cut down the fees, and she let her get married to a rich man who is able to offer her a secure future." Fatima introduced another theme, as she and her husband have being made redundant from the bank of Khartoum. She is married with four children; she said the worst thing that happened in her life is the decision of job loss. Fatima continued the decision badly affected our life, as we were forced to leave the rented house where we lived to move to the extended family accommodation, in order to cut the rent." While for women factory workers the situation is even worse, as they do not have any earnings for subsistence.

Zehour from factory workers, she is married with five children, one of them being disabled. Her husband abandoned her, she returned to live with the extended family, all of us live in one room. We depend on relative assistance and support, as her brother is responsible for his family and our father and his wife. She continues, her children cannot go to school anymore.

Wafa and Alshifa, their situation were nearly similar to that of Zehour, as they needed to stop children from going to school; and they need to return to the house of the extended family, to save rent expenses.

Redundancy led most of these groups to a situation of impoverishment. For the group of equal sharer of family/household budget, their families were greatly affected by the loss of income, and this resulted in aggravating their poor living conditions. For the FHH,

either married or divorced, their situation becomes worse and worse, or redundancy increased their disadvantaged situation.

#### **Privatisation and contributors towards extended family budget**

Regarding the third group of contributors towards extended family budget, the impact on those women, who are unmarried and still living with their extended families, was very hard. They were responsible for elder and young family members who have different needs, and the main problem faced by them was the health expenses of the elderly.

#### **Cuts in health expenses**

As for as the increase in the health expenses is concerned, before their job loss, women employed in the bank were offered health expenses entitlement for themselves and their families. After they lost their job these privileges have been stopped. The coincidence of this with other negative effects of privatisation (e.g. the introduction of user fees for education and health services) made health services and entertainment very expensive and not affordable for most families.

#### **Women's adaptive responses**

Women have adopted different adaptive responses to mitigate the loss of their jobs. Some of these responses were used for a limited time after the job loss, until a job was found.

As the case in the bank sample illustrates, one-third of the sample were using the adaptive response of depending on others' support, such as husbands, brothers and relatives, while 26% of the women started small-scale enterprises. The adaptive of renting the family house was used by more than 23% of the respondents, who resorted to rent part of the family accommodation in order to cope with their new situation.

13% of the women depended on borrowing from others, mainly friends, colleagues and relatives. Only three of the women sold some properties including land, furniture, and jewellery.

Another response that most of the women resorted to, is returning to, or continuing to live in the extended family house, to cut the high cost of renting the house. Moreover, all women bankers are entitled to end of service benefits, but no pension. While women factory workers are only entitled to pensions.

It is worth mentioning that all the sources of income are very meagre, and do not secure a decent living over a long time. No social security funds and no unemployment funds are available as in other countries (especially when the job cancellation took place all of a sudden and without planning). What aggravated the situation is that their dismissal coincided with the negative effects of privatisation, i.e. rising prices and high cost of services.

The data show various types of coping strategies adopted by women to deal with their new situations, which include: renting of the house, support by others, starting small-scale enterprises, borrowing from others, selling possessions, and pensions and gratuity.

**Starting small-scale enterprises:** 26% of the respondents started small-scale enterprises, so as to address the needs of their families, as the chances of paid employment became very slim if not impossible for women in their situation. These types of entrepreneurship are considered as home-based activities. According to Ali M, "by home-based activities we mean that the production activities are taken at home while the marketing may be done at home or outside."



The respondents varied in items produced or services provided. The sample included:

Two women petty-traders (selling imported cloth), two 'Ragsha' (meaning local transport) owners, two women owners of service delivery shops, one having a printing and photocopying shop, and the other one having a communication service shop, one woman making and selling perfumes, and one preparing and selling cookies and pastries. Awatif is divorced; she sells imported cloth, namely 'tobes' the national dress for Sudanese women especially the white 'tobes' for working women, she was selling tobes since she has been recruited in the bank; her clients were her colleagues in the bank and its various branches."

The case of Awatif is considered a bit different from others, because she started her work quite a long time before she lost her job; therefore, she had good experience that mitigated the shock of the job loss. However, other respondents have resorted to these activities after they lost their jobs and have faced many difficulties in starting their enterprises. It was found that five of the women run and manage their activities from their homes.

Ekhlass case is different, as she continued to make cookies and pastries and sell them from home, even after she got a paid job; all these activities are related and traditionally known as women's activities, which reflect the gender stereotypical division of labour. And even for the two women who have different types of activities (Ragsha), they supervised and managed their activities from home, with the help of their husbands. Only two women out of the eight respondents have run their own service delivery shops, one owning a printing and photocopying shop, and the other owning a shop for telephone communications services. They still face a number of problems and constraints, partly related to the locality (town hall), which collects taxes and other charges, and partly related to the prices of inputs and maintenance costs. The engagement of women in these activities is a recent pattern initiated by educated middle-class women as part of their coping strategies with the increasing poverty [20].

About one-third of the respondents attempted to start their small scale businesses with no assistance or support, neither from the government or the non-governmental organisations. These businesses help women to support their families, it to fulfil their commitments towards their children's schooling and other basic needs. The noticeable remark here is the engagement of educated middle-class women into the informal sector, previously dominated by low educated, unskilled women [21,22].

Other remarks are mentioned in relation to the level of investment in which women are involved. For women who are well-educated and well-trained with long experience as bankers, their daily work is management of financial transactions, investment deals, issuance of cheques, revision of treasury and accounts opening. Professional women are not able to start large-scale investments and just limit themselves to such low level sorts of activities, because of women's traditionally-ascribed role, so they cannot take the risk of big investments on their own. Women are confined to the ascribed gender division of labour; men are known to make large investments, while the majority of women are still limited to small-scale enterprises [23-25].

**Renting the house:** Around 23% of the respondents resorted to renting part of their houses, completing building work in their houses, or refurbishing old houses to offer them for rent in order to generate income. Generally, in Sudan, people tended to resort to renting estate:

a house, shop or a store, as they are considered a safe investment. Therefore, women deal in such types of investment. However, this tendency increased the supply of estate offered for rent, which has led to the lowering of rents.

Da'ad and Alshoul mentioned resort to the same strategy to earn alternative income; they offer part of their properties for rent. The earnings for rent vary from one area to another, the average rate ranging between US\$350 and US\$600 per month, which hardly covers the expenses of these families.

Regarding the ownership of these properties, four respondents are owners, the other four women, husbands own the properties. There is also a changing aspect here, whereby there are an increasing number of women, who are property owners; unlike before when it was most likely that family prosperities were registered under the husband's name, even if women had an equal share.

**Support by others:** This strategy has been used as a short-run strategy adopted by around one-third of the core sample. Women tended to depend either on brothers, relatives or husbands. Amna, a widow depends on her brothers and relatives to support her family with the five children. Hayat story is different, she is from the banking sector, but came from poor family. She is single and has come to depend on her extended family. Mona is married and her husband does not work she lived with extended family and depend on her brother to support her family.

The three women's respondents were return to be dependent on their extended families, although their marital status is different (i.e. one widowed, single and the third is married).

The above discussion indicates that the proportion of women who come to depend on others is only one-third of the respondents, which refutes the perceived assumption of the bank management, taking women as economic dependents, with relatives or a husband to support them. The experiences mentioned above explained the wrong assumption, and the unfair basis for their job cancellation.

For the women respondents from the factory, support by others is the only shared coping strategy with the women from the bank. As 40% of the respondents resorted to this strategy, they returned to depend on the support of others. The proportion of women from the factory is rather higher than that of the women from the bank, as only one-third of the respondents took this strategy.

**Borrowing from others:** Four of the respondents resorted to borrowing from others to address their family needs. The example of Sittana, reflects her experience with borrowing. She depends on loans from her family members and relatives." Her status is better than others as she borrowed from family members, which is safer for her. Fatima and Nawal also resorted to the same strategy. The observable remark noted is that four of the respondents, who resorted to borrowing from others, are married women, which implies that women do not always depend economically on their husbands; only one case is a second wife, who needs to help herself. It is evident from the data that the percentage of the women who resorted to this strategy is very small, as the culture of borrowing is not popular in Sudanese society, because it is considered as humiliating behaviour to go and borrow from others. That is besides the risk of an inability to fulfil the commitment, which might lead to tarnishing the image of a person, and their loss of credibility. Despite all these precautions, women were forced to resort to such things for the sake of their families. The other reason that might encourage them is their nature in the bank. Women took the risk of such strategies due

the absence of state funding bodies, which are supposed to provide funding for the needy in case of emergency and crisis.

**Selling possessions:** Only two women adopted this strategy; they sold land, their homes, furniture and jewellery. The decision to sell any property is normally taken by males, who are the owners of properties; it is very rare for women to take such a decision. These two women are heads of households, so they are taking charge.

**Having a pension:** Other coping strategies adopted by the women from the factory are: depending on pensions, and another one related to education and training. The large majority of the respondents depended on their pension. While only two decided to continue their education and training; one decided to complete her university studies, and the other one went for advanced training to qualify for a better job. Another group resorted to casual jobs in the informal sector. It is crucial to note that the amount of income, generated by the above adaptive responses, although they are very meagre and do not secure a decent living over a long time.

## Conclusion

Women's economic positions were strongly influenced by these redundancies. Both groups of respondents from the bank and the factory have shouldered the impact of those policies in a similar way, as the issues emerging were related to the roles undertaken by women at family/household level before redundancy. Major groups in the sample were from the FHH group, particularly, women bankers. The other group is women sharing equally in the household budget, while sole breadwinner in the big family represents a core group.

The FHH group emerged as a feature among professional women in the sample of women bankers; redundancy led these women to impoverishment in some cases, and in others to severe deterioration in their economic conditions. As the government embarked on its decision, based on the male breadwinner notion, in the implementation of privatisation policies, women employed in the public enterprises were the first to go. This indicated male breadwinner bias in the process of policy formulation and implementation. Accordingly, the governments' privatisation operation in the future, should consider the emerging changes which have occurred in family structures, such as families/households headed by females.

In the other group, where women are equal sharers in the household budget, they are also affected by the male breadwinner bias; this notion has negated the experiences of the respondents. According to some feminist scholars, the notion of multiple income earners has become more popular with the decline of the male breadwinner. Consequently, it needs to be considered in privatisation programmes that will be implemented in forthcoming periods: men and women should be dealt with equally, with no gender discriminatory practices, at the level of policy makers or formal sector enterprises. As the different positions of women were adversely affected by privatisation, redundant women were forced to adapt, to cope with their new situations of economic disadvantage, through the sale of their properties, valuable items, borrowing from others, receiving grants from individuals and other forms of subsistence. Government was expected- and needed- to offer emergency assistance from Social Security Funds, to support redundant women employees and their families.

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