

The Role of Women Associations in Activating the Women Socio-economic Participation During 2008-2012 in Bethlehem District

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the role of women associations in activating the social and economic of women participation, during 2008-2012 in Bethlehem district. The study approached the literature as a multi-dimensional phenomenon which addressed both theoretical and applied research. The significance of this recent study is the first which dealt with this theme, to the author knowledge which in turn encourages other researchers to work on further research on this important issue.

The study depended on quantitative descriptive approach, using a 65-item questionnaire was formulated which was divided into six sub-scales as follows: the general information of the participants; the second section dealt with the kind of benefit (7 items); the third section included financial support and loans scale (8 items); the fourth dealt with the trends toward the participation of woman in the work (16 items), the fifth included the activation of the economic participation (14 items), and the sixth dealt with the activation of the social participation (20 items). The random stratified method was utilized which comprised of a sample size of 136 female respondents among the women associations in Bethlehem district. The collected data was statistically analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

The results revealed that the role of women associations has a high impact in activating the women socio-economic participation in Bethlehem District. The mean scores and standard deviation were (M 3.73 SD 0.40). Furthermore, the findings revealed that the indicators of this role ranked in a descending order are as follows, benefit from the affiliation of the association (M 4.03 SD 0.61), the activation of the social participation (M 4.01 SD 0.57), the trends of the associations members toward women participation in the labor market (M 3.99 SD 0.39), the activation of the economic participation (M 3.31 SD 0.66), and the financial support and loans (M 2.96 SD 0.89).

Additionally, the results of the study revealed significant statistical differences in the role of women associations in activating the socio-economic of women participation among the

participants due to work status, work sector, work benefits, and the contribution rate of work in the total income. However, no statistical significant differences were found in the rest of the study variables, that is, age, marital status, family household, place of residency, educational level, membership duration, and income.

The findings revealed that the most important motivations of affiliating to women associations were, capacity and skills building; hope to attain a fund for a project; and education in order to enhance women awareness. However, the obstacles of affiliating to women associations were, male dominated culture, in rural areas in particular; the distance between the center of the association and the place of residency; membership tuition; and transportation.

Moreover, the results of the study indicated that the most important methods to improve the performance of the women associations were, funding of projects and facilitating their access, focusing on handicrafts, and enhance the associations media through publishing bulletins and information programs.

In light of the current study and its discussions, the following is recommended: activating and enhancing the coordination process between women associations in Bethlehem district, in order to mobilize the competencies and efforts to achieve the women socio-economic activation, and finally, further research is essential to develop an understanding of women role and participation in the developmental process in the Palestinian society using the case study and qualitative research design.

Keywords: Women associations, socio-economic, participation, Palestine.

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