The Push and Pull Factors Influencing Women's Development in the Sudan: Historical Perspective

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Abstract

This paper substantially examines the issues connected to the role and position of women in the Sudan, by focusing upon the education of women and their participation in the labour force within the context of the interplay of socio-political and cultural forces. The complexity of these forces creates a unique situation for Sudanese women. To appreciate, women's situation today, an historical perspective is adopted to illustrate the influence of three factors on women's conditions in the Sudan. These are: the political development of the country, the women's movement in Sudan and the dominant cultural aspects. The significance of this review paper is to highlight the context with which women's constrains to development are considered in the Sudan Therefore, for policy makers it makes the picture clear for planning within the thoroughly described context to improve women's situation in the Sudan. The paper begins with brief description of the political development of the country and its implication on women's political gains and rights. Next, we will be highlighting oppression forces and resistance of the oppression aspect by women in the Sudan. Finally, we explain some basic dimensions that affect women's current situation and the impact on their development, especially on women's education and their participation in the labour force.

Key words: Women, political, cultural factor, women's movement, Gender, Sudan

1. Introduction

1.1 Political development of the country

The Sudan is a vast country that extends over an area of approximately one million square miles. It is a land of widely differing physical characteristics, diverse cultures and multiple ethnic groups. The major development in the history of contemporary Sudan was greatly influenced by the coming of the Muslim Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula and their intermingling with the local inhabitants. The outcome of such an intermingling between the foreign and the local is manifested in the cultural and ethnic multiplicity, which is one of the salient features of the present country and its people. Today the Sudan is generally viewed as comprising two distinct groups: the largely Arab–Islamic group in the north and the largely Christian and Pagan African groups in the south.

The first recorded modern history of the Sudan is dated to the year 1504 when the Sudanese national Sultanate (Kingdom) of Funj unified the country; its rule extended until 1821 when the Turko–Egyptian invasion took place and the country was ruled by the Turks for sixty years. In 1881 a national revolution led by the religious leader Al Mahadi overthrew the Turks and established a militant national Islamic state. A condominium government following the conquest of the country by Anglo-Egyptians in 1898 took over the rule of the country. Their rule extended for nearly sixty years until the Sudan earned its independence in 1956. Since independence, the country has been subject to great political turmoil and democratic governments have constantly been overthrown by military coups. After independence a democratically elected government was taken over by the military in 1958. Following a popular uprising the military was forced to hand power to a democratic government in 1964. However, in 1969 another coup took place whose leaders remained in office for sixteen years when it was again forced by public pressure to hand over powers to the democratic parties. Since 1989 a military government with strong Islamic inclinations has ruled the country. The political environment in Sudan plays a vital role in women's situation, particularly as far as their education and work are concerned. The emphasis on these two aspects is mainly because they are the main pillars of development.

They indicate the advancement and changes in women's situation attributed to actions of different regimes (military and civilian) since independence. These actions have had an undeniable effect (either positively or negatively) on women's situation.

Sudan inherited from the British rule an economy with moderate development, but little growth in the gross domestic product. This meant that there was no real development during the colonial period, including growth in issues related to women, although women fought with their male counterparts against colonization (Badri, 1984). The first military government that ruled the country after independence (1958-64) had a negative impact on women's situation. It banned all political activities, including the activities of women's associations, despite the fact that the period prior to the coup was a significant one for women's public activities. They had participated in trade unions, active youth movements and other political organizations and joined the membership of political parties. The main reason for their participation was that they believed that through their activities in public organizations they would contribute to improving their conditions and those of society as a whole. A study carried out by Al-Nager on women's motives for participation in public organizations during that period showed that '…*thirty-five per cent stated that their main motives for participation was(Sic) to contribute to the development of the society; for 10 per cent the motive was to participate in political and social changes in the society. Whilethe rest aimed through their participation to contribute to identification of the women's problems and development of their situations*' (Al-Nagar, 1993:60).

During the second democratic government (1964-69), women gained many rights. For example, equal pay for equal work, the right to vote and be elected, permanent work instead of on a month-by month basis (when women married, their employer was not obliged to let them keep their jobs). The evidence of such progress was the election of the first woman as a member of parliament in 1965 (A. A., 1972; Badri, 1984).

A drastic change in women's conditions occurred during the second military coup in 1969 (Nimieri's regime). This regime had a socialist ideology that provided women with the opportunity to stand on an equal footing with their male counterparts.   They were appointed as ministers, members of public councils and to the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU), which represented the government political party. In 1971 women formed the Sudan Women's Union (SWU), which dominated and streamlined all women's activities. They formed many branches in different regions; however women remained unable to fill the stipulated 25% of the membership of the country's parliament - a right that they were granted by law. Women did, however, participate in political decision-making through holding ministerial portfolios. The SWU pursued some rights for working women, and in general this period was the best in the history of women's political participation. However, discrimination still persisted. Women were appointed only to certain ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Cultural Affairs. None was appointed to the Ministry of Health, or Education, despite the fact that teaching is a predominantly female occupation. Nor has one ever been appointed as prime minister as has happened in some other countries such as Turkey, Britain, India and Pakistan.

It is noteworthy that the women who were appointed as ministers were teachers who were among the elite of Sudanese society. They came from the middle class and had mostly received secondary school education. Their fathers, who were relatively educated, supported them; 20% had Khalwa education (see glossary), 27.5% had primary education and 12.5% had intermediate education; they had held white-collar jobs.

Despite the limited education of these pioneer women their role in the national movement against colonial rule is undeniable. They paved the way for the younger generations to obtain some rights, for example equal educational opportunities for higher education, and equal opportunities for all different kind of jobs training and development with their male counterparts (A. A., 1972). However, in practice, gender discrimination still persists and the gender gap has not disappeared. Women's situation has worsened, especially since 1983 when the state developed Islamic tendencies and imposed Islamic Sharia law (see the glossary). During the waning years of Nimieri's regime (1969-1985) much of the work of the Union of Sudanese Women (SSU) was clearly directed towards designing the ideal Islamic woman and family, within a framework that looked towards building a society based on Islamic foundations. In addition, a change in the political atmosphere, due to the imposition of Sharia law, has had a direct negative impact on the gains women had achieved after a long fight, which had lasted for over 27 years since independence in 1956.

The impact of the Islamisation during the declining years of Nimieri's regime included all aspects of women's life: for example politically, socially, in education and in their participation in labour force. The first effect of the imposition of Islamisation was a negative one, on the political aspect.

In evidence of the loss of their political gains, Hale states: '*At the end of Nimieri's regime, proper social conduct was being monitored not only in the streets, but in various government institutions. Nafissa Ahmed El-Amin, chair of the Union of Sudanese Women (SSU), was barred from chairing a session in Khartoum on "Women's rights under Islam" at the First International Islamic Conference on the Implementation of Sharia. The Saudi delegation protested that it was not Islamic to permit a woman to chair a meeting where men were present*' (1996:209).

This was the first step in the deterioration in women's situation in Sudan. The second effect was on social transformation and the new family. The process of social transformation had begun before independence in 1956. The aim was to create an Islamic family and the ideal Islamic woman, and measures were put into effect primarily in the school curriculum, the media and other apparatuses of the state. In this respect, these hegemonic processes were building up a spiritual infrastructure. This process laid the foundation for creating an Islamic society, which was aggravated by the National Islamic Front (NIF) (an Islamic political party, which masterminded a military coup in 1989 whose leaders are still governing the Sudan). As Hale states: '*…By the 1980s the media had begun to play an active role in re-socializing the populace toward the creation of a truly Islamic family. A great deal of the popular press material of the mid-1980s declared among the functions of the September Laws to protect the family and to educate toward an Islamic family system. Certainly other media was also working to produce a cultural model of an Islamic family as the core of the new Islamic societ*y' (1996:202).

Certainly, it paved the way for the NIF, since 1989, to achieve the complete transformation of the society into an Islamic one. With this background, the situation of women has witnessed a continuous deterioration in the 1990s. The third implication of the imposition of Islamization was in the educational sphere. The National Islamic Front (NIF), after the coup in 1989, played a major role in the changes by appointing high-ranking NIF officials to top administrative positions in education. They adopted a new requirement that students accepted to the university first serve in the National Military Service (NMS), which was called the Popular Defence Forces. The implication of the hegemony of the NIF on education apparatuses is most apparent when we look at the attempts to lessen the expansion of girls' education in Sudan. As noted by Hale: '*…This treatment hinted ominously at things to come, such as the national debates held by authorities to determine if too many women were being trained in certain professions. The administration of the University of Khartoum, for example, considered quotas for women in particular fields*' (1996:192).

In addition, a host of variables led to rapid economic deterioration as people suffered from inflation, shortage of fuel, poverty, resumption of the civil war and educational services (Al- Nagar, 1993). All these forces together have had a negative impact on the socio-economic, socio-political and cultural conditions of women in the Sudan. According to Hale: '*…. The unemployment rate rose and salaries could not match inflation. Another factor affecting male workers was the pressure that international lending agencies were applying on the Sudanese government to reduce Sudan's overdeveloped civil service. This resulted in even fewer jobs. Men left to find jobs and earn more money*' (1996:197).

Drastic changes affected women's conditions with the NIF military coup in June 1989. This government adopted Islamic ideology that affected all aspects of Sudanese society, including the situation of women. Public participation was restricted to certain groups, those active as members of the NIF. At the same time, the Islamic government resumed the civil war in the South. All resources were directed to support the war, to defeat the southern rebels. The cost of this war is extremely high and drains all the resources of the country, aggravating poverty and leading to a noticeable deterioration in GDP, and continued devaluation of the Sudanese pound. This economic deterioration has had an incredible effect on women's situation, with an increasing number of women having to work to increase family income because of the emigration of husbands and brothers to Gulf countries to increase family income. The effect has extended to include girls' education because in these cases girls have to assist their mothers in carrying out domestic chores. This burden leads to an increasing number dropping out of school with a consequent rise in the number of illiterates. This has widened the gender gap in as far as education and, eventually, work is concerned.

2. Oppression Forces: The Cultural Factors

This section introduces the cultural factors in the Sudan and their impact on women, recognizing the cultural diversity of the country. Sudan is a 'crossroads' between the African and Arab worlds, an 'Afro-Arab state', or 'Islamic-African'.

It is essential for research works concentrating on the Sudan to elucidate and reflect on the diversity of culture between its northern and southern inhabitants since these ethnic groups have different languages and different religions. The Islamic religion and Arabic language predominate among the northern ethnic groups, whereas Christianity, the English language and local colloquies are predominant among southern ethnic groups. The difference between these ethnic groups and their culture is beyond the scope of this section. Instead, we will concentrate on the culture of the northern people, from whom those who live in the capital city are descendants.
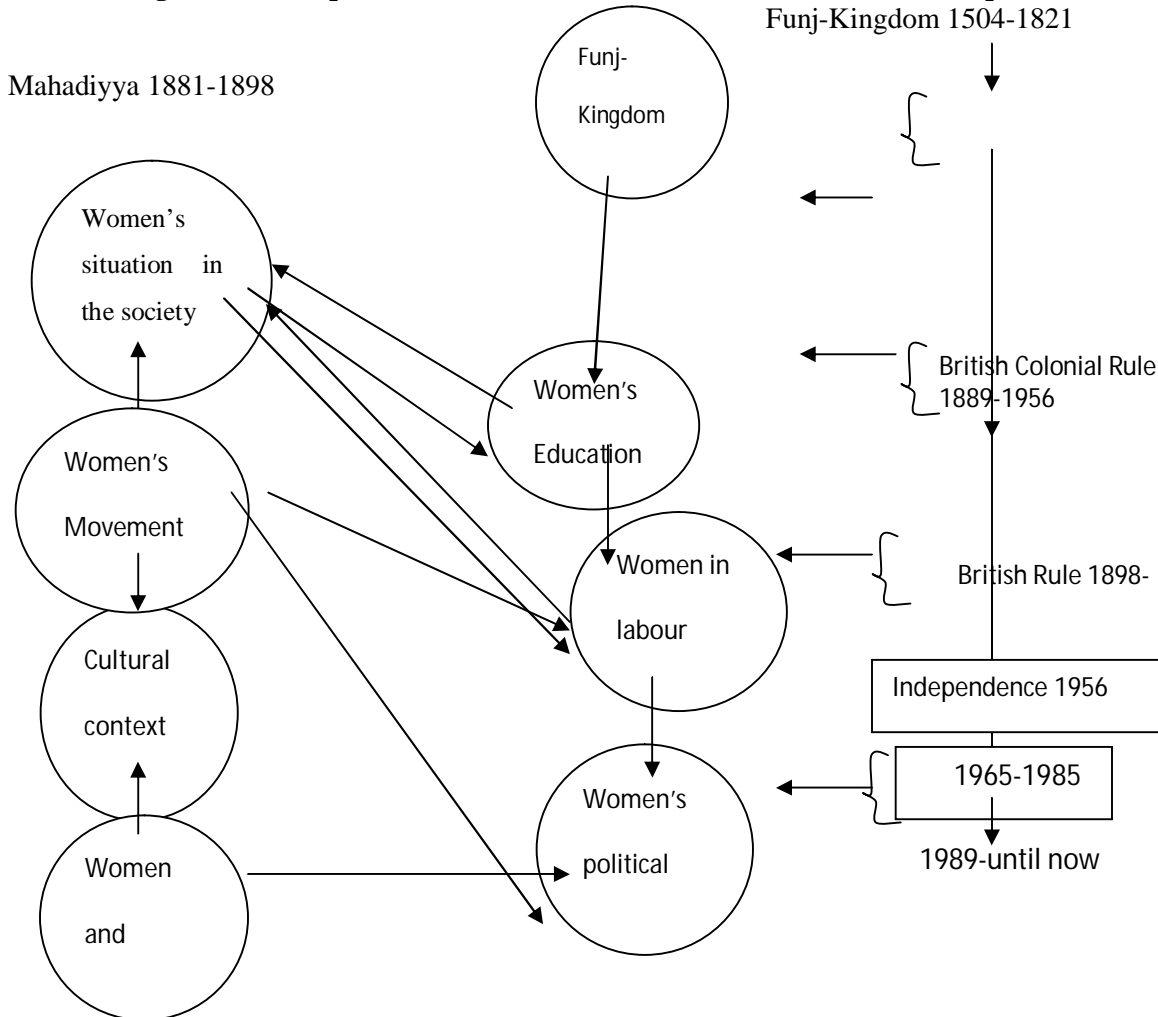
The foundation of the Islamic culture in the north of Sudan was an outcome of the intermingling of the Arab immigrants with the indigenous Nilotic groups. The influential effect of the penetration of Arabs on indigenous Sudanese groups cannot be denied. Over the long period of this mixing the Arabs changed the social structures, which could arguably have been described as gender egalitarian (Hale, 1996). The establishment of the Funj Kingdom fostered the spread of Arabic language, culture, and forms of social organization, as well as Islam. During the Turko–Egyptian Rule from 1821 to 1881, Turks tried to impose upon the people a doctrinaire form of Islam. Its rigid orthodoxy was characterized in the way of teaching local holy men (Fagis) in the Koranic schools (Khalwas) (see the glossary). During this Turko–Egyptian Rule, gender relations changed, particularly in terms of gender division of labour (Hale, 1996). Since then, this gender division of labour has been the prevailing one and has shaped gender relationships. Women have been assigned the domestic work to look after children, whereas men have to work outside as breadwinners. This prevailing gender division of labour has not changed, even after the change in women's situation and their participation in the formal work force.

The mixture of Islamic principles with the culture of the indigenous Nilotic people produced a new Sudanese culture in which a different importance and value was assigned to the work of women and men. Women feel that their financial contribution to supporting their family is minimal compare to that of their male counterparts. In this respect men take the responsibility for providing the 'essential needs', whereas women, even when they go out to work, spend their salaries on providing 'non-essential' items for their families (Hale, 1996). This social convention has stemmed from Islam, which assigned the responsibility of the provision of basic needs such as shelter and food to men, whereas women are not obliged to spend their money as providers. This division of gender responsibility is drawn from the Holy Koran, as interpreted by Al-Tabari*et al.,* Surah 4, An-Nisa' part 5, verse 34, which says that 'Men are protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means' (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1993:127).

In view of the Sudanese culture (the mixture of the Nilotic indigenous culture and the Islamic principle), it is dictated that women must respect their husbands. This situation gives men the right to obtain women's respect and compliance. As stated in Al-Tabari: '*Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husbands property, etc)*' (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1993). In view of this cultural fabric this cultural frame is very important in interpreting and analyzing gender behaviour, particularly the superior-subordinate relationship within formal organizations in Sudan. It will help considerably in understanding women's behaviour towards male employees, as well as in understanding male perception of and behaviour towards female employees.

The relationship between the different aspects previously discussed may be conceptualized as shown in Figure (1) below:

Figure 1: Conceptualization of Social formation and women's development in the Sudan

3. Resistance of Oppression: Women's Movement in Sudan

The historical presence of the Sudanese women movement is vital to understanding women's present conditions and to appreciate their achievements. The Sudanese women's movement dates back to the early 1940s when they formed social, rather than religious, organizations with the primary objective of achieving social changes. This reflects social movement among particular social groups: those Sudanese pioneers were enlightened women, relatively educated and mostly teachers. The explicit objective of these groups was to raise women's political, social and economic status, in which they sought radical changes. The struggle was hard if they were to realize their predetermined objectives. However, these organizations rapidly declined and vanished because of the various forces at work in the period 1958-64 (Badri, 1984). These forces included the following:

First, the social organizations lacked a fixed structure or stable internal guidance system to direct them to realize the predetermined objectives. Secondly, there was interplay of many different inhibiting factors: for example external environmental forces, social customs, beliefs and the lack of interest on the part of the colonial rulers. These forces jointly formed strong barriers that hindered women's efforts to achieve the intended development and liberate women from the influence of patriarchy.

The most important of these forces, however, was the external environmental factor associated mainly with the political force. The women's movement derived its impetus from the political parties that fought hard against the colonial administration in the 1940s. The external environment at that time was characterized by the influence of the nationalist movement.

The formation of the political parties was mainly to achieve independence from British rule, a goal that had been realized in 1956. Despite its importance, however, discussion of the role of political parties and the nationalist movement is beyond the scope of this chapter (Bashier, 1975). At that time, women formed their own political organizations, which were closely linked with nationalists' struggle for the independence of the country (Badri, 1987). They participated in political campaigns to increase women's political awareness, fought hard for their rights and contributed to achieving some social changes. They initially started with writing in magazines and newspapers under artificial female names because of the traditions (Issa, 1993). Eventually, they succeeded in imposing their existence in the mass media. As pointed out by Issa: '*This is evident where some pioneer women started to broadcast from the British broadcasting service in London*' (1993:103). In addition, women gained some of their political rights (Badri, 1987). The following section introduces the cultural factor and examines its impact on women's situation.

4. Women in the Sudan: Basic Dimensions Affect the Current Situation

Against the background of political and cultural factors as explained in the previous sections, the study will concentrate on two basic dimensions related to women in the Sudan. These are the education of women and their participation in the labour force.

Women's education in the Sudan

Education plays a critical role in the socio-economic development of any society. Experts and specialists on development claim that economic development depends primarily on human capital, which, in turn, requires appropriate investment in education. To this end, schooling is considered as the key ingredient of development and expenditure on education is encouraged in developing countries. More specifically it is claimed that there is a strong positive correlation between an individual's level of education and his or her social status. According to this line of reasoning, well-educated people always tend to get better jobs, to enjoy high prestige and are empowered with more authority than poorly educated people. Education in general and women's education in particular, plays a crucial role in family planning, which is considered to be imperative in the development process (Muneer, 1993).

As far as the history of girls' education in the Sudan is concerned, before 1907 there was no formal education for them. Khalwa education (see glossary, p. 318) was the prevailing kind of schooling. It was basically a religious type of education and although it was predominantly for boys, a few girls were granted chances in these educational institutions. In some parts of the country, the learning of the basic principles of Islam by the girl was a condition for marriage set by the groom and his family. By the same token, it was also a condition for a male to be accepted by the bride's family. Besides the Khalwa, Bayt-Al Khayatta (see the glossary, p.318) was also introduced as a form of education for young, middle-class girls who were allowed by their families to attend sewing and needlework classes conducted in Bayt-Al Khyatta (1925). Such classes tended to take place before sunrise until sunset to avoid the girls' are being seen by men. There they learned sewing, cooking, and other household skills. The process of learning required that the girls should assist their teacher in carrying out her housework. The aim of this kind of learning was to prepare girls for their expected role as mothers and housewives.

1907 marked a milestone in women's education. In that year Shiekh Babiker Badri of the town of Rofaa' (in mid-eastern Sudan) succeeded in establishing the first school for girls in the Sudan thereby crowning with success the fierce struggle for that cause against both local opinion and British opposition. Amongst his most vociferous opponents were religious men and conservatives. Their objections were based on the fact that girls might forget the values and principles of Sudanese society. At that time the colonial rule intentionally opted not to challenge the social system. Until 1911 the Rofaa' school was the only girls' school in the Sudan; later, more schools were founded by Christian missionaries and were attended by both Muslim and Christian girls.

The British colonial administration focused upon the training of qualified administrators and technicians as required by the machinery of the administration system. Accordingly, women's education was not given any priority. The colonial governments justified this via a desire not to violate traditions and values of the Sudanese society. However, this justification covered the fact that the objection to women's education was meant to avoid additional expenditure and to reduce further demand for job opportunities. Notwithstanding these and other pressures the colonial government was obliged to appoint the first controller for girls' education and the first female teachers' training college was established in Omdurman in 1921.

The popular demand for women's education gained more momentum with the increasing political awareness created by the nationalist movement in 1930. The main purpose behind this demand was to put pressure on the British colonial rule rather than a genuine interest in gender issues. The evidence for this is the fact that the concern for women's education came to a sudden halt following the independence of the Sudan in 1956. This was mainly because most of the national politicians had little, if any, gender awareness and therefore little concern for improving women's conditions. The social attitudes towards women's education together with the preference for early marriage acted as a barrier that limited the desired expansion in women's education. Consequently, the illiteracy rate remained high and the gender gap in education became more evident. However, despite the prevailing circumstances more primary schools for girls were established as a result of the efforts of some graduates and due to the establishment of the women teachers' college in Omdurman.

After the Second World War, a memo was submitted to the British Colonial administration by the graduates' conference (GC) demanding more schools of formal education for girls. During the 1940s the nationalist movement was fiercely fighting the British colonial rule. Educated women, who were represented by the teachers, became a firm component of the nationalists' movement. No doubt women's political awareness during that period laid the foundations for the women's movement in the Sudan. Women realised that women's knowledge would improve their situation by making them more productive and effective in society (Badri, 1984). However, the colonial administration, being alerted by the increasing national awareness and the ever-growing demands for independence, decided to expand girls' education. Thus a higher secondary school for girls was established in 1945 in Omdurman. In addition, significant improvements in women's situation took place in 1950 when girls were for the first time allowed to be enrolled at a university level.

The expansion of girls' education, supported by state policy in the post-independence period, had a positive effect in women's situation, which indicates the changes in social attitudes towards women in a favourable direction (Badri, 1984). As well, it has had repercussions on the tremendous increase in the number of women participating in the workforce (Hale, 1996). Despite the difficulties encountered in gathering more recent and complete statistics shows that, in general, in the 1980s girls' education at the university level witnessed a flourishing period. There was a prominent increase in the number of girls enrolled in the higher education institutions compared with the period before the 1980s.

Among the positive indicators of the changing attitudes towards women's education is that they are allowed to pursue courses of study in the evening. Such a practice was previously forbidden, as society tended to reject the idea of allowing women to go out or, even to be seen by men. They were allowed to go out only when married. These changes are attributed mainly to women's education, which is closely linked to the development of their awareness (Badri, 1984).

Since independence in 1956 there has been a substantial increase in the number of primary schools for girls. The number of girls enrolled in primary schools in the 1970s almost double the number in the 1980s (Ministry of Education Report, 1992/1993:14) . Such an increase was the result of the policies of the May Regime (1969-85), which formulated, adopted and implemented new educational policies. Upon the execution of these policies, the number of girls enrolled in primary schools substantially increased during the period 1969-78. The statistics show that at primary level age (6-11) years, there was an increase of 43.7% (Ali, 1995:70). However, the number of girls was still far lower than the number of boys of the same age group.

The gender gap at primary school level in the 1970s and 1980s is very evident, as illustrated inA remarkable aspect of the education system has always been the gender gap. This is mainly attributed to the fact that girls' schools are far fewer in number than boys'. The main reason behind this gap could be the socio-economic factor. Moreover, technical schools were established to enhance women's technical knowledge, especially in nursing. Nursing as a profession has witnessed a prominent increase despite the fact that the number of males exceeds that of females. Nevertheless, the worldwide changes and the concomitant great interest in women's issues have had prominent positive repercussions on women's situation in the Sudan. One of the manifest impacts was the tremendous increase in the number of girls enrolled in schools, which slightly narrowed the gender gap.

In contrast, since the 1980s the educational system has witnessed a drastic and rapid deterioration. Compared to the situation in the 1970s the number of students was about 33% lower and there was a smaller budget allocation to increase the number of schools. Until the mid-1980s the budget amounted to 15% of the government budget but it then declined steadily to become 2.8% in 1990/91 and 1.7% in 1991/92 (Ministry of Education Report, 1992/1993:12).

The increasingly low percentage of the budget allocated to education is widening gender inequality. In fact, when such a low budget is allocated it means that the cost of education has been transferred to the community. An important feature that tends to impede educational development is the impact of multiple factors, namely the shortage in educational resources, books, equipment and social services. In addition to the economic deterioration, which has added further problems to the situation, education has become more expensive due to the fees stipulated for government schools which were previously free of charge or subsidized by the government. The rise in the cost of transport to school, uniform and other educational costs has aggravated the situation with the result that parents are more burdened with the direct and indirect costs of education. The inevitable result of the combination of these factors is that girls leave school to help in income-generating activities to support their families. Moreover, they financially support their brothers' education, which directly jeopardizes girls' educational opportunities.

Since the 1990s illiteracy has become more severe and is positively correlated with the deterioration in economic conditions. One of the main factors which have made the situation even worse, is the increase in immigrants from rural areas to urban centers seeking work. This mobility from rural areas causes an increase in the number of drop-outs from schools. As explained by the Ministry of Education's report 1992/93: '*Illiteracy among young groups of population remains high, it shows that the expansion of education is not keeping pace with the population growth. Such percentages signal the serious conditions of rural areas. Further, in both rural and urban areas, the percentage of illiterate females is high. In addition, the percentage of illiterates among the groups 10-14 and 15-19 stresses the need for informal and technical education*' (Ministry of Education Report, 1992/1993:22).

One reason, among others, is the high rate of drop-out at the primary level, in both rural and urban areas, in all different states in the country (Ministry of Education Report, 1992/1993:29). One reason behind this high rate of drop-out is that pupils reach schools very tired because they walk very long distances. Even if they use mechanized transport, they walk almost the same distance to reach the school. Another reason directly related to social custom is co-education. Girls may not be able to attend mixed schools, or deal with male teachers, as this is against the prevailing social customs (Ministry of Education Report, 1992/1993:29). Moreover, there is a negative effect from the conservative attitude which does not allow girls to walk alone for long distances. Instead, families prefer girls to stay at home and help with domestic work. This is usually the case in certain circumstances, for example when the mother is unwell or no elders or other female relatives can help with domestic chores. The situation is further complicated by the lack of interest on the part of girls themselves, where the heavy burden of domestic responsibilities conflicts with the academic responsibilities. Thus, socio-economic conditions play a vital role in widening the gender gap in education. As the number of male migrants increases, urban women are forced to carry over men's responsibilities and this reflected negatively in girls' education. A third reason is associated with girls' early marriage. This practice is common in both rural and urban areas. The implication of this situation is fewer girl students reaching a high level of education. Consequently, this situation is perpetuated and widens the already existing gender-gap.

Despite this gender-gap the number of girls in higher education institutions is steadily increasing, from both urban and rural areas. However, if we compare the number of girls from urban areas admitted in the universities they outweigh those from rural areas. This is mainly attributable to two reasons: the first is the unbalanced distribution of resources between urban and rural areas, i.e. the socio- economic services distribution is concentrated in urban areas. The implication of this unbalanced distribution of resources is mirrored in the lack of educational facilities. The second reason is that girls in rural areas help in domestic work and more importantly in agriculture (Muneer, 1993). It is inevitable that the gender-gap will prevail where there are fewer educational opportunities allocated for women. Therefore, few females will participate in the work force.

Women in the labour force

Prior to independence, females' education was very low-level for the reasons already mentioned. Those who were educated worked in a very limited range of jobs, for example teaching, nursing and midwifery. In the post-independence period and, with the rise in the standard of living more educational facilities were appearing. The outcome was a relative increase in the number of women in the labour force. However, their participation in the labour force is still low and a high percentage of women are concentrated in low-paid jobs (Al-Nagar, 1989). Women's work was accepted and approved only after a long and bitter struggle by the women pioneers.

They had the approval of their families, as their fathers were educated and considered to be the elite of Sudanese society at that time. As those pioneers worked prior to their marriage, they did not confront any problems after marriage. Thus, some continued working for self-fulfillment and self-actualization. It has been found that '… *75% of them asserted that they work for personal achievements, while 25% worked because of economic need. This reflects the class differences among women*' (Al-Nagar, 1993:56);in the last two decades, the previous abundance of girls in higher education has been reversed and economic conditions have deteriorated sharply. Families now prefer their daughters to participate in the labour force. They enter different specializations, for example law, economics, medicine and engineering. It is only very recently that females have entered the field of law. Tracing their existence in the history of the judicial system, they were not there in any period despite the different kinds of rule in the country. However, with the changes in men's attitudes towards women judges the number has increased but still it is not comparable to their male counterparts. In 1993 the number started to increase to 96 women judges, whereas their male counterparts number 471 judges. This means that gender equality is only written in judicial law whereas it is not practiced in reality (El-Shiekh, 1993).

Another profession in which women confronted many problems and obstacles was broadcasting, as to hear women's voices in public was forbidden by social tradition. Women were working in the broadcasting profession using artificial names to hide their real names. They used the radio to discuss backward traditions and other women's issues. They tried to enlighten women through spreading useful ideas and concepts. Through the media they explained the harm of some customs such as Zar (see glossary) and female circumcision. They explained the importance of female education and the usefulness of avoiding early marriage. Those who attempted to play this role were the pioneer teachers. The core of the programs presented was sewing, art, traditional meals, Islamic education and other kinds of educational material. As a matter of fact, all these programs emphasized women's duties associated with their role as wives and housekeepers.

Although they were getting the same educational opportunities at the university level as their male counterparts, gender segregation led to the concentration of the majority of females studying social sciences and nursing to become either teachers or nurses. In contrast, males study all subjects, for example agriculture, engineering and mechanical engineering. The segregation in education has an implication for shaping the labour market, even within the same profession. Thus, some jobs become predominately male occupations and others are predominantly female. One clear example of this is the steady increase in the number of females enrolled in nursing college. The intake shows a steady rise over the last decade (the 1980s), despite the negative impact of socio-cultural influences that related to the social misconception of nursing as a profession.

Although teaching is predominantly a female occupation, segregation still persists. Despite the difficulties encountered in gathering more recent and complete data, the majority of female teachers are at the primary level, whereas in high schools male teachers are predominant. However, since the 1980s there has been an increase in the number of females joining the profession whereas the number of males has shown a steady decrease. One of the main reasons is the emigration of teachers to the oil-rich countries of the Gulf. As economic conditions deteriorated, teachers' conditions too witnessed a rapid deterioration. Since the rewards from this profession are not compatible with living expenses and inflation, one way to solve their problems is by migration. The discrimination is further extended to include teachers' training. Female teachers get fewer training opportunities than their male counterparts. However, this still depends on the level at which they are teaching. At primary level females received more training opportunities than their male counterparts during the period 1979-90. At the intermediate levels and high levels during the same period male teachers were getting more opportunities for training.

Despite the difficulties encountered the gathering of the recent and complete data showed that more training opportunities are allocated for men within the Ministry of Education, which is a common practice. More training opportunities at intermediate and secondary levels are awarded to males whereas females get fewer training opportunities. On the other hand, females have more training opportunities at the primary level than their male counterparts. This reveals the hidden gender discrimination within the same profession. However, in the mid-1980s the number of training opportunities for female teachers was increased. One main cause, which we have already noted, is men's tendency to migrate to the Gulf, so that women were offered extra opportunities. There were two main reasons for this emigration: the first was the deterioration in the socio-economic conditions in Sudan and the second was related to the political turmoil, which entailed imprisonment of teachers who were politically active. Therefore, other groups emigrated to evade political harassment.

Despite the steady increase in male teachers' emigration, still the training opportunities allocated for males, except at the primary level, exceed those for females at intermediate and secondary levels. To Sum up, it is argued that within the same profession gender discrimination exists, as females remain concentrated at the lower level of the educational system. The implication is that females' qualifications, which would enable them to take responsibility at higher education level, is not enough, although the number of girls enrolled in higher education institutions has shown a steady increase, Ali argued that one reason, *inter alia*, that women are not provided full rights at work is their lack of the required education, training opportunities and professional advice. Consequently, this tends to weaken women's opportunity to compete in the labour market because of the poor qualifications they may have which are not matching with job requirements (Ali, 1995).Although teaching and nursing are predominantly female occupation, tradition did not encourage women to work in nursing profession. This is because of the unacceptable requirements of the job itself, which allow intermingling with men and overnight shifts.

To conclude, women in Sudan are assigned a secondary status similar to the status of women in the Arab and Third World countries in general (see the glossary (Koopman, 1995; Moghadam, 1995; Tobia, 1993; UN Report,1991; Brydon, 1989; Chant, 1989; Chant and Brydon, 1989; Sharabi,1988; Al- Tal,1985). This status determines their role in society, which confines them largely to domestic work whereas men are assigned the role of bread-winners. Therefore, women's education and participation in the formal labour force are considered as unimportant. However, women's awareness of their rights has been raised and they have gained political and social rights as a result of the women's movement over past decades. The most important success they have achieved is change in the rules of employment and they have earned the acceptance of society regarding their education and participation in the labour force. Thus, girls' education has witnessed a major expansion despite the prevailing gender gap. Similarly, there is a prominent increase in females' participation in the labour force although still the gender gap persists.

The political factor has had a negative effect on women's situation, in particular during the first military government (1958-64) and the last military government (1989-present) and a positive one during the second military regime (1969-85). Women's most prominent achievements were during the civilian government (1964-69), when they gained political rights and work legislation to have the same rights as their male counterparts. On the other hand, during the second civilian government (1985-89) women's situation witnessed no changes.

Glossary

Bakeet –El –Rowda: It is the specialized institute offering a two year training course for teachers they have two years' experience.

Byt-Al Khyatta: A social institution where the learning of sewing, needlework, is carried out. It takes place in the house of the teacher/ trainer.

Civil service: It is the service of the government organizations.

Fagis: Is a teacher of Islamic religion and its bases in a religious institution called Khalwas.

Family: Refers to a nuclear family (wife, husband and children). By the extended family we refer to (parents, sisters, brothers and other relatives).

Gender egalitarian:
Refers to a kind of gender equality among the Nilotic groups in the Sudan before the emigration of the Arabs changed the social structure- including gender relationships, so according to this gender egalitarian, men and women shared the same kind of work.

Hardship Area: The work in the rural areas.

"If a female becomes an axe, she would not shatter a head"
It is a proverb used in Sudanese culture, which means that a woman even, if she appears to have all the qualities and traits to be effective, is not really effective.

Huddud: Are the limits ordained by God, which should not be transgress them.

Kasala: A city in the eastern part of the Sudan.

Khalwa: Is an institution mainly to teach Islamic religion and its bases. Khalwa is also refer to the Islamic term that means a man who is a stranger to a woman (a woman who is not his wife or sister or a mother) must not stay alone with her in an isolated place. This Khalaw is forbidden by the Islam.

Khartoum: is the capital city of Sudan. It is located in the central region, between the two Niles; White and the Blue Niles

Kosti: Is a town in the middle part of Sudan.

Leadership posts: Are the posts in scale (5), scale (4) and scale (3).

Mohirim (or Mahram): An Islamic concept refers to a husband and any male relative a woman can not marry according to Islam, for example a father, brother and a brother in law who marry her sister.

National Islamic Front (NIF): Is the political party that rules the country, after a military coupe they came into power since June1989 and until now.

Omdurman: is one of the three towns that form the capital city Khartoum.

Open career system: Is the system implemented according to 1995 Act to promote civil service employees every 3-4 years. It is an automatic promotion process. It has been introduced to solve the problem of bottleneck along an employee's career development.

Popular defense force: Military training for groups; not part of the formal military forces, it is compulsory for all nationals expect old people and children. It is based on the "Malishya" idea.

Public interest law: A law legislated by the government to service political interest. It is used to implement politically motivated dismissal of civil service employees who are not supporters of the (NIF), or the opponents of the political regime.

Scales in Sudanese Civil Service: The entry point to Sudanese civil service for university graduates is at scale (9). The at most senior scale for the entire civil service is scale (1). Only this scale has three steps. The lowest is step (1-3) and the highest is scale (1-1) which is labelled scale (1- special).

Shariah: The Islamic rules and regulations according to the Holly Koran.

S(he): These pronouns will be used in this way to refer to a person when used by respondens. The use of person means gender free (can be a male or a female).Therefore, the reflexive pronouns will be using in association with it is written in this form his (her), or him (hers) in the translation of their speech.

Social factor refers to: social occasions, family commitments, effect of the extended family and culture.

Southern Sudan: It is the part of Sudan where war (1955) between southern and northern people had taken place because of the difference in religion and ethnic groups.

Third World: Regions include Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia and Middle East and North Africa, according to Brydon and Chant (1989: 14).

Tobe: Sudanese women's traditional/ national dress. It is a full-length cotton white fabric. It is a wrap around gown for women to cover their whole body and heads. After June 1989 it was considered to be an Islamic dress and veil and as such imposed on women inside the country (Mahamoud, 2002).

Top Leadership posts: Are the executive jobs; as include scale (1) and scale (2).

Veil: Is the Islamic dress where women have to cover their heads by scarf, wear long wide dress with long sleeves. Another interpretation for the word veil is that women should stay in a place different from men, so they should not mix in any place or under any circumstances.

Waw: one of the cities located in the area where the war between North and South Sudan had taken place.

West: Geographically: refers to Europe (UK and post-socialist countries) and USA because they represent part of the first world in which most of the studies on women in management have been carried out.

Women's Talk: It is a phrase used in the Sudanese's culture that referred to nonsense talk and of no theme.

Zar: Ceremony to drive out evil red spirits, which cause depression and anxiety. The Zar spirit is considered as a spirit that like jolly things and happy ones, according to Mahmoud (2002).

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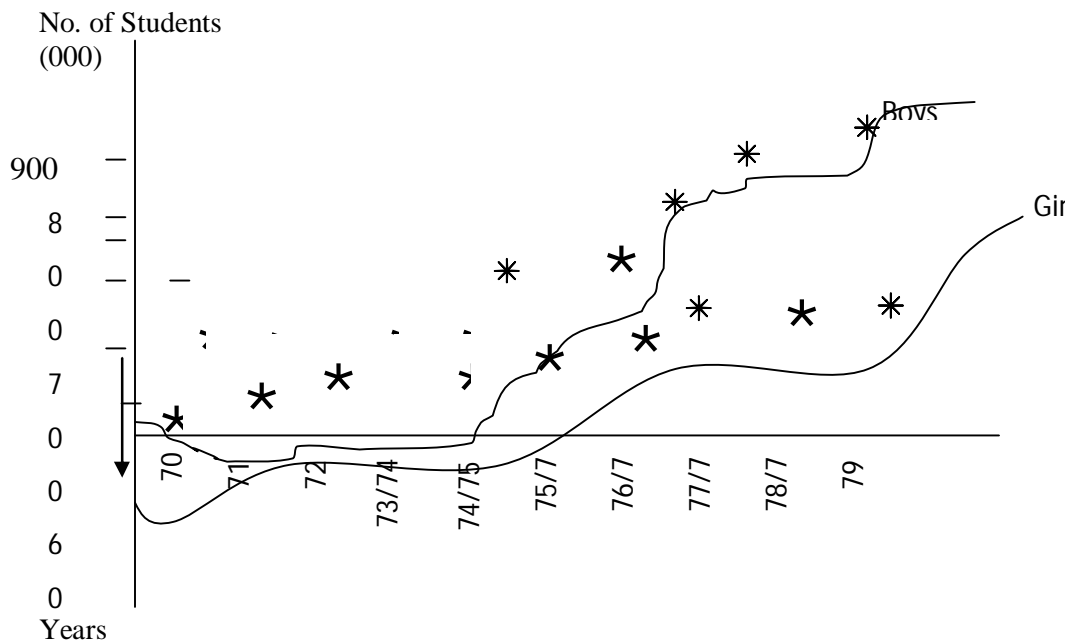
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See Figure (2).

**Figure (2): Primary Government Education (boys and girls)
1970/71-1979/80**

Source: Ministry of Education, Educational Statistics of 1979/1980

See table (1) below:

Table (1): Average number of female and male nurse graduates in Sudan*
1948-1989

Year	Males	Females
1948/61	135 000	27 200
1962/75	343 000	135 600
1976/89	998 500	411 900

*Source: (Al -Shiekh, 1993:71)

Al- Sakf Al- Zujaji: It is a literal translation of the phrase ' Glass Ceiling'. Al- Sakf Al-Zujaji is not used in Sudan to denote the same connotation as in the western literature. This thesis proposes that the phrase could be used as a concept or metaphor to indicate the existence of an artificial barrier faced by women managers in the Sudan.

Al- Ahfad college: It is the only higher education college for girls in Sudan. It is formed of many colleges, for example Women's studies, Medicine, Administrative sciences and Home sciences. In addition, it is the first higher education college teaching women's studies and establishing a department for it, which has a primary concern of eradicated gender discrimination. Also, it is fighting against all the traditions and social customs that dehumanizing women, for example circumcision.

Darfour: It is a remote province in the Western region of Sudan which is in the border with Chad. It is one of the 9 states of the country far from the capital city Khartoum.

Easy selection: This phrase refers to selection either done directly from graduates list and candidates are not subject to any selection committee, or subject to a selection committee as to complete the formalities only such as 'an interviewing committee'.