

# The Gender-Biased Wording of Recruitment Advertisements in Iraq

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## Abstract

This research studies the nature and the scope of gender discrimination in job advertisements across Iraq's various business sectors, segments, and hierarchical levels. It also attempts to understand the correlation between the language of the vacancy announcements and the level of the gender discriminatory content in them. This study is conducted with the hope of contributing to gender equality at the workplace in Iraq and the wider region. The current study adopts a content coding and analysis method that depends on the analysis of job advertisements (n=1015) by organizations operating in Iraq published in the leading recruitment websites and social media pages for a period of about four consecutive months from June to October 2017. The analysis is conducted using descriptive statistics and tested using simple cross tabulation method. Although the topic has been studied in various countries and contexts, it lacks academic attention in the Middle East, which can be seen as a unique area for research. Also, this research is the first attempt, as far as we are aware of, to comprehend the correlation between the choice of language (English, Arabic or Kurdish) and gender-biased wording of vacancy announcements. Understanding the relationship between language and gender discrimination in job advertisements might as well unveil a new area of study and aid in the quest for gender equality in the Iraqi workplace. This paper provides scientific evidence that more than 41% of all job advertisements in Iraq commit gender discrimination. The majority of them indirectly favor male candidates. Additionally, the nature of the vacancies for which women are preferred is different from the ones that target men. The adverts generally try to segregate women into non-managerial and administrative jobs. The study also infers a statistically significant correlation between the language of the advertisement and gender discrimination rate.

**Keywords:** Recruitment, Job Advertisements, Direct Gender Discrimination, Indirect Gender Discrimination, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, The Language of Job Advertisements.

## 1. Introduction

In Iraq, the practice of gender discrimination is illegal. The Iraqi constitution states that all Iraqis are equal regardless of their gender and any act of discrimination is prohibited (Iraqi Const. art. 14, 2005; Iraqi Const. art. 16, 2005). However,

gender discrimination is prevalent in many aspects of work life in Iraq. One of the reasons is the ineffective implementation of the relevant regulations, because of weak public institutions (Fatafta, 2018). Another reason is the lack of legal education and awareness of relevant individual rights (Women in Iraq Factsheet, 2013). These and various sociocultural barriers are among the reasons that allow organizations operating in Iraq to commit gender discrimination in their job vacancy promotions.

Gender discrimination in job advertisements is when a vacancy announcement shows favouritism to a particular gender. It can be either direct or indirect. Direct gender discrimination is when employers publicly call for one gender and/or discourage the other. However, nowadays gender discrimination in recruitment advertisements is subtler (Regmi & Naidoo, 2008; Gaucher *et al.*, 2011; Pager & Western, 2012). Indirect gender discrimination is when employers use subtle signs, such as qualities attributable to one specific gender, without stipulating the preferred gender of the applicants. This research focuses on both direct and indirect sex favouritism in the design of such advertisements in Iraq.

Although research on the matter is fairly advanced in other parts of the world; in the Middle East, it is underexplored at best. Not enough scientifically valid content has been published about the nature of gender-biased advertisements in the area. Similarly, the relationship between the use of the language of the advertisement and gender discrimination tendency lacks adequate scientific research. We deliberate that studying the phenomenon could contribute to gender equality at Iraqi workplace and contribute to the deeper understanding of the gendered wording of job advertisements.

To fill this knowledge gap, this research has collected, content-coded and analysed more than one thousand job advertisements from all over Iraq. It is aimed to settle important questions regarding the nature of discrimination in the job advertisements in Iraq. Some of these questions included the rate of gender discrimination, the targeted gender and whether the discrimination rate corresponds with the level and the segment of the job being promoted. It also tried to understand the correlation between the choice of language (English, as a main language of business in the country, Kurdish and Arabic, the two main official languages of Iraq) in the call for job applicants and the likelihood of committing gender discrimination.

The issue of gender discrimination during recruitment is very important in the Iraqi context, as women are very underrepresented in the country's job market. The Iraqi labour force consists of 72% males and only 13% females who are currently working or actively seeking jobs (Iraq Knowledge Network Survey, 2011) without much prospect for positive change (Iraq Human Development Report 2014, 2014). This phenomenon can harm the individuals and their families (Iraq Knowledge Network Survey, 2011). Against this backdrop, this research examined one important area of employment practice, which is recruitment advertising. In view of the fact that the way employers design their recruitment messages can have a significant impact on the number of applicants, their gender mix and capabilities. It can also influence the country's labour force.

This paper starts by first reviewing the relevant literature around the topic followed by an in-depth explanation of the methods used for data collection, organization, analysis and interpretation. The detailed discussions of the findings of this research are followed by the conclusions and the recommendations alongside the authors' notes for better practice and further research at the end of the paper.

## 2. Literature Review

Recent research on the topic has been carried out in many different countries in Asia, Europe and America, excluding any Middle Eastern country, up to the researchers' knowledge. The studies propose that the practice of gender discrimination in job advertisements is both present and has important negative outcomes.

Various studies claim that organizations option for attracting a specific gender right from the recruitment stage almost all over the world, and the majority of organizations tend to try to attract male applicants. For instance, Gao (2008) and Woodhams *et al.* (2009) study the Chinese labour market for the symptoms of sex discrimination in job advertisements to find out that nearly 40% of job advertisements specify the gender sought for, the majority of which seek male applicants. Lawler (1996), Grün (2004) Hossain and Kusakabe (2005) and Anand (2013) examine employment statements in Thailand, Singapore, Africa and India to come up with similar inferences. Similarly, the gender-differentiated wording of job advertisements is considered both present and significant in some European countries such as England (Stidder, 2005; Regmi, 2009), Denmark (Askehave & Zethsen, 2014) and Germany (Horvath & Sczesny, 2015). In a similar fashion, in the United States of America and Canada gendered wording is used in job recruitment materials (Gaucher *et al.*, 2011).

The only exception seems to be Spain. García-Izquierdo *et al.* (2015) state that their research could not verify such practices in Spanish electronic recruitment documents. However, their study mainly focuses on the recruitment messages on the websites of companies listed on the Spanish Stock Exchange. Listed companies are usually subject to more scrutiny. Therefore, they are probably more prudent when discriminating against one gender. Moreover, they test

for discriminatory language against women only. Hence, their findings cannot infer lack of gender discrimination against males and by organizations that are not listed on the stock exchange. Accordingly, the nonexistence of gendered wording of job advertisements in Spain cannot be verified.

Regardless of the gender preferred, gender discrimination in job advertisements can lead to many negative outcomes. One such repercussion is reducing the size of the generated pool of applicants. For, women are less likely to apply for jobs that use more masculine terms (Born & Taris, 2010; Gaucher *et al.*, 2011). This does not apply to women only. Men also avoid applying for positions that favour female applicants (Bem & Bem, 1973). Additionally, just portraying a sex in a job advertisement, regardless of whether it is a male or female, can drive both men and women away even if it is their gender that is being called for (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Along with the reduction in the size of the pool, the talent level of the applicants is likely to drop as well.

The second drawback of the gendered wording of job advertisements is maintaining and increasing gender inequality and stereotypical ideas about masculinity and femininity at the workplace. Researchers argue that being gender-biased at the first stage of recruitment, the vacancy announcement, is both an important symptom of and a cause for gender inequality (Woodhams *et al.*, 2009; Gómez-Mejía *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, it can be an indicator of an organization's detachment from fair-hiring practices (Leong *et al.*, 2004).

Discrimination against women in Iraq is related to the traditional culture and deeply rooted in the society; that establishes the hierarchical relationship between male and female. Discrimination has been a cultural tradition that is accepted by women and applied by men as social value. Iraq is a religious and male dominated society where women are considered as secondary to men. Preference of son birth is more common almost in every community. Gender based discrimination in different forms starts right after the birth and it continues throughout the life cycle. There is popular saying in Iraqi "Chhora pae khasi, chhori pae farsi" which literally meaning a delivered women will get goat and pumpkin to eat if she gives birth of boy and daughter, respectively. There are different sets of behaviours for boys and girls to perform. Such discrimination has helped to establish the hierarchical relationship between men and women in the society and also helped to create many rigid gender norms that restrict women's opportunities and stifle their development in the private and public sphere.

Furthermore, the gendered wording used in job recruitment materials has served as a reason to keep women away from traditionally male-dominated occupations (Gaucher *et al.*, 2011). This, in turn, leads to gender segregation of jobs. Authors distinguish between two types of gender segregation, vertical and horizontal; both of which are attributable to gender discrimination in recruitment. Horizontal gender segregation refers to sorting men and women into different jobs. While vertical segregation is sorting men and women between different managerial hierarchies (Fernandez & Sosa, 2005; Hossain & Kusakabe, 2005; Gao, 2008; Woodhams *et al.*, 2009; Gaucher *et al.*, 2011). The consequences of gender segregation range from hesitant applicants, under satisfied workers to economic inefficiencies (Hegewisch *et al.*, 2010).

The current research focuses on a particular geography whose labour market is of a unique structure that is underexplored in the area of gender discrimination at recruitment stages. It also focuses on the relationship between the use of a particular language and the tendency to discriminate between the genders. Understanding these is likely to aid in gender-fair recruitment in Iraqi job market and improving both the labour force and the recruiters.

The definitions of the important variables used in this paper are provided as follows:

Gender-biased language has been found to have detrimental effects for women, for example, in decision making during the hiring process: Early work by Bem and Bem (1973) showed that explicit gender references in job advertisements discouraged female U.S. university students from applying for typically male positions. Recent studies obtained similar results with more subtle gender references: An agentic compared with communal wording of job advertisements led to a lower level of anticipated belongingness and to a lower level of job appeal in female Canadian psychology students (Gaucher *et al.*, 2011). Job advertisements in the masculine (he instead of he and she) decreased female U.S. students' identification with the job and their motivation to pursue the respective career (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011).

Gender discrimination in the world can be seen in different religions, countries and communities. As indicated by Waltke, ancient Jewish prayed every morning saying "Thank you lord that I was not born a woman; Christian boys are taken to the special room of the church, but the girls are not during the name giving ceremony; women are not supposed to be priest or father in temples and church. The situation of the gender discrimination has been worsened with the development of science and technology as it predicts the sex of a foetus before it turns to a baby. In 1978 and 1983, seventy-eight thousand foetuses were aborted in Mumbai, as they were known as female foetus.

The first point to identify about recruitment is that it is a process with several key stages, all of which work in co-operation to improve one's chances of finding the best candidates available for any advertised position. The candidates are required to go through various stages, and they are given certain tasks or go through various rounds of interviews,

which they have to accomplish in order to get selected. In some cases, final round of interviews, include only two people, one is selected and the other one gets rejected.

Job advertisement is an announcement that informs people that a certain job position is available. It is written in an engaging tone, and it contains information not only about the job position, but also about your company and the benefits you offer.

### 3. Methodology

The researchers wanted to find answers for important questions related to the rate of direct and indirect gender discrimination in vacancy announcements in Iraq and whether the nature of this discrimination changes in accordance to variables such as job level, job segment and the sector in which the recruiting organization operates. This study is conducted with the hope of contributing to gender equality at the workplace in Iraq and the wider region. The current study adopts a content coding and analysis method that depends on the analysis of job advertisements (n=1015) by organizations operating in Iraq published in the leading recruitment websites and social media pages for a period of about four consecutive months from June to October 2017. The analysis is conducted using descriptive statistics and tested using simple cross tabulation method. Although the topic has been studied in various countries and contexts, it lacks academic attention in the Middle East, which can be seen as a unique area for research. Also, this research is the first attempt, as far as we are aware of, to comprehend the correlation between the choice of language (English, Arabic or Kurdish) and gender-biased wording of vacancy announcements. Understanding the relationship between language and gender discrimination in job advertisements might as well unveil a new area of study and aid in the quest for gender equality in the Iraqi workplace. Thus, the research was conducted using content-coding and analysis method, a method used by the majority of the researchers who have conducted similar research in other countries (Bem & Bem, 1973; Grün, 2004; Leong *et al.*, 2004; Gao, 2008; Gaucher *et al.*, 2011; Anand, 2013; Askehave & Zethsen, 2014). We content-coded every job advertisement we could find on the leading recruitment websites and the leading social media pages throughout Iraq from the period of June to October 2017. The choice of the period was out of convenience. We used random sampling for data collection as described hereinafter.

First, a focus group of 7 persons was entrusted with finding the leading recruitment websites and relevant social media pages. The group included people from different backgrounds all of whom were seeking jobs when the focus group was conducted. They suggested the sources shown in Appendix one alongside the reasons for their choices. Their suggested sources were used to collect the samples from.

After that, around 10100 job advertisements were downloaded and screened by one of the researchers. However, only the advertisements containing the required information were content-coded (n=1015). The required information included job descriptions and requirements, person specifications, seniority level and the profile of the hiring organization. The content-coding was done by one person (the researcher mentioned above) for consistency purposes. To help with the process, a special Google Form was created, a similar copy of which is attached in Appendix two.

During the coding process, any advertisement that included reference to one gender such as male/female or men/women in any language was labelled as a direct discriminator. When direct discrimination was found, there were no further attempts to detect indirect discrimination, assuming it unnecessary.

For indirect discrimination, we used the same list of vocabularies presented by Gaucher *et al.* (2011) in their similar research. The list was translated to Arabic and Kurdish to check the non-English content. According to the aforementioned list, any advertisement that contained more feminine terms that refer to communication, care, commitment and passion than masculine terms such as leadership, command, control and analytical skills were considered indirect gender biasedness in favour of female applicants and vice-versa. Alongside this list, any advertisement that asked for owning a car or having a driving license was considered sexist in favour of men. For, Iraqi women drive to a much lesser degree compared to their male counterparts. For example, in Kurdistan Region, probably the most economically active region in the country (Aziz *et al.*, 2017; Ahmad & Cheng, 2018). The ratio of women having driving licence is probably much more at least at the past few years. In the other parts of Iraq, the odds are much less in favor of women (Tahir, 2013). Finally, any job advertisement that required the ability to travel within and outside the country or required the applicant to be able to stay onsite overnight was considered indirect gender discrimination against women. Since Iraqi women have too many social and religious constraints against that.

The research question related to understanding the relationship between the language of the advertisement (Arabic, Kurdish, or English) and gender discrimination rate is considered complex, for gender is expressed in different ways in each language. For instance, there are male and female suffixed and stand-alone pronouns in the Arabic language. Yet, when Arabic speakers do not want to discriminate, they usually use male pronouns (Sibawayh, 1988). Therefore, we did not interpret the use of male pronouns as a sign of direct discrimination in the Arabic advertisements. However, the use of the female pronouns is interpreted as direct discrimination in favour of women. Nevertheless, the case is different in

the English language. Therefore, any use of male/female pronouns is interpreted as a sign of direct discrimination. In contrary to both Arabic and English languages, there are no dedicated male/female pronouns in the Kurdish language<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, only words like male/female, man/woman and lady/gentleman were considered direct discrimination.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

Job postings in Iraq are written in any of the three aforementioned languages or a combination of any two. The English language is considered the most popular language for advertising vacancies. As, around 40% of them were written in English. The second most popular language of the job advertising is Arabic followed by Kurdish at 35% and 21% respectively. The rest of the advertisements are either bilingual or multilingual, combining two or more of the three languages. Interestingly, even organizations located in Iraqi Kurdistan use English and Arabic languages more often than the local language in their job advertisements. This could be due to the weakness of business Kurdish and/or Iraq's subsequent regimes' efforts to Arabize the Kurdish region.

According to our data, the retail sector seems to be the biggest recruiter, as more than 15% of the job advertisements come from that sector alone. Correspondingly, the current status of Iraq has attracted many local and international charity and non-profit organizations. Therefore, this sector has had the second largest rate of job advertisements during the period of this research.

The segments and the hierarchical levels of the jobs being advertised vary as well. The majority of the recruiters look for professionals at almost 37% followed by management positions at a little less than 29%. Administrative jobs and sales and marketing come last at 18.7% and 16% respectively. Furthermore, the absolute majority of advertised jobs fall into the non-managerial level category. When it comes to management positions, recruitment messages for first-line management jobs are more popular than middle and top management ones. During the period of this research, only 4.2% of the organizations were looking to hire top managers, while 16% and 14% of them were looking to hire functional and middle managers respectively.

In what follows, our findings are presented and discussed. This section is divided into two parts. Part one discusses the nature of the practice in Iraq and part two analyses the relationship between the use of language and discriminatory content.

#### 4.1. The Nature of Gender Discrimination in Recruitment Advertisements

##### 4.1.1. Discrimination Level

A little over 41% of all recruitment advertisements state their favouritism for one specific gender. This rate, despite the fact that it is high, is a little lower than countries such as Thailand, Singapore and a few other countries mentioned in this paper. Results also indicate that establishments operating in Iraq are less likely to commit indirect sex favouritism. As, only 14% of the organizations stress qualities that are attributable to one specific gender without directly specifying the gender they are seeking. The reason might be the relative freedom organizations possess to commit direct gender favouritism without the fear of being persecuted, as discussed earlier.

In India, organizations seek female candidates (Anand, 2013). Nevertheless, in China organizations look for male applicants (Gao, 2008; Woodhams *et al.*, 2009). Similar to China, organizations operating in Iraq show gender favouritism towards men. Of the advertisements that favour one gender only, 52.5% of them favour men and the other 47.5% favour female candidates. A more interesting finding is when organizations want to discriminate for females, they are more likely to do so publicly at 83.4%. This could be the result of the relatively unique use of pronouns in the Arabic language, especially that job advertisements in Arabic tend to be more in favour of females (direct discrimination).

##### 4.1.2. Discrimination and the Job Hierarchy

The data presented in Table 1 shows that organizations operating in Iraq are trying to drive women away from top management positions towards lower-level jobs, as not even a single job advertisement was found to publicly favour female applicants for top management positions. On contrary, almost 65% of them state they favour female applicants for non-managerial jobs.

Table 1. Direct and Indirect Gender Discrimination According to the Job Level.

| Type | Gender | Job level      |                   |                       |                |
|------|--------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|      |        | Top management | Middle management | First-line management | Non-managerial |
|      |        |                |                   |                       |                |

<sup>1</sup> This is true for the Sorani dialect that is spoken by the majority of the Kurds living in Iraq. In the other dialects, there are dedicated male/female pronouns.

|                         |        |            |            |            |             |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Direct discrimination   | Male   | 8 (100%)   | 12 (57.1%) | 13 (52.0%) | 79 (35.1%)  |
|                         | Female | 0 (0.0%)   | 9 (42.9%)  | 12 (48.0%) | 146 (64.9%) |
| Indirect discrimination | Male   | 8 (80.0%)  | 22 (75.9%) | 21 (65.6%) | 58 (84.1%)  |
|                         | Female | 2 (20.0%)  | 7 (24.1%)  | 11 (34.4%) | 11 (15.9%)  |
| Total                   | Male   | 16 (88.9%) | 34 (68.0%) | 34 (59.6%) | 137 (46.6%) |
|                         | Female | 2 (11.1%)  | 16 (32.0%) | 23 (40.4%) | 157 (53.4%) |

A consequence of this is the vertical segregation of women in the lower managerial positions, while men occupy the decision centres. One of the reasons this happens, which is related to the wording of job advertisements, is the fact that masculine wording of advertisements for middle and top management positions can make women think they are less fit for the job posted (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Horvath & Sczesny, 2015). This phenomenon is already apparent in some sectors of Iraq. According to Abdullah (2015), in the political sphere and in the judiciary system of Iraq, women do not have decision making power. For instance, about 90% of the judges and the top leaders of the political parties are men. This is because the judges and those of top managerial posts are appointed by decision makers and political consensus. You rarely can find job advertisements for the public sector. However, lower in the hierarchy, female representation could go up to 60 %. The current research suggests this phenomenon could partially. But we rarely can find job advertisements for the government sector. This practice, as (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Zieleńska, 2012; Horvath & Sczesny, 2015) explain, is due to the misbelief that men are more fit for leadership positions; despite lack of scientific evidence supporting this claim.

#### 4.1.3. Discrimination and the Job Segment

Table 2. Direct and Indirect Gender Discrimination According to the Job Segment.

| Does the advert discriminate? |        | What segment would the advertised job fall into? |            |                |              |
|-------------------------------|--------|--|------------|----------------|--------------|
|                               |        | Sales and marketing                              | Management | Administrative | Professional |
| Direct discrimination         | Male   | 28 (41.8%)                                       | 20 (54.1%) | 19 (28.8%)     | 45 (41.3%)   |
|                               | Female | 39 (58.2%)                                       | 17 (45.9%) | 47 (71.2%)     | 64 (58.7%)   |
| Indirect discrimination       | Male   | 23 (100.0%)                                      | 42 (70.0%) | 7 (46.7%)      | 37 (88.1%)   |
|                               | Female | 0 (0.0%)   | 18 (30.0%) | 8 (53.3%)      | 5 (11.9%)    |
| Total                         | Male   | 51 (56.7%)                                       | 62 (63.9%) | 26 (32.1%)     | 82 (54.3%)   |
|                               | Female | 39 (43.3%)                                       | 35 (36.1%) | 55 (67.9%)     | 69 (45.7%)   |

Results in Table 2 show that only administrative job advertisements seek female applicants, while every other segment commits discrimination against them. As mentioned earlier, this sector counts for less than 19% of the job postings. This could partially explain why women are so underrepresented in Iraqi job market. These results are similar to many other such studies done elsewhere (Gao, 2008; Leong *et al.*, 2004; Anand, 2013). This practice is thought to be one of the major reasons behind the formation and persistence of gender segmentation and segregation (Hossain & Kusakabe, 2005), especially horizontal segregation where Iraqi women are more likely to be concentrated in administrative jobs.

#### 4.2. The Correlation Between Language and Discriminatory Content

It could be because of the culture, the language structure or the organizational atmosphere that there is a significant relationship between the level of discriminatory content and the language being used to advertise. The results in Table 3 show that Kurdish advertisements seem to commit the most direct discrimination at 45% followed by Arabic advertisements. Nonetheless, English advertisements are the highest in committing indirect discrimination at 20 %, but lowest in doing direct discrimination. This phenomenon was noticeable during the content-coding process too. For example, the same organization posting the same or very similar job openings directly discriminates when using Arabic and/or Kurdish languages but is much more prudent when using the English language.

If we assume that foreign-owned entities use the English language more often in their advertising, we might be able to divulge that foreign organizations are less likely to discriminate between the genders, since these organizations usually try to set good examples for the local ones in terms of gender-fair recruitment (Gao, 2008). It is likely that these organizations are responsible to abide by the gender discrimination rules in their home countries too. However, the current research cannot verify this practice in Iraq. Another likely reason is that it is popular for the non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to use English as the main language of vacancy announcements and people would expect the

third sector organizations to be more gender-fair. This practice might be the NGOs' attempt to stay up to those expectations. However, making valid assumptions for this case is beyond the scope of the current research.

Table 3. The Choice of Language and the Discriminatory Content.

| Type                    | The language of the advert |            |             |            | Total       |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
|                         | Arabic                     | Kurdish    | English     | Bilingual  |             |
| Direct discrimination   | 127 (35.7%)                | 94 (45.0%) | 51 (12.4%)  | 10 (26.3%) | 282 (27.8%) |
| Indirect discrimination | 29 (8.1%)                  | 23 (11.0%) | 85 (20.7%)  | 4 (10.5%)  | 141 (13.9%) |
| No discrimination       | 200 (56.2%)                | 92 (44.0%) | 275 (66.9%) | 24 (63.2%) | 591 (58.3%) |

Even though Kurdish is the formal language of the Kurdistan Region and the advertisements written in this language portray the highest rate of gender biasedness, it cannot be automatically assumed that organizations located in Kurdistan are more discriminative than those located in the other parts of Iraq. In fact, the analyses revealed that organizations all over Iraq are almost equally discriminative regardless of their location. The only difference between the Kurdish region and the rest of Iraq is that organizations located in Kurdistan are more discrete than the later in doing so.

Additional suggestions should be developed and proposed by each conference's Safety Officer in consultation with the conference organizing committee. Moreover, conference organizers can assess the extent of diversity programming at each delegates' home institution to develop a reference point for how knowledgeable delegates are of gender disparity through a short survey during the registration period. For example, surveys could ask if participants have a leaky pipeline program at their institution or what tactics they have encountered at other conferences, including any diversity trainings they have completed.

## 5. Conclusions

This research content-coded more than a thousand job advertisements from Iraq's different organizations. Then, the data was analysed and tested to settle questions related to the level and the nature of the gender-biased wording of job advertisements published on the leading recruitments websites and social media pages all over Iraq. The first purpose of the paper was to answer important questions about the level of discrimination and whether it changes in accordance with the nature of the job opening. The second purpose was to find the correlation between the use of language and the tendency to discriminate between the genders by the recruiters in their job advertisements.

It was concluded that gender discrimination is present in more than 41% of the job advertisements in Iraq. Of those gender-biased job announcements, more than 52% seek male applicants. This might be one of the reasons why women are so underrepresented in Iraqi labour force. It also concluded that women are not only discriminated against in numbers, but the nature of the discrimination is less in their favour. Since only the advertisements that promote vacancies in administration and lower level or non-managerial positions try to attract female applicants, while organizations try attracting male applicants for management and professional vacancies. This has led to segregating women in non-managerial and administrative jobs in the country.

This research also inferred that the use of a particular language has a significant impact on the discriminatory content in job advertisements in Iraq. Since advertisements written in Kurdish are more discriminative than the ones written in the Arabic language while English job advertisements contain the least amount of discriminatory content. Furthermore, Kurdish and Arabic advertisements are more direct in their discrimination, while organizations are more discrete in their discrimination attempts when they use English in their advertisements.

Finally, this study concluded that organizations all over Iraq are equally discriminative, judging the geographic location an irrelevant factor on the rate of the gender-biased wording of the job advertisements in the country. The only exception was that organizations in Kurdistan are more indirect in their discrimination.

## 6. Recommendations for Practice and Further Research

Judging from the findings of this research, we believe it is the responsibility of individuals, businesses, NGO's and the government together to be aware of the status-quo that undermines the Iraqi job market and prevents women from getting the jobs they are worthy of. The hope is for all the parties to work together to create equal opportunities for the genders.

We advocate that it is the government's responsibility to pass and implement relevant equal opportunity laws for Iraqi workplace. Also, the government and the NGO's have to make sure that individuals are well aware of their legal rights, especially the ones related to equal opportunities at the recruitment stage. They also have to change the cultural values that encourage gender discrimination in recruitment. These approaches, we presume, will minimize the practice of

gender discrimination in job postings across Iraq.

Furthermore, the recruiters should actively try to avoid the misconception of women being fit for lower positions only. They should follow the best practices in this regard. One way to make sure that their advertisements are discrimination-free is to post their job vacancies in more than one language.

We also recommend further research to be carried out in this regard. First, research should be conducted to understand the differences between local and foreign organizations in terms of gender discrimination in job advertisements. Also, a scientific understanding of whether NGOs are more gender-fair in their recruitment messages is important. These studies will help determine whether the international organizations and the NGOs can be used as role models for the Iraqi organizations.

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