

A Study on "Image of the Egyptian Woman in Mass Media"

BY AWATEF ABDEL-RAHMAN⁽¹⁾

The author introduces her study with a general foreword about the Egyptian woman's role in development. She says that in spite of the large increase in the number of literate and working women in Egypt, their actual participation in the developmental process remains highly limited. Repeated claims from international groups and conferences, emphasizing the necessity of allowing them more effective participation, have met with little success.

Since 1956, women's right to participate in public affairs and development activities, on the same basis as men, has been recognized. Their political rights were officially proclaimed in 1956. The July Revolution of 1956 gave them equal rights with men in government employment. Between 1966 and 1970, the number of working women in the various industrial enterprises increased from 4% to 6% or more. Yet their contribution to national development is checked by various factors: 1) The level of their wages remains comparatively low because of inadequate training. 2) The law of equal salaries for equal work is not always applied in the private sector. 3) Responsible officers in administration-production sectors are hesitant about appointing women to leadership positions. 4) Modern public nurseries for the children of working women are scarce. 5) There is a lack of orientation centers which would help students choose their professions in conformity with local needs. 6) Feminine organizations, in spite of persistent efforts, have not realized all the necessary progress in reaching the laboring and rural classes. 7) The law of personal status by giving the husband the privilege of divorce has limited woman's freedom of action and development.

Image of woman in mass media

In handling this project, the author chose three representative

Egyptian papers: Al-Ahram, Al-Akhbar, the women's magazine Hawwa' (Eve); studied the contents of the woman's page in 10% of the issues between 1965 and 1976.

In Al-Ahram, three samples were studied:

Sample I: representing the first 3 months of 1965.

Main topics: women's social activities, fashion, make-up, food preparation, health and sports.

Main interest: middle class woman.

Sample II: April, May, June 1970.

Smaller space given to woman's page.

Emphasis on family problems: school examinations, woman and old age.

More room to woman's charitable activities in rural districts.

Sample III: July, August, September 1975.

More interest in woman's activities in economic and cultural fields.

Same interest in traditional topics: fashions, make-up, etc.

Increased space for advertisements

imposed decreased space for woman's activities.

Comments: The working woman is badly neglected, advertisements occupy the larger space.

Woman's page in Al-Akhbar: similar to the one in Al-Ahram.

Hawwa' magazine

Samples taken from 1971, 1972, 1976 issues.

Permanent topics: women's problems, around the world with women, horoscopes, fashions, short story, ads, aesthetics, health, letter from Europe (disconnected after 1973).

New topics: meeting prominent figures, social work, education, family laws, problems of the working woman, problems of motherhood and childhood, abnormal behavior of youth.

New topics occupy 10% of the entire magazine.

Comments:

Contents concentrate on interests and problems of urban society and middle class women.

High proportion of space given to advertisements, cosmetics and beauty products.

The working women in the small and middle bourgeoisie, including 10% of the whole working class among women, are now faced with the problem of adjustment between housework and outside work. The press should try to solve the problem of these women by inducing a change in men's mentality, so they may agree to share house duties with their working wives. It should also claim amendment of family laws, mainly those which discriminate between husband and wife in the rights of divorce, custody and inheritance.

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1. "Indigenous Midwives in Lebanon (Eng.)

by Mary Chamie and Jamal K. Harfouche

submitted to Smithsonian Institute, Jul. 31, 1976

Photocopy of a study of 222 pages, analyzing the background characteristics of Lebanese "dayahs" (indigenous midwives), their training, delivery practices, child care and family planning techniques; containing figures, tables and an appendix illustrating and demonstrating the various topics.

2. A Report on the activities of the Center for Women's Studies -

Lectures and Seminars - (Eng.) Center for Women's Studies, Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Tokyo, Japan, 1978.

3. A summary of two studies (Eng.) on "Women in administrative posts" and "Women in industry" in Pakistan,

prepared by Dr Sabeeha Hafeez, assistant professor of sociology, University of Karachi.

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"Population Studies"

No. 43, Apr.-June 1978

Arabic-English quarterly review

Issued by the Supreme Council for Population & Family Planning Cairo - ARE.

Two facts emerge from the latest population studies presented in this issue:

1 - Egypt is experiencing a heavy rural-urban migration trend. Population pressure on the land is a main cause of out-migration. Urban centers are growing at a much faster rate than the rest of the country (p. 35).

2 - Egypt is one of the countries where the death rate is dropping without being accompanied by a corresponding decline in the birth rate. This has led to a stage of population explosion which creates grave economic and social problems. (p. 37-39).

The following conclusions are obtained from a study prepared by Dr. Wafa Hussein el-Zomar, associate professor of sociology at Cairo University and published in this issue:

Even with a very rapid fertility decline, the population of Egypt will continue to grow.

If the average fertility patterns that are currently becoming commonplace on the developed countries are achieved in Egypt by the end of this century, the population will double in size and it might reach 2.38 times its 1975 size by the middle of the next century. Otherwise if the present fertility rate continues, the population will be 5 times its present number by the year 2065.

Mortality will continue to decline.

Eventually an average family size of two children will be the norm.

Once the two child family norm is attained, the corresponding level of fertility will be maintained.

Socio-economic development plays a role in demographic transition. There is on the one hand the Malthus theory which says that economic development promotes fertility. On the other hand, there is the Thompson and Davis school which asserts the contrary. Studies have shown that if the Malthus theory is true during the early stages of socio-economic development, it does not apply to the later stages when development succeeds in effecting the decline of both death and fertility rates, thus confirming the Thompson and Davis theory.

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