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Libya's Female Unemployment Rate during the Covid-19 Pandemic, Compared with Previous Years

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Abstract:

The issue of unemployment is among the most important and urgent challenges facing the Libyan state, especially as it coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, The MENA region faces both the highest overall unemployment levels and the widest gender gap worldwide. Hence, the current study aims to analyze the unemployment rate developed during the Corona pandemic among females in Libya, through data obtained from secondary data Comparison among the years (2011-2020). The results show that the unemployment rates in the workforce in Libya for women are higher than those for men and that in the year 2020 in which Covid-19 spread, the unemployment rate for men increased, also same for women. in addition, the Unemployment rate for females in Libya has gradually decreased, from 2016, but in 2020 when Covid-19 swept the country, which increased the Unemployment rate for females in Libya, as the rate in 2019 was equal to 24.57, while it suddenly increased in 2020 to 24.66.

Keywords: Female unemployment rate in Libya, covid-19 pandemics

1. Introduction

The war on unemployment at the turn of the new century is becoming a growing priority of economic policies in the majority of the highly-developed and developed world economies. The same target is being pursued by the less developed economies, although their determinants of unemployment are quite different. Unemployment is a situation where someone belongs to the labor force and wants to get a job, but they have not got the job. Unemployment can occur due to imbalances in the labor market. This shows that the number of workers offered exceeds the number of workers requested. Unemployment is a measure that is done if someone does not have a job, but they are doing an active effort in the last four weeks to find work. The unemployment rate measures the underutilization of the labor supply, reflecting the inability of those working-age populations who are actively seeking work to find employment.

Unemployment is defined as all persons not classified as employed who during the reference period desired to work and were seeking work, whether they had worked before or not (Singh, 2019; 2020, عبد). Persons not in the labor force are defined as all the remaining persons not considered as employed or unemployed. They are classified as housewives, students, inactive engaged in domestic work, retired, disabled, and others. Unemployment is the presence of a workforce in and out of the working force who is willing to work from the current wage and cannot find a job, Types of unemployment can be defined as voluntary unemployment, involuntary unemployment, frictional unemployment, cyclical unemployment, seasonal unemployment, technological unemployment, structural unemployment, and hidden unemployment (Soylu, Çakmak, & Okur, 2018; Woldetensay, 2020).

Arab countries face many challenges in achieving these policies, including high population growth rates, fluctuating economic growth rates, fluctuating global oil prices, the collapse of global stock markets, high unemployment rates among youth and women in light of declining investments and job creation, and high immigration flows to Arab countries, etc. (Fakih, Haimoun, & Kassem, 2020).

Although unemployment affects the youth in general, females are the most affected. Unemployment rates among females in Arab countries are much higher than rates for males and are among the highest rates in the world. Female unemployment in Arab countries reached (20.0%) in 2019, compared to (5.6%) at the world level (Kasoolu, Hausmann, O'Brien, & Santos, 2019). Therefore, the high unemployment rates among youth and females are a concern for policymakers at the national level in Arab countries (Arab, 2020; Haseena & Meera Bai, 2019).

Libya is a large country with a population of 6 422 772 (2011), 90% of whom live in the coastal 10% of the land area. The population density is about 50 people per km, Libya is an upper-middle-income country, with the highest per

capita gross domestic product (GDP) in Africa as a result of the oil resources (Secretariat, 2020; Tabutin, Masquelier, Grieve, & Reeve, 2017).

However, following the 2011 uprising, unemployment has increased steadily in Libya, reaching 19.0 percent, or 358,300 individuals, in 2012, up from an estimated 13.5 percent in 2010. Libya's unemployment rate is one of the highest among middle-income countries. Lower than that of South Africa 25 percent, unemployment in Libya is comparable to that of Tunisia 18 percent but double the rate in Turkey 9 percent (BANK, 2015; Jacobsen).

The issue of unemployment and limited job numbers is among the most important and urgent challenges facing the Libyan state (Hüsken, 2017). The leading reasons for unemployment in Libya are increased population growth, where the 2000 and 2006 censuses show a growth rate of approximately 2.9%, coupled with increased growth in the labor force given the high number of young new entrants to the labor market every year. And Libyan state policies that deliberately marginalized the role of the private sector in economic activity and regulations that prohibit or prevent the establishment of Libyan private sector businesses, also the explanation for the increased level of unemployment is the result of security conditions in Libya, the economic infrastructure was degraded significantly during the civil war and economic uncertainty remains very high. Even before the Libyan conflict, the country was facing profound challenges in terms of decent work. These challenges included high unemployment rates, especially among the youth, and high inflows of immigrant labor, Libya is one of the main hubs for irregular migrants in Africa, especially those on their way to Europe (Ajaali, 2014; Woldemichael, Jodlowski, & Shimeles, 2017).

Covid-19 is a dangerous disease caused by the coronavirus, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) – CoV - 2, which is a respiratory pathogen (parasitic microorganism) that can be transmitted to humans and animals. Cases of this new virus were first discovered in Wuhan, the People's Republic of China on 31 December 2019 according to WHO (Alanagreh, Alzoughool, & Atoum, 2020).

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization characterized Covid-19 as a pandemic (WHO, Opening Remarks, 2020). In light of the changes that the world has gone through, since the emergence of the Coronavirus 'Covid-19' and its spread among all countries, it seemed that its economic and social repercussions will be significant and influential at the global and national levels, as what the outbreak imposed by taking a package of precautionary measures and measures was 'isolation Quarantine/ social distancing/travel ban / total closure of all state institutions:' schools, universities, companies, factories, and places of entertainment negatively affected the economies of all countries of the world, and brought the global system into a state of recession, resulting in an impact on the economic and social system, Libya extended as well as all countries of the world (Jakobsson, Malm, Furberg, Ekelund, & Svensson, 2020).

The Libyan National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in Libya on 24 March 2020 in the capital city of Tripoli. According to NCDC, case zero was a 73-year-old Libyan male who visited Saudi Arabia. The majority of new confirmed cases are people who have come into contact with confirmed cases (Khalifa et al., 2021).

There, he encountered other people during the religious gathering in February 2020. He returned to Libya on March 4, 2020, and he developed symptoms almost 2 weeks later. Since then, the number of cases has increased steadily, and by April 16, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Libya was 49. And by the end of June, the total number of confirmed cases rising to 824, and at the close of 2020, the total number of confirmed cases was reached 100,277 cases. (Khalifa, Omrani, & Bashagha, 2021).

The United Nations Secretary-General report on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) of May 2020, covering the period January – May 2020 stated: the sustainability of the economic situation in Libya is becoming increasingly tenuous, and the situation will be further exacerbated by Covid-19 (Mezran & Perteghella, 2020; UNSMIL, 2020).

Historically, in terms of unemployment, we find that the period associated with the Great Pandemic of 1870–1875 and the Russian flu shows a more persistent, higher level of unemployment than in the subsequent period with no major pandemics reported. Moreover, after the Spanish flu pandemic and the First World War, unemployment suffered an increase in level and persistence—that is, unemployment increased, and it became more rooted. This effect is not detected after the Second World War, which points to the relevance of the effect of the shock on unemployment due to the Spanish flu pandemic. The results suggest that once the number of unemployed increases, it is a long and arduous process to return to employment levels before the pandemic (Rodríguez-Caballero & Vera-Valdés, 2020).

Although prevention and preparedness measures taken with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic were introduced by authorities with the support of the United Nations, Libya remained at extremely high risk. The situation was compounded by increasing levels of fighting and insecurity, political fragmentation, and a weak and overstretched health system. The pandemic led to a loss of income for segments of society, food shortages, and an increase in the price of basic commodities. In addition, measures to restrict the spread of Covid-19 hampered access to humanitarian aid and the movement of medical and humanitarian personnel (UNSMIL, 2020). Hence, the current study aims to study Disclosure of whether the unemployment rate developed during the Corona pandemic among women in Libya, through data obtained Pertaining to the subject of study in Libya.

2. Methodology

The method of this research is quantitative research which the result of the research will be processed and analyzed to conclude. This means that the research is emphasized in numeric. It means that we should conduct quantitative research with the philosophy of positivism with the objective phenomenon.

The researcher used secondary data on unemployment rates for women in Libya for specific periods (2011-2020). At present, a lot of secondary data are being collected and archived by researchers all over the world for research that is

becoming more widespread (Andrews, 2000). Secondary data are collected by someone else for his primary research purposes which provide basic research principles. Researchers who have limited time and resources can use secondary data for their research. For the collection of secondary data, we have used both published and unpublished data. Published data are collected from: (1) (census reports, statistical statement, reports of government departments), (2) international bodies and their subsidiary organizations (e.g., UNO, IMF, World Bank, ILO, WHO, etc.), (3) various research reports are prepared by research scholars, universities, economists, etc., in different fields (4) books of various authors, magazines, and newspapers, (5) various sources from university libraries, (6) technical and trade journals, (7) websites, and (8) public records and statistics, historical documents and other sources of published information.

3. Results

Before talking about unemployment rates during the period (2011 to 2020) that year Covid-19 pandemic has spread of for all the world, it is important to talk about that Libya has been affected by this pandemic like the rest of the Arab countries, and countries of the world, and this has an impact on the economy, including the women work status in Libya. Libyan authorities implemented a set of measures to limit the spread of the virus, so they closed the borders and airports, closed schools, public and private schools were replaced with remote learning, banned social gatherings, and suspended gatherings. Coronavirus had its impact on the economic level as the prices of basic food rose, unemployment rates increased.

The National Council for Disease Control and Prevention continued to implement strict measures to contain the spread of the virus inside Libya, but the fighting between militias and the migration of civilians posed a difficult challenge. Among the measures taken by the government are closing the country's borders, banning large public gatherings, and imposing travel restrictions, including between cities. The Government of National Accord announced a package of (500 million Libyan dinars) for emergency spending related to the Coronavirus in addition to reducing the wages of civil employees by 20.0% (Arab, 2020).

When talking about the results of the Covid-19 pandemic, we find that the main affected is the economy, and one of the manifestations of this damage is the increase in unemployment, whether for the current official employment, especially or formal employment, During the Covid-19 pandemic, unemployment rates increased in Libya, including female unemployment, and the following data shows the years (2011 to 2020) for comparison.

3.1. Unemployment Rate in Libya: Generally

The following table shows the change in the unemployment rate in Libya in general during the period from 2011 to 2020:

n	year	Unemployment Rate	Notes
1	2011	19.02	Decreases
2	2012	19.03	Increases
3	2013	19.05	Increases
4	2014	18.94	Decreases
5	2015	18.87	Decreases
6	2016	18.77	Decreases
7	2017	18.61	Decreases
8	2018	18.46	Decreases
9	2019	18.34	Decreases
10	2020	19.39	Increases
-	The average	18.848	-

Table 1: Relative Unemployment Rate Libya in General (10) Years
Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020 (Economy.Com, 2021)

The unemployment rate, 2011- 2020: For that indicator, we provide data for Libya from 2011 to 2020. The average value for Libya during that period was 18.848 percent with a minimum of 18.34 percent in 2019 and a maximum of 19.39 percent in 2020.

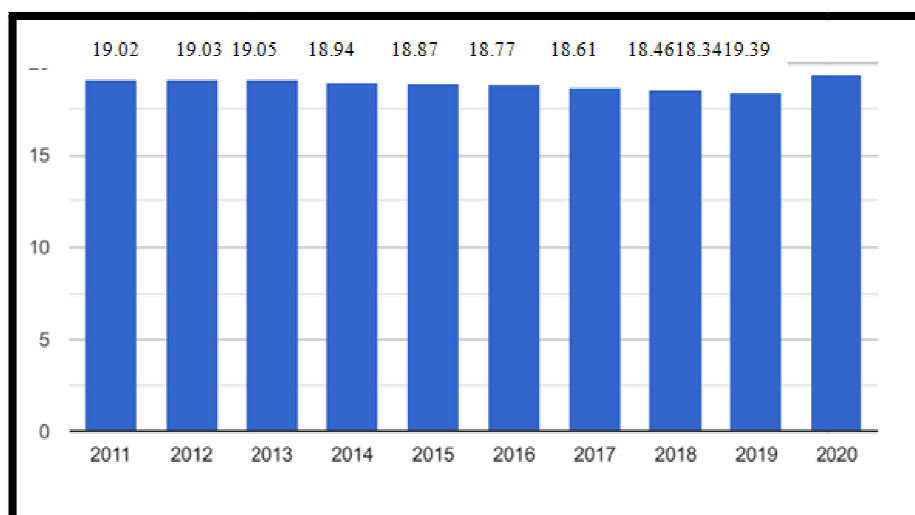


Figure 1: General Unemployment Rate in Libya from 2011 to 2020

Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020 (Economy.Com, 2021)

From Figure (1) can be seen that the Unemployment rate in Libya has gradually decreased from 2013 but in 2020 when Covid-19 swept the country, which increased the unemployment rate in Libya, as the rate in 2019 was equal to 18.34, while it suddenly increased in 2020 to 19.39. The following Figure (2) shows the trend of change among years:

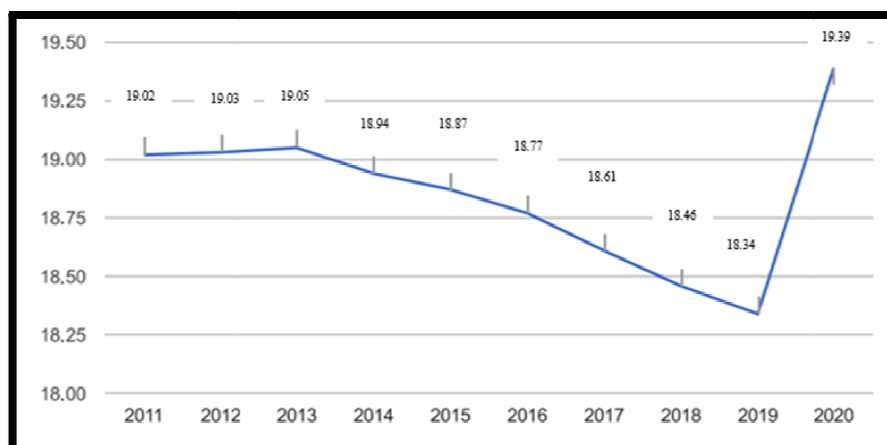


Figure 2: Path of the General Unemployment Rate in Libya from 2011 to 2020

Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020 (Economy.Com, 2021)

Based on figure (2).it can be seen that Libya's unemployment rate over a period of 10 years, from 2011 to 2019, almost stable at around 18%, the average overall is (18.7). But with the spread of Covid-19, the index rose to (19.39). Overall, Libya's unemployment also varies widely by region, particularly in the west. Unemployment generally is higher in the western half of the country, including Tripoli and Misratah, compared to the Benghazi figure (3)(BANK, 2015).

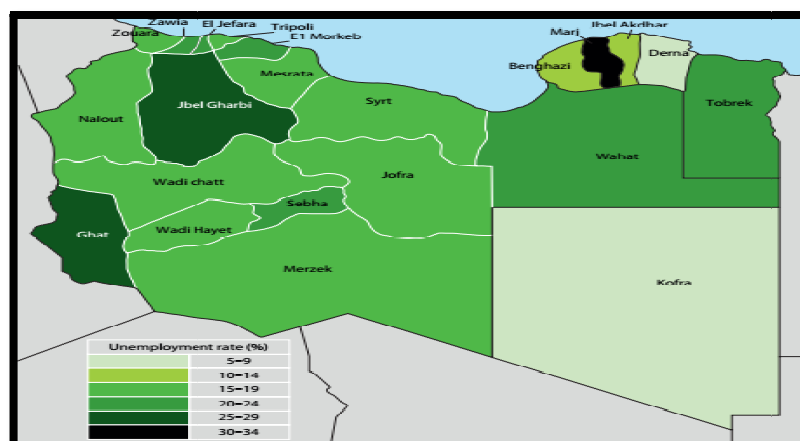


Figure 3: Unemployment Rate in Libya by Governorate in Libya

Source:(IBRD) International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (BANK, 2015)

3.2. Unemployment Rate for Males

The following table shows the change in the Unemployment rate for males in Libya during the period from 2011 to 2020:

n	Year	Unemployment Rate	Notes
1	2011	16.17	Increases
2	2012	15.90	Decreases
3	2013	16.12	Increases
4	2014	15.77	Decreases
5	2015	15.54	Decreases
6	2016	15.46	Decreases
7	2017	15.33	Decreases
8	2018	15.30	Decreases
9	2019	15.46	Increases
10	2020	15.52	Increases
-	The average	15,657	-

Table 2: The unemployment rate for males in Libya (10) years
Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020 (economy.com, 2021)

The unemployment rate for males, 2011- 2020: For that indicator, we provide data for Libya from 2011 to 2020. The average value for Libya during that period was 15,657 percent with a minimum of 15.3 percent in 2018 and a maximum of 16.17 percent in 2011.

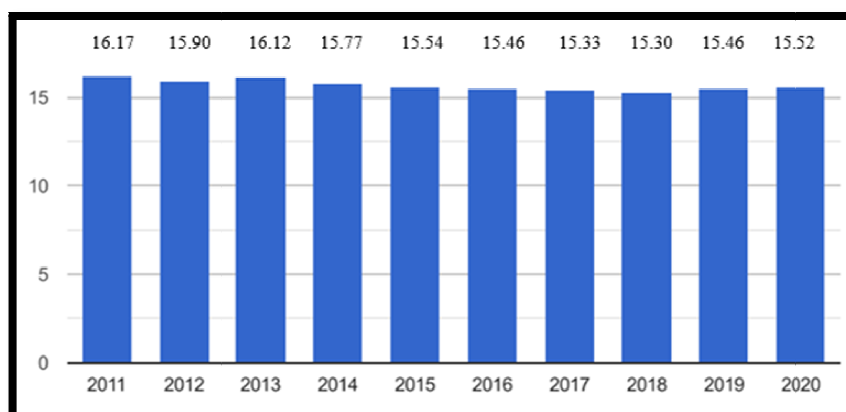


Figure 4: The Unemployment Rate for Males in Libya From 2011 to 2020
Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020(Economy.Com, 2021)

From Figure (4) can be seen that the Unemployment rate for males in Libya has gradually decreased from 2014 but in 2018, when Covid-19 swept the country, which increased the Unemployment rate for males in Libya, as the rate in 2019 was equal to 15.46, while it increased in 2020 to 15.52. the following Figure (5) shows the trend of change among years:

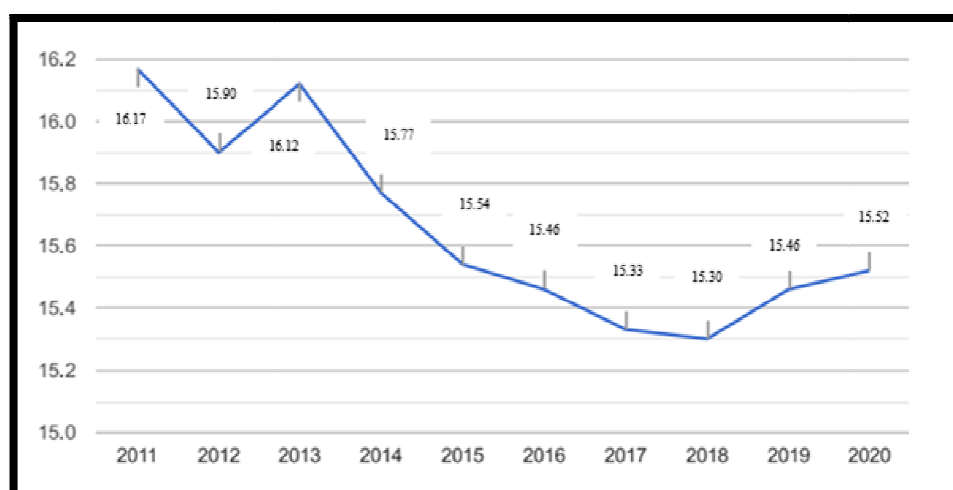


Figure 5: Path of the Unemployment Rate for Males in Libya from 2011 to 2020
Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020 (Economy.Com, 2021)

3.3. Unemployment Rate for Females in Libya

The following table shows the change in the Unemployment rate for females in Libya during the period from 2011 to 2020:

n	year	Unemployment Rate	Notes
1	2011	24.50	Decreases
2	2012	25.08	Increases
3	2013	24.75	Decreases
4	2014	25.11	Increases
5	2015	25.33	Increases
6	2016	25.22	Decreases
7	2017	25.00	Decreases
8	2018	24.60	Decreases
9	2019	24.57	Decreases
10	2020	24.66	Increases
-	The average	24,882	-

Table 3: Unemployment Rate for Females in Libya (10) Years
Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020 (Economy.Com, 2021)

The unemployment rate for females, 2011- 2020: For that indicator, we provide data for Libya from 2011 to 2020. The average value for Libya during that period was 24,882 percent with a minimum of 24.50 percent in 2011 and a maximum of 25.33 percent in 2015.

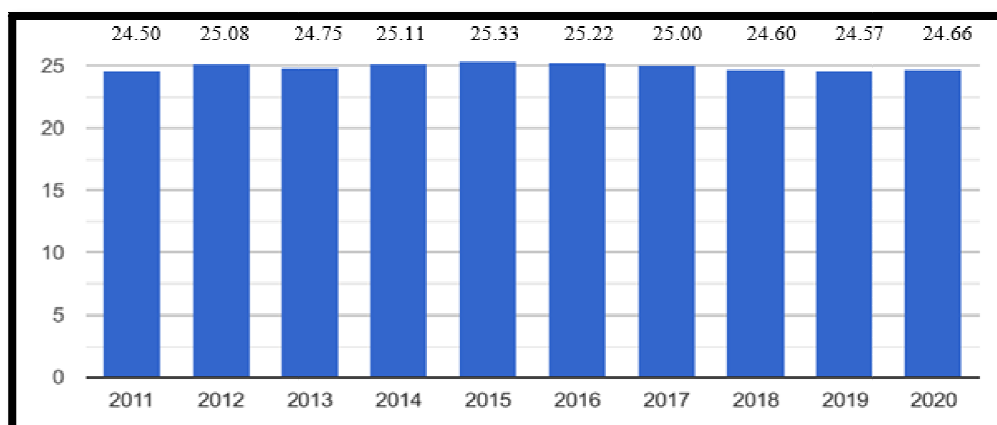


Figure 6: The Unemployment Rate for Females in Libya from 2011 to 2020
Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020(Economy.Com, 2021)

From Figure (6) can be seen that the Unemployment rate for females in Libya has gradually decreased, from 2016 but in 2020, when Covid-19 swept the country, which increased the Unemployment rate for females in Libya, as the rate in 2019 was equal to 24.57, while it suddenly increased in 2020 to 24.66. The following Figure (7) shows the trend of change among years:

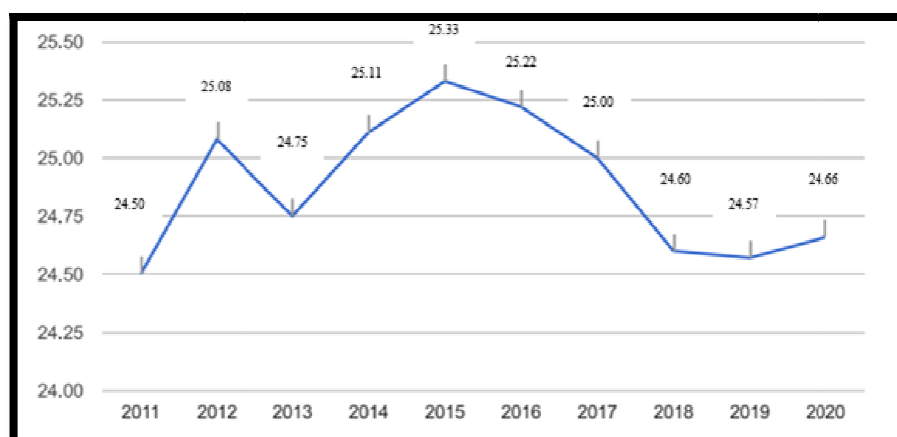


Figure 7: Path of the Unemployment Rate for Females in Libya from 2011 to 2020
Source: Libya Unemployment Rate 2011-2020(Economy.Com, 2021)

4. Discussion

Based on the data results, we conclude that the unemployment rates in the workforce in Libya for women are higher than those for men and that in the year 2020 in which Covid-19 spread, the unemployment rate for men increased, also the same for women, but the rate of increase in the unemployment rate was more of men with a slight difference, but noticeable. It indicates that the working class of women, as well as women waiting for employment opportunities, are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic during the year 2020 and the following years.

Libya has been characterized by persistent growth of unemployment. Firstly, in terms of long-term unemployment. all countries in transition have been characterized by a high rate of unemployment. This rate exceeded 68 percent in 1999 in some countries, such as Armenia. After the hard first years of transition, most countries of transition have dramatically reduced the unemployment rate. Nevertheless, unemployment in Libya remained very high till the end of the former regime era (Efthalelbum).

An important issue is female youth unemployment, underemployment, and youth inactivity, The MENA region faces both the highest overall unemployment levels and the widest gender gap worldwide. In 2014, unemployment rates for young females ranged from 19.1% in Morocco to 69.2% in Libya, considerably high compared to an average of 16.2% in OECD countries (Figure 8). And while a gender gap in unemployment is almost nonexistent in other emerging countries (India, Indonesia, China) or within the OECD, female unemployment rates were twice as high as those of men in Libya and Egypt, and in the overall MENA region (WorldBank, 2016).

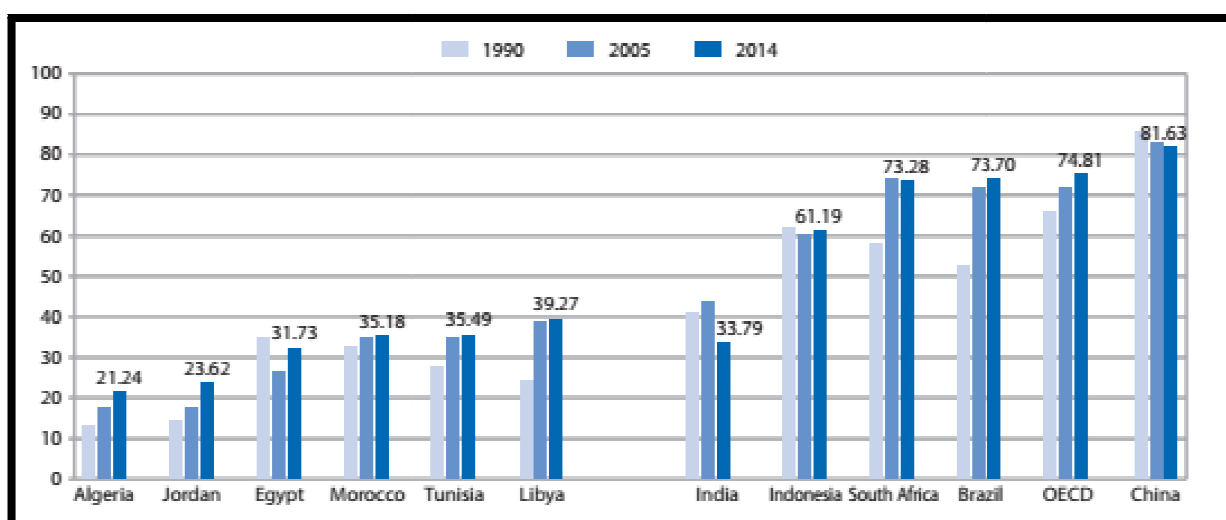


Figure 8: Female-To-Male Labor Force Participation Ratios 1990-2005-2014 (%)

Source: Labour Force Participation Ratio Is the Proportion of the Population Aged 15 and Older That Is Economically Active: All People Who Supply Labor for the Production Of Goods and Services During a Specified Period. Female-To-Male Labor Force Participation Measures How Many Women Are Active in the Labor Force for Every 100 Men (Worldbank, 2016).

Libya has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, particularly given its high rate of tertiary enrollment. Given the dominance of the public sector as the main employer, job security is high, particularly for 45-year-old and above who tend to have open-ended contracts. While nearly all public sector workers are covered by some form of social insurance, only 46 percent of private-sector workers are enrolled– a striking difference. Wages in Libya are buttressed by substantive state subsidies on fuel and food, and social benefits for maternity, dependents, and aging (BANK, 2015).

In addition to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but there are more complex factors in the unemployment of women in Libya. Despite the success of women in proving themselves in the field of education and scientific research and their contribution to the labor market, the percentage of women working in the labor market is still low due to some social and cultural barriers. These barriers and obstacles include, but are not limited to, gender discrimination and the entrenchment of negative stereotypes about women's capabilities at work, and the current security conditions represent an important obstacle that limits women's abilities to join the labor market, for example, women find it difficult to move under the current security conditions (Hala, 2017; Jacobsen).

5. Conclusion

The unemployment rates in the workforce in Libya for women are higher than those for men, and that in the year 2020 in which Covid-19 spread, the unemployment rate for men increased, also the same for women, but the rate of increase in the unemployment rate was more of men with a slight difference, but noticeable. It indicates that the working class of women, as well as women waiting for employment opportunities, are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic during the year 2020 and the following years.

The Unemployment rate for females in Libya has gradually decreased from 2016 but in 2020, when Covid-19 swept the country, which increased the Unemployment rate for females in Libya, as the rate in 2019 was equal to 24.57, while it suddenly increased in 2020 to 24.66.

The researcher recommends: assess the impact of policies that support female employment and entrepreneurship and identify the determinants of female labor market participation.

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