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SMEs Employees Gender Composition and Firm Growth: Evidence from Manufacturing Industry in Co-operative Sector during the Second Development Plan in Iran from 1995 to 1999

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The performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), measured by employment growth, and hence their ability to job creation and a remedy for unemployment has been an important area of economic debate since the last three recent decades. However recent studies, mostly in developing countries, have found evidence that gender has significant effect on SME performance. Utilizing probit regression technique, this paper examines the effect of employee's gender composition in co-operative sector on SME growth using data obtain from General Census of Manufacturing and Mines in Iran (GCMM). This includes 12,000 manufacturing SMEs, with 1 to 99 employees. The results suggest that employee's Gender composition in co-operative sector has no significant effect on SME growth. Using Heckman's two-step procedure, we find that sample selection bias is not a problem in the study of manufacturing SME growth in co-operative sector during the years of the Second Development Plan in Iran.

Key words: *SMEs, Gender Composition, IRAN, Firm Growth, Second Development Plan.*

1. Introduction

The small business sector plays an important role in economic development and job creation. SMEs are influenced by various factors and are often discriminated against by large businesses due to their size. An initiative that can promote SMEs is the establishment of cooperatives. By using this business form, SMEs can increase their bargaining power, which will enable them to compete and survive. The cooperative does not only contribute to the survival of the small business, but also plays an important role in building communities (Van Der Walt, 2002).The fact that small firms grow faster than large firms has important implications for job generation and employment policy in developing countries as well as in developed countries. With the high rate of unemployment, it is the SME sector that will need to expand and grow to generate enough jobs to absorb the new entrants to the labour market.

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It is now accepted that the SME sector, especially the potentially fast-growth firms, can not only play a key role in the process of job generation, but the sector also contributes in innovation and the creation of competition (Doi and Cowling, 1998). Furthermore, the fast growing small firms are of interest to those providing finance (in the form of loan or equity capital), and advisory services, such as management consultancy.

Much emphasis is placed on SMEs to create jobs, alleviate poverty and contribute to economic development. SMEs can undoubtedly make a considerable contribution to economic development as long as the obstacles in its way are bridged. In a developing country, the small business sector is widely regarded as the driving force behind job creation (Lunsche & Barron, 1998). In a country characterised by difficult political and economic conditions and transformation, entrepreneurship proves to be important. The entrepreneur and the small business are essential in economic restructuring (Glass & Drnovsek, 2001).

Subsequently, entrepreneurship is a prerequisite for economic development within a country (Jennings, 1993). Although the entrepreneur as an owner of his/her own business is not always associated with a cooperative, many people do not see small business owners as natural allies and participants in the cooperative sector. SMEs are increasingly facing the same economic problems that farmers have experienced for years (Hazen, 2000). The benefits of a cooperative also apply to small businesses, and this form of business may also be used by SMEs.

Due to collective bargaining power, flexibility and knowledge of the local markets SMEs will be in a more favourable position to survive. Non-agricultural cooperatives in various sectors of the economy have experienced reduced operating cost. Independent traders in similar businesses may join and form a purchase cooperative to purchase supplies and equipment or conduct other activities to share and reduce cost (Bhuyan & Olson, 1997:7). It is, in general, true that there is a clear gender bias in entrepreneurship. In most countries there is significantly less female participation in the labour market. For example, a study by Borooah and Hart (1999) focuses on self-employment of Indian and Black Caribbean men in Britain, and neglects female entrepreneurship.

despite the scarcity of data, the available information on female entrepreneurs shows that the involvement of women in entrepreneurial activity and the consequent self-employment rates, which include women who own and operate their own businesses, are increasing around the world, especially in urban areas and metropoles (NFWBO, 2002; OECD, 2001a, b; Weeks, 2001). We found that there is no study that has investigated the employees gender composition role in firm growth. But the most researches, have examined the gender role of business owner in firm growth. According to the available data, between one-quarter and one-third of the formal sector businesses are owned and operated by women in different countries. In the USA 38 per cent of

businesses are owned by women (1999), in Finland, 34 per cent (1990), in Australia (1994) and Canada (1996), 33 per cent, in Korea, 32 per cent (1998) and in Mexico, 30 per cent (1997) (Weeks, 2001). According to the OECD's Labour Force Survey database, the total number of entrepreneurs in the OECD has increased considerably over the past decade, particularly after 1995 and in 1999, when the average number of entrepreneurs in the OECD was 36 per cent higher than in 1985. The share of female entrepreneurs during this period has been between one-quarter to one-third of all the entrepreneurs (OECD, 2001b).

Recent estimates indicate that more than one-third of the new firms founded in the United States are owned by women,' yet, as a number of studies have observed, the data regarding female entrepreneurs is limited. First, women's lower average wage earnings may imply more binding financial constraints on the initial scale of women's businesses relative to men's. Second, a lot of research found that female owners in both cohorts are less likely than their male counterparts to have had any prior managerial experience or to have 10 or more years of general, prior paid employment experience, which may imply that female entrepreneurs are more constrained in the quantity and quality of human capital that they acquire during wage employment. Data from the Census Bureau's 1982 and 1987 Characteristics of Business Owners (CBO) surveys indicate that, compared to female business owners, men are more likely to retain ownership of their businesses for the first 4 to 6 years after starting or acquiring the business.

Brusch (1992) summarizes early research examining a great many aspects of female entrepreneurship. The bulk of the aggregate evidence from national data of the U.S. points towards female underperformance by conventional production, employment, profitability and other performance indicators. Rosa, Carter and Hamilton (1996) found a similar aggregate pattern using British data. Such macro observations may justify the formulation of a female underperformance hypothesis, which can be stated as follows: All else equal, female entrepreneurs tend to be less successful than their male counterparts in terms of conventional economic performance measures.

Several studies – see Fischer (1992) and Rosa et al. (1996) for surveys – suggest that women entrepreneurs underperform relative to men as measured by conventional economic performance measures such as profitability and growth in sales, value added and employment. It appears that this result with few exceptions ensues when looking at aggregate comparisons of male and female entrepreneurs. On the other hand, there may be systematic gender differences in the choice of industry or other structural factors that explain the observed differences in performance. Thus, a test of the female underperformance hypothesis presupposes adequate statistical controls for other determinants in addition to gender. In recent years, a small literature with this purpose has emerged.

As we will see below the findings become substantially less clear-cut compared to the raw (aggregate) comparisons. First, it must be noted that there are a large number of studies that examine female-owned businesses.

Examples of such studies include Cuba, Decenzo and Anish (1983), Chaganti (1986), Scott (1986) and Hisrich and Brusch (1987). Although these studies provide useful insights into the attitudes and motivations of women entrepreneurs and the problems they face, the lack of male control groups precludes performance comparisons across gender. However, a number of studies have made such comparisons. Watkins and Watkins (1984) compared 49 female-owned and 43 male-owned businesses in the U.K. They found that female entrepreneurs were much less likely to have had relevant prior training and experience, which led them to start up businesses in areas and at times that were less favorable compared to the typical male start up.

Study of Holmquist and Sundin (1988) is a comprehensive study of 1,600 female-owned businesses in Sweden. They also compare 1,440 female business owners with 317 male business owners. Their conclusion shows that gender differences mainly manifest themselves in the selection of industry. Cromie (1987) reports no significant gender differences in motivation among 70 business owners in the startup phase in Northern Ireland. Masters and Meier (1988) find no gender differences in risk-taking propensity in a study of 50 U.S. entrepreneurs.

More specifically, there are four studies that directly focus on gender differences in traditional performance measures. Johnson and Storey (1993) studied 298 U.K. businesses, 67 of which were female owned. They conclude that “women who do manage to set up and remain in business do not appear to differ markedly from those of male entrepreneurs”. Kalleberg and Leicht (1991) studied roughly 300 firms in three industrial sectors in Indiana. Likewise, they conclude that women were just as successful as men. In contrast, Fischer (1992) found inferior performance among women entrepreneurs on a sample of Canadian firms in six different service industries. Rosa, Carter and Hamilton (1996) study 600 U.K. enterprises (half male/half female) in textiles and clothing, business services and hotel catering. They also find considerable differences by gender, and that female owned businesses underperform in terms of number of employees, VAT registration, sales and capital assets. Furthermore, female entrepreneurs were less likely to own multiple businesses, less eager to plan for expansion, and where expansion was planned, their strategies for growth were often significantly different from those of their male counterparts.

An important issue in research on organizational survival and success is the relevance of gender to the performance of small businesses. The rate of growth in self-employment has recently been greater among women than men; women experienced an increase of 35 percent from 1977-82, compared to 12 percent for men (Hisrich & Brush, 1984). Nevertheless, men are still more likely than women to be self-employed. Moreover, researchers and others commonly assert that businesses owned by men are more successful than those owned by women (Aldrich, 1989; Cuba, Decenzo, & Anish, 1983). Indeed, in 1985, the average man-owned business had seven times the average annual receipts of the average woman-owned business (U.S. Small Business Administration, 1986]. Data on the relative survival chances of businesses headed by men and by women are sparser than those on

success, but descriptions of the disadvantages women face in small business led us to expect them to fail more often than men.

Women's employment

In almost all discussions of industrial restructuring the importance of female labour is emphasized. Alongside early studies that stressed the significance of female labour supply in the restructuring process (Massey, 1984), Special attention has been paid to homeworking(Allen & Wolkowitz, 1987; Beneria & Roldan, 1987; Benton, 1989; Peck, 1992; phizacklea & Wolkowitz , 1995) and to the increasing involvement of women in the informal economy (Cheng and Gereffi, 1994).

The three factors most likely to be responsible for the relatively low participation of women in the industrial labour force: a high level of frictional unemployment because of movement in and out of the labour force; a relative lack of training, particularly specific training, and consequently a susceptibility to cyclical layoffs and unemployment; and occupational and geographic immobility, resulting in a high level of structural unemployment. There are several important questions about women's role in economic development. Is there a positive relationship between the process of economic development and female employment? Does the level of female employment alter with the level of economic activities?

Studies by Boserup (1990), Tilly and Scott (1987) and Cagatay and Ozler (1995) indicate that the relationship between the long-term process of capitalist development and women's labour force participation is U-shape. Accordingly, the women's labour force participation rate during the initial stages of commercialization and capitalist development decreases and then increases with increased urbanization and with further economic development. In a pioneering study, concerned with female employment in a historical perspective, Boserup (1990) argued that in the early phase of capitalism and economic development women's share in the labour force declines. This is because of men's monopoly control over technology and education inherited from the previous mode of subsistence economies. In subsistence agricultural economies the use of improved techniques is usually monopolized by the men. The skill gap between women and men widens during the transition to capitalist development; boys get systematic training as apprentices in family enterprises, while girls continue to be taught only simple household and agricultural operations by their mother's (Boserup, 1990). However, beyond the early stage of capitalist development women's share in the labour force increases. The expansion of industry is concurrent with increased urbanization, increased female education, falling fertility rates and the commodification of domestic labour. Hence women's share of employment expands.

2- Unemployment by gender

The increase of unemployment in many developed and developing countries over the last two decades have kept it at the forefront of academic attention. For example, with some 19 million people out of work in western Europe, unemployment has become one of the biggest problems facing many European Union countries. It is estimated that more than 300 million people are jobless in the developing countries, with most of them living in Asia. Not only are the causes of unemployment complex and manifold, but they may differ from one country to another. For example, only the English Channel geographically separates the UK from France, but the unemployment rate and its causes are very different between these countries. Furthermore, the causes and rates of unemployment may vary between regions of the same country. For example, there have been large differences in regional unemployment rates in Italy.

Over time, a significant change in the relationship between male and female unemployment rates has occurred. Between 1970 and 1981, the female unemployment rates averaged 1.5 percentage points higher than the male rate. However, in 1982, the male unemployment rate (9.9 percent) exceeded the female rate (9.4 percent) for the first time since such data were recorded beginning in 1947. This reversal in unemployment rates is the apparent culmination of a narrowing of the differential that began in 1978. although male unemployment rates generally increase more than female rates during recessions, the relative worsening experienced by men during the 1981-82 recession was greater than in previous downturns. Many researchers observed the procyclical nature of the female-male unemployment rate differential. Because men tend to be concentrated in those industries which are most sensitive to the business cycle (particularly manufacturing, construction and mining), it is not surprising that male unemployment rate rise relative to female rates during recessions and fall during recoveries. But industries also change their employment requirements in response to forces other than the business cycle. For example, in recent years automobile and steel manufacturing employment has experienced a secular decline because of increased foreign competition and laborsaving technological changes. Such longer term trends have an impact on unemployment differentials between men and women. The effect that the growth (or decline) of a given industry has on the female-male unemployment rate differential depends on several factors, including:

- the rate of growth (or decline) of the industry
- the percentage of total employment in the industry which is female or male
- the interindustry mobility of men and women in response to changes in employment opportunities in the industry and
- the labour force mobility of men and women in response to change in employment opportunities in the industry.

Currently, in Iran, unemployment is a severe problem, and chronic unemployment has been a major characteristic of the Iranian economy since

the late 1970s. Between 1966 and 1976 unemployment in Iran stood around 10 percent and the number of unemployed was less than one million. However, it rose to over 20 percent by 1985 when the number of unemployed stood at 2.7 million. After 1985, both the rate and number of unemployed has decreased, but since 1999 it has began emerge as a major problem. Unemployment now stands at 2.0 million, which is 16.4 percent of the working population. It is estimated that the vast majority of this unemployment is involuntary, and that it will continue to grow due to high rate of population growth and fundamental changes in the labour market. There are also striking differences in the composition of unemployment in Iran. In 1996 some provinces of Iran suffered from the rate of unemployment of more than 18 percent, but other experience unemployment rates of only 5 percent. Moreover, the rate of unemployment for women was less than 9 percent in 1966, but it rose to more than 24 percent in 1986, while the unemployment rate for men was about the same in the two periods, at about 9.5 percent.

In order to appreciate these sharp differences in the unemployment pattern, it is important to understand the nature and the changing structure of employment in Iran. This is for two reasons. The first is to understand some of the changes that have caused this rise in unemployment, and the second reason is to understand how public policy can be used to create jobs and thereby reduce unemployment. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and to analyse the labour market in Iran, so as to consider both the nature of employment and the pattern and causes of unemployment. As we see, an important aspect of the Iranian economy is the very sharp population growth that has occurred over the last 25 years or so.

The role of men and women in Iranian society and economic activity are not the same. Generally, women's economic activity is less than men, while the employment ratio for men is much higher, and especially in developing countries. According to the 1956 Census, Iran's male and female population of ten years of age and over were more or less exactly the same, at about 6.5 million. However, of these around 5.9 million men (90.7 %) were employed, but less than 0.6 million (9.3 %) women were employed. While the female activity rate was 37 percent in the world as a whole in 1991, it was only around 9.4 percent in Iran (Zarra-Nezhad, 1998). In addition, there are no noticeable trend in the employment ratio and activity rate for women over last three decades.

Most obvious is an increase in the share of females in total employees prior to 1976, but then a sharp decrease up to 1986. The decline in the share of females in the labour force occurred during the first years of Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War, and while the share of women in labour force has increased slightly since then, it has not reached its pre-Revolutionary figure. Alizadeh (2000) refers to the decrease in the rate of female activity over 1976-96 as the de-feminisation period, and the period 1956-76 as the feminisation years. The share of female employment is now around 12 percent compared with around 19.5 percent in 1976.

The Iranian state and women

A Census of Employment is carried about every ten years in Iran since 1956 (the exception to this was 1991 following the Iran-Iraq War). According to the statistical center of Iran SCI here of there definition (2000), all persons who reported working or had a job during the last seven days preceding the Census enumeration date, but who may not have worked because of specific reasons (such as being ‘on leave’, sick, etc.) are considered as employed. However, the definition of employment in Iran has changed over time. In the 1966 and 1976 National Censuses of Population and Housing, for example, those persons who had worked 8 hours or more per week were considered as employed. However, according to later Censuses (in 1986, 1991 and 1996) those persons who had worked two days during the last seven days preceding the enumeration date were considered as employed. This means that are some problems in considered employment patterns over time. Nevertheless, on this basis, total employment has increased from 5,908,000 in 1956 to 14,531,000 in 1996.

In the Iranian state women on the one hand bear the burden of being 'mothers of the nation', a duty that is ideologically defined, reflection the ideological orientation of the state. On the other hand, women as mothers and educators transmit culture and tradition and subsequently reproduce the boundaries of ethnic/national grouping. The role and social position of women, therefore, has specific importance during the process of either nation building or redefinition of nationhood.

Thus far, patterns of women's employment in Iran have been influenced by the oil-based nature of the economy. By the policy of import-substitution industrialization which has favoured capital-intensive, male intensive industries. By cultural attitudes and gender bias which render many occupations inappropriate or off-limits to women.

Women's share of government employment grew during the 1990s- although this is perhaps as much a reflection of the deterioration of government wages and the increasing participation of men in the private sector as it is an indicator of the advancement of women. The number of public-service employees was nearly 2 million in 1994, of which 603000, or about 31 per cent , were women. Again the ministries of education and health employed most of these women(43,8 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively), and 34 per cent of them had university degrees. Now a lot of women, employed in the private sector and this sector tend to managerial levels.

Table 1: Gender composition of Employment (1986, 1996)

1986	*Males*	*Females*	*1996*	*Males*	*Females*
Professional	67,43	32,57	***Professional***	67,10	32,90
Administrative	96.55	3,45	***Administrative***	87,20	12,80
Clerical	87,27	12,73	***Clerical***	83,00	17,00
Sales	98,51	1,49	***Sales and services***	94,90	5,10
Services	92,96	7,04	***Agricultural***	91,10	8,90
Agricultural	91,93	8,07	***Production***	89,00	11,00
Production	93,67	6,33	***Miscellaneous***	94,70	5,30
Miscellaneous	95,97	4,03	***Total employment***	87,90	12,10
Total employment	91,06	8,94	***Total employment(000)***	12808,40	1763,10
Total employment(000)	10054,3	987,1			

The main decline in the share of female employment occurred over the period 1976 to 1986, although since then it has increased slightely, from 9,7 per cent of total employment in 1986 to 12,1 per cent in 1996(table 1). Nevertheless, the share of female employment has still not recovered its pre-revolutionary level.

Table 2: Middle Income Countries

Iran		***Lower***	***middle***	***income***
Activity rate(6+)	***1966***	***1976***	***1986***	***1996***
Women	8,3	16,9	8,2	9,1
Men	50,7	69,3	68,7	60,7
Total	30,2	42,5	39,2	35,3
Women in total employment	13,3	19,5	8,7	12,1
Women in non-agricultural sector	19,1	17,4	9	13

Turkey		***Lower***	***middle***	***income***
Activity rate(12+)	***1965***	***1975***	***1985***	***1990***
Women	33,4	33	30,6	31,1
Men	53	51,7	54,3	56,2
Total	43,4	42,5	42,6	43,8
Women in total employment	40,2	35,6	36,4	31,8
Women in non-agricultural sector	7.1	12,6	11,6	14,4

Malaysia		***Upper***	***middle***	***income***
Activity rate(10+)	***1957***	***1970***	***1980***	***1991***
Women	17,4	20,9	25,3	22,6
Men	50,5	44,2	49,6	47,3
Total	34,5	32,6	37,5	35,1
Women in total employment	24,6	31,3	33,3	34,2
Women in non-agricultural sector	13,8	25,6	30,6	35,1

In (Table 2) we can compare Iran with other countries. The data in this table indicate that female employment in Turkey, as well as in Malaysia, has been always much greater than that in Iran. Nevertheless, the gap in women's share of employment between Iran and these two countries has widened since 1976. the share of female employment in Turkey in the 1990s was two-and-a-half times greater than that of Iran: female employment accounted for 31,8 per cent of total employment in Turkey in contrast to only 12,1 per cent in Iran. Similarly, the share of female employment in Malaysia is nearly three times greater than that in Iran. In fact, the share of female employment in Iran is similar to that of a low income country like Pakistan and even below that of Egypt.

The share of skilled workers in Iran has risen over recent decades. According to Nazari (1998), for example, while skilled manpower constituted only one percent of the active population in 1966, it was more than 9.6 percent in 1996. From a gender point of view, women are often involved in low-paid jobs and jobs that need few skills or any special training. In 1956 and 1966, the share of women in skilled jobs was 4.4 percent and 6.6 percent respectively, but in 1994 it increased to 32.6 percent, including education and medicine Focusing on the most recent year, 1996, most male occupations are in sales, services or agriculture. A high proportion of women are in professional occupations (32.9 percent). the decrease in female employment over 1976-86 was highly concentrated in the agriculture and production activities and to a lesser extent in service occupations. The substantial decline in female employment was concurrent with the increased share of female employment in the professional occupations (Alizadeh, 2000).

All of this debate, leading to an important economic concept "Gender Inequality". Economic literature introduce this concept using three major theories that we should know more, concerning this theories:

- Neoclassical theory
- Dual Labour Market Theory
- Gender theory

Neoclassical theory

A first set of studies within the cross-national and development literature has indicated that gender inequalities are likely to decline with industrialization or economic growth. A similar perspective has been advanced by organizations such as the World Bank, although with acknowledgements that "economic growth has proved a slow instrument of change in the status of women" and that public policies may have a significant role to play in breaking down institutional and cultural mechanisms of discrimination against women.
In perhaps the most systematic presentation of this approach, several studies within a neoclassical economic approach have argued that differences between men and women (e.g., in employment, wages, or vulnerability to poverty) result primarily from human capital differentials (education, skills, expected length of labour-force participation) that are bound to wither away

over time. Such an approach acknowledges that a share of existing gender gaps in wages or employment might be attributed to the persistence of discrimination. This approach in the economic literature can be linked to sociological theoretical perspectives emphasizing the gradual erosion of social inequalities rooted in ascribed characteristics. According to these perspectives, the expansion of market is accompanied by greater reliance on achievement as a basis for allocating resources and organizing the division of labour. Gender inequalities, in this approach, are portrayed as a remnant of traditional structures organized around ascribed status. Processes of economic growth, insofar as they are indicative of a process of modernization, can be expected to reduce these inequalities.

Dual Labour Market Theory

In its most elementary form, dual labour market theory suggests a basic division between employers operating in two separate labour market sectors. the primary sector provides high wages, internal labour markets with career opportunities, non-arbitrary management and insecure employment, while the secondary sector provides low wages, no career opportunities, arbitrary management and insecure employment. Although more recent developments of dual labour market theory have suggested a more highly differentiated labour market structure (See and piore, 1979), this basic division between the two sectors has been retained. However, it has been generally recognized by the proponents of this theory that the same employer could operate in more than one sector.

Gender theory: basic concepts and lines of research

The 1980s were characterized by a new phase in the development of women's studies. There was a transition from the analysis of patriarchal society and women's specific experience to the analysis of the gender system. Women's studies have gradually become gender studies, in which the primary approach is to view all aspects of human society, culture, and relationships as aspects of gender. A gradual shift in emphasis can be observed from a focus on the feminine and the confirmation of male domination to the analysis of how gender exists, is construed, and is reproduced through all social processes and how this affects both women and men.

The differentiation between the concepts of sex and gender marked the attainment of a new theoretical level. The difference between the concepts of "sex" and "gender" was first noted by the psychologist Robert Stoller in 1968. Later, in 1972, this idea was taken up by feminist anthropologists. In their studies of different societies, they found substantial differences in the conception of masculine and feminine roles, positions, and character traits—in other words, in any given society's view of what men and women should be. Margaret Mead described this for the first time in the middle of the century. In 1972 came the publication of *Women, Culture, and Society,* edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere; it became famous rather quickly. Sherry Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?"(Ortner, 1974).

published in this collection, provoked heated debate. Ortner highlights the universal failure to consider woman's reproductive role in determining her social status and points out that women have been pushed out of the social sphere into the private sphere because they are associated not with social but with natural events.

One of the first studies that explicitly addressed the aforementioned difference between the concepts of "sex" and "gender" was probably an article by Gayle Rubin. Combining the methods of psychoanalysis and structural anthropology, Rubin studied the symbolic meaning of men exchanging women in so-called primitive societies. As a result, she concludes that exchanging women between tribes reflects male domination and a structure of gender identity in which women are regarded as biological entities and confined to the family. On this basis the "sex–gender system as a set of agreements" is constructed (Rubin, 1974). In other words, the gender system—which views the two sexes as different, unequal, and even complementary—is in fact a system of *power* and domination, the purpose of which is to concentrate material and symbolic capital in the hands of fathers.

Next it is useful to mention a work by the psychologist Rhoda Unger, "On a Redefinition of the Concepts of Sex and Gender." Unger proposes that "sex" be used only to refer to the specifically biological aspects of a human being, whereas "gender" should be used only in discussing social, cultural, and psychological aspects associated with traits, norms, stereotypes, and roles that are considered typical and desirable for those whom society has defined as women or men. The next important work in the development of gender theory was Adrienne Rich's [*Of Women Born:*] *Motherhood as Experience and InWINTER 2001–2002 57 stitution*. For the purpose of the present study, I would like to mention one idea that she drew from an analysis of the works of "black feminists." What I have in mind is the idea that *gender is not a monolithic category*, which makes all women exactly the same, but *instead designates a position of subordination* (i.e., gender is a type of social stratification). From this, Rich concludes that gender as a system is interconnected with other types of power or stratification. In her view, then, gender is part of a complex network of power components.

In the 1980s and the 1990s gender studies were quite popular. However, both the interpretation of the term "gender" and the methods used in the research vary greatly. Overall, I can distinguish three basic theories of gender: (1) the theory of gender as a social construction; (2) the view of gender as a type of stratification; and (3) the idea that gender is a cultural metaphor (Voronina, 2002).

3- Objectives and hypothesis

With all efforts concerning identifying and highlighting the economic role of women, their share is less than men in economy and firm growth. This happen also in that countries whose women, are the most important case for economic politicians and we can't find a country that women and men economic share is equal. The main causes, are various culture, region and

religion explanation about women economic situation and role in any country. For example, although in Iran constitution there is no limitation for women economic activities and men and women are equal, but in cultural tenets and real economy, there are some main difference in their situation. In other word, not only the job classifications are under influencing of gender, but in condition that gender does not affect on mployment, women and men are unequal in organizational climate.

Using SME's data in the Iran second five-years plan this study try to solve a secret question ' what is gender role in the firm growth?' the results of this study can make a new vision for developing countries such as Iran because if we prove that gender composition, there is no effect on firm growth, economic sectors specially cooperative sector ignore gender kind and we hope women like men can employ in this economic activity. In addition, regarding economic political concentrate on cooperative and SME's, this study make new policies for women employment. This study try to divide cooperative firms in three groups: firms that the most of their labour force are men, firms that women are main part of employees and some firms that women and men are equal but this recent group isn't considered in this study.

The main hypothesis for this research is: employees gender composition is an important factor in cooperative SME's employment growth and it has a significant effect (during second development plan in iran).

4- Methodology

SME's have some specific characteristics: flexibility, creativity and innovation. These traits cause that economist understand real role of this part (Wijewardena and Tibbits, 1999). Low information about SME's real knowledge level cause that politicians specially in developing country ignore their economic roles. SMEs account for 60 to 70 per cent of jobs in most OECD countries, with a particularly large share in Italy and Japan, and a relatively smaller share in the United States. Throughout they also account for a disproportionately large share of new jobs, especially in those countries which have displayed a strong employment record, including the United States and the Netherlands. Some evidence points also to the importance of age, rather than size, in job creation: young firms generate more than their share of employment. However, less than one-half of start-ups survive for more than five years and only a fraction develop into the high-growth firms which make important contributions to job creation. High job turnover poses problems for employment security; and small establishments are often exempt from giving notice to their employees. Small firms also tend to invest less in training and rely relatively more on external recruitment for raising competence (OECD, 1997).

Analysis suggests that a small group of high-growth small and medium-sized enterprises (HGSMEs) make important contributions to job creation and productivity growth. In particular, it has been shown that both job creation and job destruction tend to be concentrated: a significant part of gross job creation

is in a comparatively small number of very rapidly expanding firms and a large part of gross job destruction is in a relatively small number of rapidly contracting or exiting firms. However, the role of, and factors influencing, growing firms is not fully understood. A more complete understanding of high-growth firms may lead to adjustments in government policies to enhance their unique contributions to economic growth.

But what is meaning of growth and how we can measure it? Some variables are introduce for growth measuring: sale volume, value added and assets, but in countries that unemployment is the major problem, number of employees is important measure (Laursen, Mahnke and Vejrup-Hansen, 1999). In Iran also this is an economic depression and in this study our scale for growth measuring, is firm employment. In addition, if we suppose growth, is changing level in firm size between tow difference time (t',t), comparison of firm size can evaluate with tow method: relative and absolute comparison (Wiklund, 1998). In this part we introduce some models for measuring growth (Delmar, 1997):

$G^{A}_{it't} = EMP_{it} - EMP_{it'}$ absolute growth

$G^{R}_{it't} = \frac{EMP_{it} - EMP_{it'}}{EMP_{it'}}$ relative growth

$G^{AA}_{it't} = \frac{EMP_{it} - EMP_{it'}}{t - t'}$ annual growth average

$G^{AL}_{it't} = \frac{\ln EMP_{it} - \ln EMP_{it'}}{t - t'}$ annual growth average on the basis of employment logarithm

In these models :

t : end of period t' : beginning of period

EMP_{it} : number of employees at end of period

$EMP_{it'}$: number of employees at beginning of period

It's necessary to understand selecting the measuring method is very important phase because different methods have different result (Delmar, 1997).
Another cardinal point for measuring firm growth, is study period length. If we use this scale, the result of SME's investigation can differ (Storey, 1994), but pursue these firm's in a long term period is very difficult and a lot of SME's may go out of market. for these reasons, measuring SME's growth in the five-years periods suggest and it has the most frequency (Delmar, 1997).
Additionally, growth measuring model also has a basic importance. generally, firm growth is dependent on three variable categories: first, variables that explain firm traits such as (ownership, size and manpower characteristics), second , variables that focused on firm expenditure such as (advertising, research and development) and third group investigate industry traits such as (centralization and entrance barriers).

In this research we just focus on a variable in group one (employees gender composition) and suggest following model for measuring firm growth:

$$G_{itt'} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 MgF + \alpha_2 FgM + \sum_{i=1}^{n} X_{it'} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

In this model:

growth during i : firm $G_{itt'}$ t - t' **(**1995-99)

: firm's that greatest part contains men MgF

: firm's that greatest part contains women FgM

: vector of firm i explanatory variables at beginning of period $\sum X_{it'}$

ε_{it} : Stochastic Term

$X_{it'}$: other explanatory variables in group tow that are not underlying in this study

On the most important point in estimating this model is that we can calculate growth just for firms that continue their economic activity (Agarwal and Audretsch, 2001). In this situation, assessment may has bias and one of suggested ways for its reform is Heckman tow-step procedure that we perform it using Stata software. Another point about model estimate is correlation between explanatory variables that considered in this model.

Data, collecting method and explain

Access to firms data during period, is very difficult and even impossible for different reasons.

For this study, we used industrial firm data that have less than 500 employees at the first year of second five-year plan in Iran. Using this data, like other developing countries by tow measure (less than 100 and less than 50 employees) (Mead, 1994), we can divide SME's to tow group: firm's that greatest part contains men and firm's that greatest part contains women. However, existing data has main deficiencies that are barriers for analysis. For example, even though more than 95 per cent of Iran manufacturing firms had less than 10 employees and 45 percent of manufacturing employment is in this group, existing data contains few number of this firms (about 2000). Furthermore, lack of access to data from firms with more than 500 employees, is another data deficiency.

Table 3: division of firm on the basis of ownership and gender(1995)

Ownership	***Firms***		***Men employees***		***Women employees***		***Total employees***	
	number	***Percent***	***number***	***Percent***	***number***	***Percent***	***number***	***Percent***
Cooperative	283	2,2	6,074	87,8	843	12,2	917,6	1,5
Private	11502	90,5	326,623	91,17	31,603	8,83	226,358	77,10
Public	927	7,3	94,064	94,8	5,175	5,2	239,99	21,4
Total	12712	100	426,761	91,9	37,621	8,1	382,464	100

Generally, from 12,712 industrial firms that their data was accessible, just 283 firms were active in cooperative sector and 278 firms placed on SME's group (less than 100 employees).

From table 3, we understand that cooperative firms, just formed 2.2 per cent of Iran manufacturing firms in 1995, and had 1.5 per cent of total employment that it represent small size of these firms.

But women share in SME's sector is really more relative than other sectors (private and public). This represent that SME's in the cooperative sector have more ability and capacity for women attraction.

Discussion and Result

Unemployment can be defined as excess supply in the labour market. This is either voluntary or involuntary, in the sense that individuals may either decide not to work at the prevailing market wage (i.e. voluntary), or are seeking employment at this wage but can not find it (i.e. involuntary).
Unemployment crisis is on of the vital problems, especially in the developing country so identifying factors to decrease this problem is important priority. In economic literature, unemployment can affected with four element:

1- New firm formation in economic activities
2- Existing firms exit from economic activities
3- Existing firms growth
4- Existing firms downsizing

New firm formation and growth of existing firms are tow way for increasing employment and perhaps decreasing unemployment, but existing firm exit and existing firms downsizing are factors with negative effect on employment and consequently decreasing unemployment volume. From two positive ways, firm growth has preference, because in many cases, necessary time for firm growth that is employed in a economic activity, is less than a new firm foundation. In addition, we can claim that an active firm in the economy performed the main stages such as marketing and enjoying better environment.

After agreement with importance of growth, a vital question is that ''what are the main factor in the firm growth?'' we debated that the most valid scale is number of employees in the firm. In addition, in a lot of studies, '100 and 50 employees' recognized as scale for distinction of SME's from large firm. For this reasons, the main study goal is examination of employees gender affect on SME growth in the cooperative sector. In order to this goal, we applied
Different growth measuring methods such as: G1(absolute growth), G2(10% annual growth average)and Heckman Two-Step Estimation Procedure for preventing probable bias in model estimating.

a: gender affect on co-operative growth(less than 100 employees) using G1 and G2

In various firm growth studies, the main influencing factors of growth, divide in tow group (plant related variables and industry related variables). Likewise we can divide firms variable to 'employment related variables and expenditure related variables' on the basis of economic literature. In this case, firm employees gender is one of the firm manpower characteristics and on this basis, firms divide to ' firm's that greatest part contains men and firm's that greatest part contains women'. In table 4 DFgM variable shows the firms that number of women are more than men and DMgF variable is representative firms that number of men are more and this is a dummy variable.
We explained that from total 12.712 firm, there are just 278 cooperative with less than 100 employees. The result of model estimating in table 4 shows that mentioned variables effect on firm employment growth, statistically is not

significant (t = -0.270 and t = -0.340). it means firm growth in cooperative sector, don't show different behaviors with separate gender composition and gender, is not an effective factor on growth. In addition, in this study we examined firm growth in a specific period using G2(10% annual growth average) that presented the same results.

Table 4: effective factors on cooperative growth (less than 100 employees) during second five-year plan using G1

G_1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	[95% Conf.	Interval]
constant	244.576	39.445	**6.200**	166.787	322.364
lnEMP95	-259.971	41.684	**-6.240**	-342.176	-177.766
lnEMP95SQ	88.888	15.367	**5.780**	58.583	119.193
lnEMP95CB	-10.851	2.099	**-5.170**	-14.990	-6.712
DFgM	-1.662	4.917	-0.340	-11.359	8.035
DMgF	-0.971	3.579	-0.270	-8.029	6.087
DAGE195	1.699	1.851	0.920	-1.952	5.349
PCM1	0.668	4.615	0.140	-8.433	9.768
LPVALUE95	0.015	0.102	0.140	-0.186	0.216
SKILL1PER95	5.931	15.429	0.380	-24.495	36.358
SKILL2PER95	0.057	6.838	0.010	-13.428	13.542
SKILL3PER95	-1.556	2.384	-0.650	-6.257	3.145
WAGE95	1.092	0.430	**2.540**	0.244	1.939
SERV2PER95	7.536	4.702	1.600	-1.736	16.809
COMM95	0.175	0.439	0.400	-0.690	1.040
TRANS95	0.084	0.076	1.110	-0.065	0.233
ADVERT95	-0.053	0.221	-0.240	-0.489	0.384
INVEST95	-0.005	0.005	-0.870	-0.015	0.006
CR_4	2.427	0.899	**2.700**	0.654	4.199
INDCHANGE	0.009	0.047	0.180	-0.085	0.102
BARRIER	0.001	0.001	0.910	-0.001	0.002

b: gender affect on firm growth (less than 100 employees) using Heckman Two-Step Estimation Procedure, G1 and G2 methods

From firm growth analysis point of view, explained result have serious importance but in economic debates for the reason that just firms participate in our estimating that had economic activity during study, this results are dubitable. Because all firms that go out from economic activity during study, ignore in this research, a bias that named sample selection bias create. There are Some different ways for adjusting this bias and one of them is Heckman Two-Step Estimation Procedure*,* doing with Stata software. Also after this estimation, previous result confirmed and we found that there is no significant relationship between gender composition and firm employment growth.

Table 5: effective factors on cooperative growth (less than 100 employees) during second five-year plan using G1 and Heckman Two-Step Estimation Procedure

G_1	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Constant	247.384	39.539	**6.260**	169.888	324.879
lnEMP95	-261.177	42.927	**-6.080**	-345.313	-177.042
lnEMP95SQ	89.331	15.992	**5.590**	57.987	120.675
lnEMP95CB	-10.894	2.125	**-5.130**	-15.059	-6.728
DFgM	-0.891	7.529	-0.120	-15.647	13.865
DMgF	-2.904	7.312	-0.400	-17.235	11.426
DAGE195	-0.845	3.599	-0.230	-7.899	6.209
PCM1	-2.968	6.129	-0.480	-14.981	9.045
LPVALUE95	0.022	0.076	0.280	-0.127	0.170
SKILL1PER95	6.875	15.532	0.440	-23.566	37.317
SKILL2PER95	-0.025	8.886	0.000	-17.441	17.392
SKILL3PER95	-1.861	2.539	-0.730	-6.837	3.116
WAGE95	1.085	0.406	**2.670**	0.290	1.880
SERV2PER95	6.322	4.346	1.450	-2.195	14.839
COMM95	0.227	0.579	0.390	-0.908	1.362
TRANS95	0.081	0.051	1.580	-0.020	0.182
ADVERT95	-0.011	0.341	-0.030	-0.680	0.659
INVEST95	-0.005	0.004	-1.130	-0.013	0.004
CR4	0.695	2.199	0.320	-3.616	5.006
INDCHANGE	0.019	0.038	0.490	-0.056	0.094
BARRIER	0.001	0.001	0.950	-0.001	0.003
select					
Constant	2.259	0.557	**4.060**	1.168	3.351
DAGE195	-0.497	0.222	**-2.240**	-0.931	-0.063
PCM1	-0.524	0.404	-1.300	-1.316	0.268
MALEPER95	-0.752	0.502	-1.500	-1.736	0.233
SERV2PER95	-0.221	0.391	-0.560	-0.986	0.545
ADVERT95	0.011	0.033	0.330	-0.055	0.077
CR_4	-0.268	0.101	**-2.650**	-0.467	-0.070
NER	0.010	0.008	1.360	-0.005	0.025
mills					
lambda	**14.192**	**15.146**	**0.940**	**-15.493**	**43.877**
rho	**1.000**				
sigma	**14.192**				

5- Conclusion:

Using various methods for measuring growth and divide SME's into tow main groups (the firms that number of women are more than men and firms that men are more), this study examines the effects of employee's gender composition in co-operative sector on SME growth. This includes 278 manufacturing SMEs, with 1 to 99 employees and for adjusting probable bias, we used Heckman's two-step procedure. The results suggest that employee's Gender composition in co-operative sector has no significant effect on SME growth. we found that sample selection bias is not a problem in the study of manufacturing SME growth in co-operative sector during the period of the Second Development Plan in Iran.

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