

The challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities: Empirical study

Prepared by

Ahmad Othman Mohammad

Middle Technical University

Institute of Administration Rusafa

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore the challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities. For carry out the study's measures as required, a descriptive analytical approach was adopted. The challenges targeted through this article are: social and cultural challenges, educational challenges, political and legal challenges, and media-related challenges. The researcher developed a questionnaire. The population is represented in all the Iraqi women living in Iraq. A stratified random sample was selected. It consists from 270 BA female and male BA students enrolled at the department of political sciences at four universities in Iraq. Those universities are: (University of Baghdad, University of Kufa, Al-Nahrain University and University of Mosul). Questionnaire forms were distributed to those students in an electronic manner. 253 forms were retrieved and considered valid for analysis. The researcher concluded that the severity of the social, cultural, educational, political, legal, and media-related challenges hindering women in Iraq from engaging in political activities are high. He recommends: holding awareness-raising lectures at Iraqi universities and public and private facilities for promoting awareness about the significance of increasing women engagement in political activities. Such lectures should be organized and funded by the government.

Key words: Political activities, challenges, Iraqi women, engagement.

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1. Introduction

All governments have exerted much effort and made many agreements and declarations to protect human rights from any violation. That applies whether the violation is made against women or men. In addition, governments seek signing agreements and declarations to ensure that women and men are treated equally and fairly and enjoy their freedoms and rights in societies. Such declarations include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). For instance, article No. 1 of the latter declaration states the following: (All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights).

Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), women must enjoy the same rights enjoyed by men. They must enjoy the right to receive education, healthcare services, social security, get a job, marry, join trade union, and vote. In other words, they must participate in the social,

political, cultural, civic and economic areas of life. They must get the same opportunities that men get in these areas (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

It should be noted that women empowerment in social, political, cultural, civic and economic areas of life has been receiving much attention by researchers. Such empowerment include increasing women political engagement. Regarding the political engagement, it may be defined as engagement in political activities and exercising political rights, such as the right to form a political party, the right to run as a candidate and the right to vote in elections (Nasarat et al., 2017). It may be defined as the voluntarily engagement in activities that aim at choosing leaders, and their representatives and the activities that aim at developing public policies and decisions in a direct or indirect manner (Maclosky, 1968).

Throughout history, women have been always playing a major role in developing societies in various areas. Similar to men, they made great achievements. Despite that, women in Arab societies are still suffering from exclusion from political activities. They have been suffering from discrimination that hinders them from getting involved in political activities. Therefore, many feminists in these societies have been launching initiatives for activating the women's role in political areas (Dababneh, 2012)

Women's political engagement in society is affected by several factors, such as: the amount of their political knowledge. Such knowledge can be promoted through media channels, election campaigns and political symposium. To be specific the greater the women's political knowledge, the more likely to see them engaged in political activities. In addition, the political system in the state significantly affect the level of women's political engagement. For instance, in the liberal systems, women are highly engaged in political activities (Milbrath, 1965)

Promoting political awareness, especially awareness about the significance about democracy shall reduce women's fear about engagement in political activities. It shall enable women to identify and meet their interests as members of the society (McDonald and Popkin, 2001). It should be noted that political awareness can be promoted several means, such as: Media channels (e.g. TV and radio channels) (Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab, 2016).

It should be noted that there are media-related challenges and social & cultural, political, legal and economic challenges hindering women from engaging in political activities (Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab, 2016). There are also religious challenges. For instance, religion is used as an excuse to exclude women from engagement in political activities (Paxton et al., 2007).

Women's exclusion from engagement in political activities shall hinder government from promoting democracy, and equality, and achieving development. It shall hinder government from promoting peace, because such exclusion lead to

having many disputes in societies. In other words, activating the women's role in political areas is a requirement for achieving development and making decisions that are based on various views of people (Kassa, 2015). To activate women's role in this regard, the researcher of the present study aimed to explore the challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities.

2. Objective

This study aimed to answer the following question:

-The challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities.

3. Question

This study aimed to answer the following question:

-What are the challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities?

4. Significance of the study:

This study is significant due to the reasons below:

- a)- This study provides decisions makers and officials in Iraq with knowledge about the challenges hindering Iraqi women from engaging in political activities
- b)-Through the results of this study, policy makers in Iraq can develop effective policies for activating the engagement of Iraqi women in political activities.
- c)-This result provides experts in ministries with an instrument to assess the severity of the challenges hindering women from engaging in political activities accurately.
- d)-The results of this study promotes awareness among curricula developers in Iraq about the significance of addressing issues related to women engagement in political activities

5. Definition of Terms

5.1. Theoretical definition:

-Political engagement: It may be defined as engagement in political activities and exercising political rights, such as the right to form a political party, the right to run as a candidate and the right to vote in elections (Nasarat et al., 2017). It may be defined as the voluntarily engagement in activities that aim at choosing leaders, and their representatives and the activities that aim at

developing public policies and decisions in a direct or indirect manner (Maclosky, 1968).

5.2. Operational definitions:

-Political engagement: It may be defined as engagement of Iraqi women in political activities and having them exercising their political rights in the Iraqi society.

-Challenges. They are represented in the challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities

6. Limits

-Spatial limits: This study was conducted in the department of political sciences at four universities in Iraq. Those universities are: (University of Baghdad, University of Kufa, Al-Nahrain University and University of Mosul)

-Temporal limits: This study was conducted during the academic year (2020/2021) / second semester.

7. Theoretical framework

According to Tremblay (2007), socio-economic, cultural, and political factors affect the degree to which women engage in political activities. Regarding the cultural factors, the degree to which women have access to university education affects the latter engagement. That is because education contributes to promoting awareness about the significance of having women engaged in political activities. In addition, the dominant ideas in society about gender roles affect women political engagement. For instance, in some societies, the dominant views about women roles are represented in having women staying at home to take care of their husbands and children. In addition, the religious views affect women political engagement. Some scholars specialized in a certain religion suggest that women mustn't engage in political activities (Tremblay, 2007).

According to Tremblay (2007), regarding the socio-economic factors, the women's social status and economic condition affect women political engagement. It should be noted that improving women socio-economic status shall increase

women presence in the parliament. In addition, the type of society affect such engagement. For instance, women engagement in industrial societies engage in political activities more than women in agricultural societies (Tremblay, 2007)

According to Tremblay (2007), regarding the political factors, they include: granting women the right to vote through national legislations. They include: granting women the right to run for an office through national elections. They include: the number of seats granted for women through national legislations. They include: the nature and type of the electoral system (Tremblay, 2007).

According to Bayeh (2016), it's necessary to empower women in political areas, because such empowerment shall significantly contribute to achieving sustainable development. Therefore, women's engagement in the process of making political decisions must be raised. In addition, women's engagement in the political leadership must be raised. However, such engagement may be hindered by the dominant belief in society that political activities should be restricted to men only. To achieve development, the degree to which women hold key political positions must be raised. Achieving development requires treating women and men equally in terms of enjoying the right to engage in political activities. Empowering women in political areas requires being fair and just in terms of enforcing, interpreting and enacting laws. It also requires providing women with training to enhance their skills and expand their knowledge. That shall improve women's competitiveness in political areas (Bayeh, 2016).

According to Mlambo et al. (2019), women engagement in political activities is affected by extent of enjoying civil liberties, women engagement in the labour market, political culture, human development index, and the electoral process. It is also affected by wars, suffering from violence (including sexual violence). It is also affected by cultural and traditional norms. It is also affected by the performance of the government (e.g. its performance in implementing the gender equality-related policies and decisions). It is affected by the extent of adopting a democratic

leadership style by the government. The extent of adopting such leadership style shall positively affect the degree to which women enjoy their rights, including their political rights (Mlambo et al., 2019).

8. Empirical studies

Al-Azzam et al. (2010) aimed to explore the extent of political awareness among women in rural areas in Jordan. They aimed to explore the political engagement level of women in these areas. They aimed to explore the relationship between both of those variables. They adopted a descriptive analytical approach. They used a questionnaire. The sample consists from 325 women living in these areas. SPSS was used. Several results were reached. The extent of political awareness among women is low. The political engagement level of women in these areas is low. There is a significant relationship between political engagement and awareness among those women. In addition, the reasons that hinder women from political participation include: having too many family responsibilities, the disapproval of husband (or another family member), and lack of interest in engaging in the election and voting process. They include: poor political awareness and poor trust in the election system.

Al-Kharouf, and Al-Hussein (2013) aimed to explore the factors that affected Jordanian women's probabilities to win the Parliamentary Elections in 2007. They adopted descriptive, qualitative and quantitative approaches. They used a questionnaire to collect data from 7 women who are members in the Parliament. The latter women were selected randomly. Interviews were conducted with 28 male and female individuals who have much expertise in the political and election fields. The researcher found that there are economic, personal, social, political and family factors that affect such probabilities (Al-Kharouf, and Al-Hussein, 2013).

Regarding the economic factors, they include: women's financial ability to fund the election campaign. They include: the amount of financial support received by family members and the members of the clan for such funding. 43.5% of the

respondents believe that women's financial independency affect their probabilities to win the election. In addition, women's control over her financial resources affect their probabilities. Regarding the personal factors, they include: women's academic qualification, age, place of residence, employment status, receiving training courses, and self-confidence (Al-Kharouf, and Al-Hussein, 2013).

Regarding the social factors, they include: marital status, customs & traditions, giving priority to the opinion of the clan leader, and the dominance of man.. They include: the extent of women's engagement in social events, and voluntarily activities and joining private organizations. They include: the extent of women's support for each other. They include: the number and age of women's children. They include: the way of raising up girls. For instance, many people raise up their girls in a manner that that discourage their trust in their skills and leadership capabilities (Al-Kharouf and Al-Hussein, 2013).

Regarding the political factors, they include: shortcoming in legislations and poor political knowledge and awareness. They include: the political connections and background of the family and the lack of women's political experience. They include: the government's amount of efforts to activate women's role in politics (Al-Kharouf, and Al-Hussein, 2013).

Kassa (2015) aimed to explore the challenges hindering women in Ethiopia from engaging in political activities. He conducted a meta-analysis. He collected data from books, reports, and studies. He found there are political, economic, social, educational and cultural reasons challenges. Regarding the economic challenges, they include: women's poor socio-economic status. They include: the scarcity of employment opportunities and the dominance of men in women in financial areas. They include the financial reliance women on men. The cultural challenges include: the dominance of the patriarchal culture in society. Due to such culture, women can take decisions independently. Regarding the educational challenges, they include: unequal access to higher

education opportunities, poor professional skills and low academic qualification. They include: lack of political knowledge and awareness. The social challenges include: women's self-confidence. They include: assigning more domestic chores and family care responsibilities to women. They include: negative attitudes towards women's leadership capabilities. The political challenges include: having negative attitudes towards the government and the political activities. They include: the prevalence of corruption discourages women from political engagement. They include: having many candidates winning the election through illegal and unethical methods discourages women from political engagement.

Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016) aimed to explore the challenges hindering Jordanian women from engaging in political activities. They selected a purposive sample consisting from 80 women. They used a questionnaire to collect data. It was found that there are media-related challenges and social & cultural, political, legal and economic challenges in this regard. Regarding the social & cultural challenges, they include: customs and traditions, favouritism, and lack of women's political knowledge and awareness. They include: men's rejection for having women as their leaders and women's low academic qualification. They include: women's poor awareness about their significance of their role in politics. They include: the poor awareness among the members of the society about the significance of activating the women's role in politics. They include: the dominance of the culture of taboo in society (Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab, 2016).

Regarding the legal and political challenges, they include: the inactive role of women in political parties. The current laws and legislations don't provide women with all their rights. Some legislations aren't implemented. Regarding the economic challenges, they include the poor financial status of some women and the men's dominance over women in financial issues. They include inequality between men and women in terms of the amount of money to be paid for funding election campaign. They include: the poor

contribution of women's organizations in funding the election campaigns of women. Some women fear quitting their job to run for election, because winning the election isn't guaranteed (Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab, 2016).

Regarding the media-related challenges, they include: the refrainment of media channels from promoting knowledge about the role of women in political areas. The refrainment of media channels from addressing political issues related to women. Media channels address women-related issues in a poor and inefficient manner. There aren't many media programs that promote awareness among women. Many media channels portray women as being dominated by men and consumers of make-up only. Many media channels shed a light mainly on the conventional social roles of women only without shedding a light on the other roles of women (Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab, 2016).

Nasarat et al. (2017) aimed to explore the opportunities available for women in Karak, Tafieleh and Maan to exercise their social, economic, civil and political rights. They aimed to explore the challenges hindering women in these cities in Jordan from exercising their political rights. They collected data from a stratified sample consisting from 1155 women. Data was collected through making interviews and using a questionnaire. It was found that the volume of such opportunities is moderate. In addition, the challenges hindering women from exercising their political rights include: customs & traditions, nepotism & favouritism, having many family responsibilities, the dominance of husband of father, low academic qualification level, low self-confidence, poor financial status, the high of costs of political predication and legislations-related challenges.

9. Methodology

9.1. Approach

The researcher adopted a descriptive analytical approach

9.2. Population and sample

The population is represented in all the Iraqi women living in Iraq. A stratified random sample was selected from the department of political sciences at

four universities in Iraq. Those universities are: (University of Baghdad, University of Kufa, Al-Nahrain University and University of Mosul). It consists from 270 BA female and male BA students. Questionnaire forms were distributed to them in an

electronic manner. 253 forms were retrieved and considered valid for analysis. Data about those BA students is shown below

Table (1): The distribution of the respondents in accordance with gender and university

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage%
Gender	Male	141	55.731
	Female	112	44.26
University	University of Baghdad	73	28.85
	University of Kufa	71	28.063
	Al-Nahrain University	42	16.600
	University of Mosul	67	26.48

N=253

55.73% of the respondents are females and 44.26% of the respondents are males.

9.3. Instrument

The researcher developed a questionnaire. He used a five point Likert scale that consists from the following rating categories. Those rating categories are: (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree). The questionnaire consists from a cover page and four parts. The cover page presents the research title and researcher's full name. It collects data about gender and name of the university. The first part of the questionnaire collects data about the social and cultural challenges. The second part of the questionnaire collects data about educational challenges. As for the third part, it collects data about political and legal challenges. The fourth part of the

questionnaire collects data about the media-related challenges.

9.4. Validity of the Instrument

After drafting the initial version of the instrument, this version was sent to 3 faculty members at a university in Iraq in order to make an assessment. The researcher informed those three experts that this assessment should be based on language, and content. One of the experts recommends deleting some words in a statement. Another expert drafted a statement and recommended adding it.

9.5. Reliability of the Instrument

The Cronbach alpha values are presented below. Those values represent reliability:

Table (2): Cronbach alpha values

No.	Area	Cronbach alpha values
1	Social and cultural challenges	0.76
2	Educational challenges	0.83
3	Political and legal challenges	0.79
4	Media-related challenges	0.89
	Overall	0.81

The values suggest that the instrument is reliable, because they are greater than 0.70 as it's suggested by Salehi & Farhang (2019)

9.6. Analysis Criteria

For classifying the means, the criteria displayed below were adopted:

Table: (3): The criteria used for the classification of means

Range	Level	Attitude
2.33 or less	Low	Negative
2.34-3.66	Moderate	Neutral
3.67 or more	High	Positive

*Source: Aljbouir (2020)

The five point Likert scale consists from 5 rating categories. Those categories are shown below

Table (4): The categories and scores of the five point Likert scale

Category	Score
Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

*Source: Aljbouir (2020)

10. Results and discussion

Means and standard deviations are identified for each area:

-What are the challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities?

Table (5): Means and standard deviations are identified of the every area targeted by the researcher

No.	Area	Mean	Std.	Level	Rank
1	Social and cultural challenges	3.84	0.34	High	4
2	Educational challenges	4.71	0.51	High	1
3	Political and legal challenges	4.45	0.45	High	2
4	Media-related challenges	4.14	0.51	High	3
	Overall	4.28	0.45	High	

The researcher found that the severity of the challenges hindering the Iraqi women from

engaging in political activities is high, because the overall mean is 4.28. That means that decisions

maker, and officials in Iraq must take effective measures for engaging women in the political decision making process and increasing the number of women holding significant political positions.

The mean of the educational challenges is 4.71. It holds rank No. 1 and deemed high. The mean of the (political and legal challenges) is 4.45. It holds rank No. 2 and deemed high. The mean of the (media-related challenges) is 4.14. It holds rank No. 3 and deemed high. The mean of the social and cultural challenges is 3.84. It holds rank No. 4 and deemed high. That means that the severity of the social, cultural, educational, political, legal, and media-related challenges hindering women in Iraq from engaging in political activities are high.

First: The social and cultural challenges:

Table (6): The severity of the social and cultural challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities

No.	Statement	Mean	Std.	Level
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities			
	Customs and traditions	4.96	0.53	High
	The dominance of the patriarchal culture	4.93	0.36	High
	Favouritism	4.90	0.33	High
	The dominance of the culture of taboo	4.97	0.12	High
	Men's rejection for having women as their leaders	4.87	0.27	High
	Giving priority to the opinion of the clan leader	4.83	0.49	High
	Extent of women's engagement in social events and occasions	2.30	0.11	Low
	Extent of women's engagement in voluntarily activities	2.24	0.29	Low
	Extent of women's support for each other in society	4.91	0.30	High
.	Number of women's children	2.29	0.11	Low
.	Age of women's children	2.07	0.42	Low
.	Negative attitudes towards women's leadership capabilities.	4.76	0.53	High
.	Having many domestic chores and family care responsibilities assigned to women	2.01	0.62	Low
	Overall	3.84	0.34	High

*Source: Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016); Al-Kharouf and Al-Hussein (2013), Kassa (2015)

Such results indicate that the Iraqi government must enact policies that aim at addressing the social, cultural, educational, political, legal, and media-related challenges hindering women from engaging in political activities and holding political positions. It indicates that more funds must be dedicated by the Iraqi government and more studies must be conducted to address such challenges. Exerting effort to address such challenges shall enable Iraq to achieve development. Achieving development in Iraq is needed currently due to the negative impacts of COVID 19 and having conflicts over power.

The researcher found that the nature of customs and traditions in the Iraqi society hinders women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 1 is 4.96. This result is in agreement with the one concluded by Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016). It may be attributed to the fact that western customs and traditions hinder women from travelling and leaving the house for long hours or days to carry out work tasks. Thus, it would be difficult for women to hold many political positions that require that under such customs and traditions.

The researcher found that the dominance of the patriarchal culture in Iraq, hinders women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 2 is 4.93. This result is deemed consistent with the one reached through the study of Kassa (2015). It may be attributed to the fact that the ones adopting patriarchal ideology believe that the power of making decisions must be enjoyed by men only. The ones adopt such an ideology believe that men are superior to women and men should be given priority when voting for the candidates running for a political position.

The researcher found that Giving priority to the opinion of the clan leader hinders women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 6 is 4.83. The latter result is attributed to the fact that the Iraqi society gives much significance to the opinions and decisions made by clan leaders. Clan leaders in Iraq adopt patriarchal ideas and give priority to men over women when recommending them to hold political offices. That shall hinder women in Iraq from engaging in political life.

The researcher found that the extent of women's support for each other in society hinders women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 9 is 4.91. This result is deemed consistent with the one reached through the study of Al-Kharouf and Al-Hussein (2013). It indicates that women in Iraqi society don't support each other in political areas and activities. However, providing such support shall enable women in Iraq to reach higher political positions and activate women's role in achieving political reforms and development.

Second: Educational challenges

Table (7): The severity of the educational *challenges* hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities

No.	Statement	Mean	Std.	Level
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities			
	Women's low academic qualification	4.68	0.22	High
	Unequal access to higher education opportunities	4.89	0.29	High
	Women's poor political knowledge and awareness	4.76	0.61	High
	Inadequacy of the training courses received by women about political knowledge	4.65	0.78	High
	Inadequacy of the training courses received by women for developing their professional skills	4.61	0.69	High
	Overall	4.71	0.51	High

*Source: Al-Kharouf, and Al-Hussein (2013), Kassa (2015), Nasarat et al. (2017)

The researcher found that women's low academic qualification in Iraq hinders them from engaging in

political activities, because the mean of statement 1 is 4.68. The latter result is consistent with the one

found by Nasarat et al. (2017). It is attributed to the fact that holding political offices and playing an active role in political parties require having university degrees. In fact, holding some key political positions requires holding graduate degree.

The researcher found that unequal access to higher education opportunities in Iraq hinders them from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 2 is 4.89. This result is attributed to the fact that many women in Iraq are deprived from enjoying their right to enrol in universities due to the patriarchal ideologies. Such deprivation shall not enable women to join the labour market nor contribute to achieving economic and political development.

The researcher found that the inadequacy of the training courses received by women in Iraq for developing their professional skills hinders them from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 4 is 4.61. This result is in agreement with the one reached by Kassa (2015). It

Third: The political and legal challenges

Table (8): The *severity of the political and legal challenges* hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities

No.	Statement	Mean	Std.	Level
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities			
	Women's poor trust in the election system	4.53	0.73	High
	The government's inadequate efforts to activate women's role in politics	3.65	0.28	Moderate
	lack of women's political experience	3.60	0.24	Moderate
	the lack of political connections	4.49	0.19	Moderate
	Having many candidates winning the election through illegal and unethical methods discourages women from political engagement	5.78	0.36	High
	The prevalence of corruption discourages women from political engagement.	4.83	0.55	High
	having negative attitudes towards the government and the political activities.	4.25	0.41	High
	Shortcoming in the laws and legislations	4.47	0.87	High
	Overall	4.45	0.45	High

*Source: Kassa (2015), Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016); Al-Kharouf and Al-Hussein (2013)

indicates that the government and the managements of universities and civil society institutions don't provide attention to developing Iraqi women's professional skills. Such lack of attention shall negatively women's ability to hold political positions and plan political activities.

The researcher found that Iraqi women's poor political knowledge and awareness hinders them from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 3 is 4.76. This result is in agreement with the one found by the study of Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016). It is attributed to the fact that many women in Iraq suffer from illiteracy and many women in Iraq leave school before finishing the secondary school stage. Those women shall not be capable to join political parties and hold political positions, because engaging in political activities requires having adequate knowledge about social, political and economic issues.

The researcher found that government's inadequate efforts to activate women's role in politics play a moderate role in hindering Iraqi women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 2 is 3.65. The latter result indicates that the Iraqi government must exert more effort to empower women in political areas. It indicates that the Iraqi government must take measures to grant women more powers in making political decisions.

The researcher found that the shortcoming in the laws and legislations, hindering Iraqi women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 8 is 4.47. The latter result is in agreement with the one found by Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016). It indicates that the Iraqi laws and

Fourth: Media-related challenges

Table (9): The severity of the media *challenges* hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities

No.	Statement	Mean	Std.	Level
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities			
	the refrainment of many local media channels from promoting knowledge about the role of women in political areas.	4.76	0.46	High
	The refrainment of many media channels from addressing political issues related to women.	4.70	0.38	High
	The refrainment of many local media programs from promoting political awareness among women.	2.18	0.95	Low
	Portraying women as being dominated by men and consumers of make-up only through many local media channels.	4.93	0.27	High
	Overall	4.14	0.51	High

*Source: Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016)

The researcher found that the refrainment of many local media channels from promoting knowledge about the role of women in political areas hinders Iraqi women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 1 is 4.76. This result is in agreement with the one found by Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016). It indicates that decisions makers in local media channels must seek presenting documentary movies and more news

legislations must be amended to empower women in political activities and give Iraqi women a voice in the political field.

The researcher found that the prevalence of corruption discourages Iraqi women from political engagement because the mean of statement 6 is 4.83. The latter result is in agreement with the one found by Kassa (2015). It is attributed to the fact that the corruption in Iraq is prevalent in Iraqi society. It indicates that measures must be taken to fight against corruption in general and political corruption in particular. Such measures shall contribute to activating women's role in politics in Iraq.

about the role of women in political areas in Iraq. That shall make Iraqi women believe in themselves and their abilities to engage in politics.

The researcher found that refrainment of many local media channels from addressing political issues related to women, hinders Iraqi women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 2 is 4.70. This result indicates that local

media channels must hold more interviews to address political issues related to women, such as: the shortcomings in laws which hinder women from political engaging. Through such interviews, suggestions must be made to address such shortcomings. Addressing such issues by the media channels shall increase women representation in the parliament and empower women in politics in Iraq.

The researcher found that portraying women as being dominated by men and consumers of make-up only on many local media channels hinders Iraqi women from engaging in political activities, because the mean of statement 4 is 4.93. This result is consistent with the one found through the article of Al-Rawashdeh and Al-A'rab (2016). It indicates that officials must take measures to ensure that local media channels portray women in a positive manner and activate the role of the media in fighting against the patriarchal ideologies. If media channels play such a positive role, women in Iraq shall be motivated to compete men in the field of politics.

11. Conclusion

The researcher concluded that the severity of the social, cultural, educational, political, legal, and media-related challenges hindering women Iraq from engaging in political activities are high. In terms of social and cultural challenges, the challenges hindering women in Iraq from engaging in political activities include: customs and traditions, the dominance of the patriarchal culture, favouritism, and the dominance of the culture of taboo. They also include: men's rejection for having women as their leaders and giving priority to the opinion of the clan leader.

Regarding the educational challenges hindering women in Iraq from engaging in political activities, they include: women's low academic qualification, and unequal access to higher education opportunities. They include: women's poor

political knowledge and awareness and the Inadequacy of the training courses received by women about political knowledge.

Regarding the political and legal challenges hindering women in Iraq from engaging in political activities, they include: having shortcoming in the laws and legislations, and having negative attitudes towards the government and the political activities. They include: the prevalence of corruption discourages women from political engagement. They include: having many candidates winning the election through illegal and unethical methods discourages women from political engagement.

Regarding the media-related challenges hindering women in Iraq from engaging in political activities, they include: the refrainment of many local media channels from promoting knowledge about the role of women in political areas. They include: the refrainment of many media channels from addressing political issues related to women. They include: Portraying women as being dominated by men and consumers of make-up only on many local media channels.

12. Recommendations

The researcher recommends:

- Holding awareness-raising lectures at Iraqi universities and public and private facilities for promoting awareness about the significance of increasing women engagement in political activities. Such lectures should be organized and funded by the government.
- Distributing pamphlets in Iraqi universities and public and private facilities for promoting awareness about the significance of increasing women engagement in political activities.
- Embedding ideas in university and school curricula in Iraqi for promoting awareness about the significance of increasing women engagement in political activities.

Appendix: The Questionnaire Form

This appendix presents the questionnaire form used for collecting data:

Questionnaire Form

Hello,
My name is Ahmad. I am a PhD student. I am

conducting a research titled: (The challenges hindering the Iraqi women from engaging in political activities: Empirical study). In order to conduct this research, I developed this questionnaire to collect data from you. Please, fill in this questionnaire form. The collected data is considered confidential. It shall be used for meeting research-related goals only

Please, circle the correct option

A)- I am ☐ a male ☐ a female

B)- I am a student at

☐ University of Baghdad

☐ University of Kufa

☐ Al-Nahrain University

☐ University of Mosul

Part 1: Please, put the tick symbol (✓) in the place that represents your view

First: Social and cultural challenges

No.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities					
	Customs and traditions					
	The dominance of the patriarchal culture					
	Favouritism					
	The dominance of the culture of taboo					
	Men's rejection for having women as their leaders					
	The opinion of the clan leader					
	Extent of women's engagement in social events and occasions					
	Extent of women's engagement in voluntarily activities					
	Extent of women's support for each other in society					
	Number of women's children					
	Age of women's children					
	Negative attitudes towards women's leadership capabilities.					

	Having many domestic chores and family care responsibilities assigned to women					
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Second: Educational *challenges*

No.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities					
	Women's low academic qualification					
	Unequal access to higher education opportunities					
	Women's poor political knowledge and awareness					
	Inadequacy of the training courses received by women about political knowledge					
	Inadequacy of the training courses received by women for developing their professional skills					

Third: Political and legal challenges

No.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities					
	Women's poor trust in the election system					
	The government's inadequate efforts to activate women's role in politics					
	lack of women's political experience					

	the lack of political connections					
	Having many candidates winning the election through illegal and unethical methods discourages women from political engagement					
	The prevalence of corruption discourages women from political engagement.					
	having negative attitudes towards the government and the political activities.					
	Shortcoming in the laws and legislations					

Fourth: Media-related challenges

No.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	I believe that the following items hinder Iraqi women from engaging in political activities					
	the refrainment of many local media channels from promoting knowledge about the role of women in political areas.					
	The refrainment of many media channels from addressing political issues related to women.					
	The refrainment of many local media programs from promoting political awareness among women.					
	Portraying women as being dominated by men and consumers of make-up only through many local media channels.					

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