

**Women's Role in the Political System in
Jordan-women's political participation
Fayez Al Zuraikat ***

Abstract

This research paper concerns with the organization and function, and the future of feminist movement in Jordan. The paper relies on several publications and studies in Arabic and English languages. It also obtains data from field interviews with prominent, activists women in the movement who are also the chair persons of several feminist associations. The paper concludes that women in Jordan recently began to develop their own strength and consciousness of the need for change of their role in the society beyond their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

This clear tone of optimism reflect a joint determination from different groups in the women's organizations, government agencies and civil societies to realize women's participation in the political process.

The Hashemite Queens also work to encourage women's organisations to realize gender equality.

Although, there are several obstacles which need to be overcome, mainly the patriarchal nature of the Jordanian society which hindered the work of different groups to serve and advance women's political participation on a full scale in both public and private sector.

Thus one can speak of women presence more than women's participation in the membership of governmental and non-governmental agencies and departments.

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دراسة وظائف ومؤسسات ومستقبل الحركة النسائية في الأردن

فايز الزريقات

الملخص

تهتم هذه الورقة بدراسة وظائف ومؤسسات ومستقبل الحركة النسائية في الأردن. وتعتمد الدراسة على عدد من المؤلفات باللغتين العربية والانجليزية، بالإضافة إلى تأمين معلومات من خلال مقابلات ميدانية مع عدد من السيدات الناشطات في الحركة النسائية في الأردن، واللواتي هن في نفس الوقت يرأسن الهيئات الإدارية للتنظيمات والاتحادات النسائية في الأردن. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى أن النساء في الأردن قد بدأن حديثاً العمل على تطوير قدراتهن من أجل القيام بدور مهم في المجتمع يتجاوز دورهن التقليدي كأمهات وزوجات. إن النظرة الإيجابية هذه تعكس التصميم المشترك من مختلف الأطراف من منظمات نسائية وحكومية ومؤسسات مجتمع مدني من أجل تحقيق عدالة ومساواة الجنس في النظام السياسي الأردني، ومن أهم هذه الأدوار هو الدور الذي قامت به وتقوم به ملكات الأردن منذ بداية استقلال المملكة وبداية نشاط النسوة من أجل تشجيع التنظيمات النسائية لتحقيق مساواة الجنس.

ولكن لا زال هناك العديد من العقبات التي يجب التغلب عليها وأهم هذه العقبات هي الطبيعة الذكورية- الأبوية للمجتمع الأردني التي تعيق عمل مختلف الأطراف لتحقيق المشاركة السياسية للمرأة بشكل كامل في القطاعين العام والخاص.

كذلك فإن الحديث يكون أدق عن حضور المرأة في الأجهزة الإدارية والمهنية والسياسية الرسمية وغير الرسمية أكثر من أن المرأة تشارك فعلياً في الحياة السياسية.

INTRODUCTION

In general, women in various countries have only recently begun to focus their attention and action to advance their role in the society. Women start this effort by getting themselves to look beyond their own individual problems, to pay attention to the social, cultural, political concern they shared as females. This feminism movement has spread beyond women in a single country to expand through the world. It has gained this universal extension when the United Nations has proclaimed the year 1975, as the International Women's Year, which aimed to look at what women around the world are doing and to listen to what they are saying and to what others are saying about them.

Yet in most developed and developing countries, there is a real gap between official policies and laws which bestow full civic rights for women, and the reality of women's daily lives. This gap is encouraged and widened by the persistence of patriarchal attitudes still accepted by most people in the society.

This research paper is concerned particularly with the role of Jordanian women in the political system. their role is enhanced by the virtue of the undergoing rapid political, social and technological changes, in the Jordanian political system, which have far-reaching effect on their participation in the general activities of the society. In Jordan, like other developing countries, the rate of change in the economic and legal system toward supporting more role for women in the society, is much more rapid than it is in the political aspects.

Objectives of this study.

This study investigates the evolution of the Jordanian women position and rights in the national political system.

Women in Jordan-as in many developing countries—only recently are beginning to develop their own strength and consciousness of the need to change. The feminist movement in the Jordanian political system aroused from this belief among women, to organize into associations, to ensure social change and policy reforms in order to bring about fundamental changes which will lead to the recognition of the women role in social, political, and economic life of the society at large.

The feminist movement in Jordan has been enhanced by the 1974 electoral law which gave women the right to vote and nominate themselves for the parliamentary elections of the house of deputies. Also in the same year (1974), Jordanian women established their first association which is the Jordanian Women Union (JWU).

This paper will shed light on the following aspects of the feminist movement in the Jordanian political system:

1. The organizational structure and functions of the movement .
2. The various aspects participation of woman in the Jordanian political system, with several notes concerning the difficulties they faced in Jordanian Society.
3. General discussion of the main factors effecting women's roles

Research Problem :-

Jordanian feminist movement is a new social and political phenomenon in the Jordanian political system at both the organizational and functional levels. This movement has been enhanced and maintained by legislations and governmental policies and programs, which assured the principles of equality in various aspects.

However, in reality there is a gap between official government programs and policies which enhance women's role in the society at large, and the traditional behavior and attitudes of a large number of the population. This gap is represented in the tension which is still rising between modernized beliefs of women full scale role in public life and tendencies to restrict primary responsibilities for women in running household and family. This paper discusses the dilemma of women's role in the Jordanian political system and the aspiration for women participation in political life, and the responsibilities of their daily life as mothers and wives.

Theoretical Framework

The backbone of political liberalism, is the conservation of political rights and civil liberties the participation of a large number of

the population in enhancing the public interest that means, the general body of citizens (men and woman) is able to participate in controlling and directing the issues and problems of the common good (1)

The arousing of common feelings across the world for more roles for women is enhanced by the liberal trend which encourage the efforts to change the societal stereo-type concerning the limited role of women which was enhanced by the United Nations proclamation of the year 1975 as the International Women's Year.(1) Feminist movements throughout the world, there after, witnessed a powerful trend to extend its aims beyond social and cultural rights, and starts to concentrate on political rights, such as the right of women to vote and nominate themselves for local and national elections for national governmental and legislative posts (2). Also in many countries around the world governments initiate laws, and policies to encourage participation of women in different economic, cultural and social activities. Also gradual change in the traditional societal image towards women role started to spread in different communities. This change recognizes a new role for women beyond their role as wives and mothers Traditional. Women through countries around the world start to participate in many social, political and economical activities. Although in most countries there is still real gap between official government pronouncement and legislations, and traditional behaviors and attitudes towards, equal suffrage of women.(3)

This inescapable universal scheme of limited role for women is strengthen by the patriarchal belief which is the main source of practices, attitudes and thinking in male superiority and female inferiority. Patriarchal belief is based upon four main elements,; First the physical strength of the male, which makes him more active and stronger than the female, which enable him to impose his domination socially and economically on the family. The second element arouse from cultural and anthropological studies which stipulate that authority in the family and in the tribe, and on the national sphere is still invested in the male. So the male is the head of the household, and still dominates the public and private life of the family.

The third element of the male superiority is the religious argument

which justified the superiority of the male in the family and society based upon the permissiveness and freedom for males and strict chastity and fidelity for females. All the main religions in the world reflect the attitudes and moral values of the male priests, and deepening the concept of the moral imperfections and weak virtue of the female. The fourth element is the economic and social argument which stipulates that males are the main and only source of income for the family, and the owners of the property and the managers of the production which women were historically excluded from ownership and disposal of property.(4)

Review of Related Literature

There are two main international studies about the status of women in the world. The first study is entitled “Women in the World”, the volume is the result of a series of seminar meetings sponsored jointly by the Department of Political Science of the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the center of the study of Democratic Institutions, the volume was edited by Lynne. B Iglitzin, and Ruth Roos (1973).

The study stated that women in different countries have only recently begun to listen to one another and to pay attention of their leaders and to their unmet needs which cut across cultural and national boundaries. The study considered the United Nations announcement of the (1975) as “International Women Year” as the beginning of the feminist movement in most countries. It is the starting point where women start to look beyond their own individual problems, to the social and cultural concerns they shared as females. The most hopeful development in this sense, the study added, is the fact that women are beginning to develop their own strength and consciousness to the need for change.

But the study noted that in spite of progress in the status of women on the legal, political, social and economic rights in most countries, women’s lives at home and family remain largely traditional.

Concerning Muslim women, the study indicated that the structural position of women in the Muslim world underwent little change. The erosion of old customs and positive exploitation of both legal

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enactment and socially generated developmental changes, have improved women's status in almost all Muslim countries.

Although the study expected that the growth of feminist movement in the Muslim world—one that would involve women at all social levels—will probably not occur in the immediate future. But recently one can say that many activist women in different Muslim countries took the lead and start to organize in some sort of organizations to advocate for women right as a first step towards organize feminist movement as in the case in Jordan recently.

The second international study is entitled “A short History of women's” rights by Eugene A. Hecker 2d ed (1973). The study traced the history of women's rights from the days of Augustus to the present time. It deals with the condition of women with special reference to England and the United states of America under Roman law, and the early Christian church and under canon law. The study considers five of the most serious objections to the granting of equal suffrage to women as a full citizen under the law. These objections, which are according to the study, the base for male superiority and female inferiority are:

1. The theological argument which is based upon the distinctly evil conception of woman.
2. The physiological argument which admits that the constitution of woman is too delicate compared with the man.
3. The social and political argument which stipulate that if women are given equal rights with men, the basis of the family life and the state itself is undermined.
4. The intellectual argument, which is based on the inferiority of woman.
5. The moral argument which describes the woman as too impulsive, too easily swayed by her emotions to hold responsible positions.

Having considered the five capital objections to the concession of equal suffrage, the study indicated that there is little difference in the aptitudes and powers of the sexes, neither physically, nor morally, or

intellectually. It is possible to conceive of each sex as the complement of the other, and between complements there can be no superior or inferior ones according to the study.

Concerning studies about feminist movement in Jordan and the male-female relations, a study entitled “The Women’s Movement in Jordan” by Ibtesam al-Atiyat (2003). The study aimed to review and analyze the discourse within women’s activists as well as the dynamics of the women’s organizations. It also concentrated on the uniqueness of the Jordanian women’s movement in terms of structural progress and its impact on women’s role in the country. The study final comments explained the relationship connecting advancement of women’s movement to the impact of societal and state modernization. This fact leads one to say, that any project targeting the emancipation of women will not succeed unless it tries to change conservative attitudes and images toward the role of the women.

The other study about feminist movement in Jordan, was conducted in cooperation between Konrad Adenauer foundation and Al Kutba Institute for Human development. It entitled “Jordanian Women’s Guide to participation in public and political life”(1999). The study revealed the history of Jordanian women’s political participation, and the organizational structure of the present women’s movement. It also discussed cultural, social, and psychological factors in the Jordanian society that hamper women’s participation in public and political life. The study also emphasizes the need for women to pursue their political aspirations with clear goals and plans, self confidence and a readiness to negotiate other parties concerned with women suffrage, in order to pursue a new role in society.

Other study conducted by Bareah Nagshabandi, 2001. entitled “The Women Political Participation in Jordan and certain Arab Countries”. The study emphasized the ability of Jordanian women to carry out their political, economic, and social roles effectively. The study discredit conservative trends that used to launch a campaign against equal suffrage for women in Jordanian and other Arab countries, as their objections are meaningless. The study concluded that enhancing women participation in various activities require a

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comprehensive strategies and programs by the government and civil society's organizations to change the traditional image about the role of women by different social, economic and political starta in the political system.

Part I : The organizational and Function of the Feminist movement in Jordan:

Women organizations in Jordan are divided into two types in accordance with the nature of their structures and objectives, The first is social and charitable, governed by the law of organizations and social association issued in 1966. The second consists of organizations concerned with the civil rights of women, namely, equality social justice, political participation and economic rights. These organizations often make up the basic unit for the analysis of efforts to improve women's conditions in general, and they are the following:-

1- General Federation of Jordanian women (GGJW):

The general federation was established on. September 5, 1981. The second article of its law stipulated that, " A federation is to be founded in the kingdom and is to be called General Federation of Jordanian Women (GFJW) with its center in Amman, and it has the right to establish branches in the various governorates in the kingdom.(5)

The GFJW aims at developing women's abilities and their skills in the various domains to intensify their active contribution to the development of society in the economic and political domains. The federation comprises many women's societies and the various clubs, which aim to vitalize the role of women in the development of society in general and of women in particular.

In the climate of democratic change, the Kingdom witnessed in the aftermath of the parliamentary general elections of October 9,1989, the GFJW has amended its statute in order to broaden the scope of membership so that it will comprise, not only women's associations – members of the GFJW – but also membership of women in their personal capacity to enhance its role and broaden its representation of women. Such amendment has led to the acceptance of few thousands of women as members.

But the ordinary individual membership of the federation was neglected and banned by the government after the elections of the federation on August of 1990 which has been won by the representative of the Islamic and the leftist trends in the women movement.(6)

The Objectives of the federation are aiming to the integration of women in the social, cultural, political and economic process and policies of the society. Initiation of training and rehabilitation programs and projects to enhance women skills and abilities and provide them with jobs in both the public and private sector. And to conduct studies and researches pertaining to advance women's role in the society on both the national and Arab levels.

The federation is composed recently of 72 women's associations and societies. Each association elect two members to the executive committee of the federation each year.(7)

2- The Jordanian Women Union (JWU).

The main objectives of the union are to enlighten women on their social, economic and political role in the society, and support them in practicing and exercising their rights as citizens, workers, housewives. The union also advocates women to conduct political activities, such as participation in the general elections of the house of representatives. Social issues and services are an important part of the union activities, such as violence against women, discriminating laws and legislations, mother-child care centers, as well as educating women concerning their rights and duties in the political system.

The union also aims to maintain a role for women in Jordan to participate in the social, political and economic development of the society, and advance the role of civil societies and endorses the democratization reforms to secure better standard of living for the women in particular and Jordanians in general.

The union membership is opened to every individual woman, who should accept the basic system of the union and support its aims, plans, policies, and strategies. The structure of the union is based on several specialized executive committees.

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The union has branches in several cities such as Irbid, Salt, Zarka, Madaba, and Aqaba. The highest authority of the union is the general conference which is consisting of all members of administrative organization for all branches.(8)

The union was established in 1974 after the approval of the Ministry of Interior.

the union faced difficulties with the government which resulted in dissolving the union in 1981, because of the activities of political parties within the union. Then it resumed its activities after a judicial decision abrogated the government resolution.(9)

3- Princess Basma center for women's affairs : -

The center was established in 1996 to develop the status of women and activate their role in the society, by providing and offering information and facilities to governmental and non-governmental commissions which are interested and concerned with women issues in Jordan. The center also started several training programs in order to improve the status of women and integrate them through the sustainable development process. The center further aims at raising awareness among women in their role in the society, public awareness in women issues and increasing participation of women in the plans and programs of the society at large. Thus the center concentrates on providing diverse educational programs, conducting workshops, media campaigns and seminars to meet its objectives and to enhance policies concerning women's issues.(10)

On the level of societal activities, the center aims at involving women's groups in advocacy work on the community level through forming interests and pressure groups through encourage women and youngwomen to be a candidates for municipals and parliamentary seats.

The center is now taking a new direction, by concentrating on both young women and young men to assume effective role in advancing their societies.(11)

4- Arab women organization (AWO)

The idea of establishing this organization goes back to 1954, when more than one hundred Jordanian women gathered in Amman to form an organization for Jordanian women. But the (AWO) faced many difficulties with the authorities because the interference of radical, national and communist parties in its activities. This interference pushed the authorities to dissolve the organization. Then the group of women activist renewed their efforts in 1970, and established the (AWO). The organization is aiming at gender quality and social justice for both males and females in the society.(12)

The (AWO) then started to concentrate on methods and programs to strengthen women economic activities and to insure stable income for them. Since 1990, the AWO added to its agenda activities concerning human rights, political participation for women in the general politics. Also the activities of the (AWO) concentrates on helping poor families especially families in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. Their activities ar mainly of political nature, but other important activities such as family planning, reproductive health as well as environmental protection are often on the working agenda of the (AWO).

5- The Jordanian national commission for women (JNCW), and the Jordanian national forum for women (JNFW):-

These two commissions which established in the 90s, are working to further serve women issues at the governmental and non-governmental levels. The JNCW which was established in 1992 as a response to calls from the United Nations to establish a national committee to draw up general policies and identifying the priorities of women in Jordan, such as amending existing legislation or enacted new legislations concerning the general status of women in Jordan. The JNFW is concerned with applying the legislation on the ground and in the field to enhance women's participation in decision-making process, and spreading awarness of the general strategy aimed at improving women roles in different fields of activities within the political system.(14)

Another women's organization was established after the Beijing

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world conference of 1995, namely, the human forum for women's rights (HFWR).

The aim of this organization is to conduct field research and studies concerning the facets of violence against women in the society. It also established a counseling center to help women who are victims of domestic violence in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental institutions, on the national and international levels.

6- There are several women associations concerned with social, vocational training to the young women. These associations are the Young women's Christian Association and the Young women's Muslim Association. These associations serve women of different racial, social and religious backgrounds in Jordan. They conduct several training and professional programs and initiatives to develop skills in financial, educational, vocational and social need of their members and beneficiaries. They also provide members with cultural and social work and leadership training. The other association in this aspect, is the Business and professional Women's club (15). The club which has about 350 members aims to encourage females and to enhance their abilities by educational and occupational training, in order to enable them to manage their own business and to have lasting income.

Although, feminist movement in Jordan had established its institutional structure, its role in advancing women equal suffrage is still very remote. And the argument that the woman's place is in the home caring her husband and children, and that woman is by nature intended to obey and can't match herself with man is still very strong in Jordanian society.(16)

Part 2: Obstacles facing Feminist movement and the various aspects of women's political participation in the Jordanian political system:

There is an agreement among social scientists, who are concerned with women's civil rights, that discriminatory practices persist in most places and almost in every country, western and non-western, industrialized and rural, modern and pre-modern. This act of

discrimination is represented mainly in denying women access to positions of prestige in the political systems and that women's primary role is being mothers and wives.(17)

The struggle of women in the world in general and in the Arab world in particular, for equal opportunity in the society with men is hindered by the practice of discrimination which puts limitations and restrictions on women's aspiration to participate effectively in the political, social and economic development of the society. This belief is based on the social perception of women's inferiority which has been dictated by the social perception towards women for centuries and is still govern male female relationship in most societies of the world. This mode of thinking led to channel women into traditional job categories, and made them dependent upon fathers or husbands for, income, permission to go to school or to work and determined the sort of their behavior in the political and economic facets in public life and even in their private life. This mode of behavior has a great negative effect on the feminist movement in general as well as on the feminist movement in Jordan in particular.(18)

This mode of behavior is based on the patriarchal thinking which believes in male superiority and female inferiority. It is a societal heritage which generates, conservative attitudes institutional practice and construction of images towards the role of women in the society. Women, according to patriarchal ideology, lack the merits necessary for ruling and they can achieve full goodness and virtue in their lives only by union with the naturally ruling element which is the male.(19)

In Jordanian society patriarchal belief has a great negative effect on the status of women. This belief is based on several arguments. The first is a socio-religious argument, which is based on the subordination of the female to the male according to the three main religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Women regard as the distinctive element of evil in and the cause of misery in this world. Also the tenets of all major religions reflect the attitudes and moral values of the male priests.(20)

Salwa Naser the coordinator of the National Committee on

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Women Affairs and a prominent activist for women rights and equality in Jordan, argues that Jordanian society is a male oriented arena, male is regards as superior to female members even at the national level. She adds, although the constitution doesn't discriminate between Jordanians in duties and rights, and legislations have been enacted to realize equality, women in Jordan still have a long way of struggle to change the perception of male-society toward them. She also argues that women have obtain a progressive political and economical status in the society, but it was on the basis of a grant from the male more than as a legitimate right of women. Mrs. Naser admits that the patriarchal conception is supported by the tribal social system deepening by male oriented society legitimized by religious creeds and interpretation by religious references, has participated in reserving the belief that the best role of women is as mothers and wives.(21)

This belief is widespread in the Jordanian society, and widely accepted by a large portion of the society even from a considerable number of females in the Jordanian society, she confirms.

Nadia Al-Aloul a writer and a prominent activist in the field of women rights and the chairperson of the national committee on liberty and democratic aspiration in Jordan, fully agrees that Jordanian society is a male oriented society, and strongly holds the belief of man superiority and that women are subordinate to men. Al-Aloul notices that even women obtain certain political and economic rights, but women are found in smaller numbers in leadership posts than is expected given their proportion of the population. She adds that in spite the profound educational opportunities opening for women, and women are increasingly enroll in the universities, there is still a prevalence of patriarchal attitudes toward women's role in the society, which regards the husband as the head of the family and woman's primary role as wife and mother. This belief Aloul adds, continues to hinder any fundamental change of women's status in the Jordanian society.(22)

The second argument is the political argument which is based on the belief that if women are given equal political rights with men, the

basis of the family and even the basic foundation of the society is undermined. The argument stipulates that there must be some sort of authority in the household and, naturally, it's the authority of the man. The argument believes that if women will neglect their duties as mothers and wives, and if they become concerned with politics. their image may be degrade in the society and they will loose their influence on men in the daily social life.(23)

This political argument is noticed by many activist women in the Jordanian society. Mrs. Wjdan al-Saket a member of the House of Senate in Jordan and the chairperson of the business and professional women club said that the male-oriented belief dominated the social, political and economic activities in the Jordanian society. She explains that this belief regards the male as the primary actor in the society and the others, children and women are subordinate and have no autonomy. The man, she adds, initiates the work of all activities in the society, executed them, and enjoyed its rewards which ensure his superiority in the family and in the society, The role of the women is to “cheer” the man and to facilitate, upon his request, whatever means necessary to help him accomplishes the work. She adds that in spite of drastic change of women status in Jordan on the legal and economic levels, women's political participation is still very remote. The control of decision making and major governmental and nongovernmental posts such as leadership in unions, interest groups, professional associations, high level cabinet posts and, ministries remain firmly entrenched male monopoly.(24)

Saket notices that the belief that women do not fit to a political role is still prevailing in the society. It affects the struggle of women in Jordan towards their rights for political participation. She points out that one of the main weakness of women movement is that a considerable number of women in Jordan adopt the traditional belief that political posts are monopoly for men and women may be degraded and burdened when involved in politics. This phenomenon is clear in the Jordanian universities, many female university's students indicate that politics is so much of a burden on them, they do not participate in political activities in the university, neither vote nor

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nominate themselves to students union's, elections and even don't care or bother to know about national politics or policies. Day-to day life for them, as many of them said, is much better without being involved in politics.(25)

Lila sharaf previous cabinet member and recently a member in the House of the Senate indicates that there are several obstacles facing women's political participation in Jordan. First, the weakness of the institutions of the civil society in Jordan which hindered women participation within these institutions and discourage their membership. Second, the chaotic state of the feminist political process in Jordan which did not attract or convince women to participate in political activities (26).

And third, the socio-religious traditions and beliefs about the limited role of women in the society, which put restraint over women's participation in political activities which denies women any experience to pursue political activities. Sharaf adds that even the few women who occupied political posts in the public or private sectors, they have to work and behave according to traditional norms and customs in order to be accepted in the political realm. Women should understand the "politics" of their traditional society before being involved in the political process. In other words, women should accept the belief that their political role should be limited.(27)

Eideh al-Mutlaq a previous member of the Jordanian consultative council and an activist and advocates for women political, social and economic rights. She points out whatever rights gained by the women in most cases are the result of women struggle through decades rather than a grant by man which is the general belief in the society.(28) But al-Mutlaq notices that one of the major reasons for the remote role of the women in the society is the absence of the political will in the feminist movement and in the modern leadership in both political parties and interest groups in the Jordanian political system. This absence has made it impossible to have positive thoughts and vital programs to enhance women's role as a full membership in the society, equal to man in all spheres of life. Dr. al-Matlaq adds that the stereotype culture of patriarchy trend is supported by traditional

conservative political power which hindered any activist or supporter to women's right to propose an equal suffrage in the society. She adds that women organizations also are not very effective, because they lack coordination, integration and cooperation among them. Each organization has its own agenda which is different from the others which makes them lose the spirit of dialogue and unified programs and plans, May Abo-al-Samn, a previous member of the House of the Senate and the chair women of the National committees of women in Jordan, indicates that there are several problems that obstruct the effort of women's organization in Jordan, and raises question about their representation to ordinary women. The structure of these organizations is rigid and rudimentary and disable to aggregate the interests, goals and hopes of the women's sector in urban and rural areas. This fact, she adds, is obvious in the limited number of women joining the membership of the feminist movement: Abo al-Samn notices that Women's organizations also face a financial problem, because they lack the independent income to finance their activities which undermine their autonomy and independence because they depend in great deal on the state assistance or forced to establish alliance and coordination with international institution to obtain financial assistance. This fact may explain the adoption of feminist movement in Jordan to certain strategies and programs initiated by several foreign institutions or by governmental posts. Other problems, she adds, are related to overall political chaotic which characterizes not only women organization, but also the work and organization of all civil societies in Jordan. This chaotic situation she adds has weakened the national strategies and programs of the feminist movement in Jordan, particularly the mix of feminist issues with other societal issues, such as childcare, elderly care, the disabled and other political issues on the national and pan- Arab levels. Mrs. Abo-al-Samen indicates that the feminist movement failed to attract young women in universities, because the movement lacks the programs and strategies concerned with the problems and interests of the young generation. Contemporary issues facing young females only recently have been discussed on a narrow scale without clear policies or orientations to deal seriously with issues such as employment, male-

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female social relations, generation gaps between parents with sons and daughters, conservative social ethics and modernization sentiments and consequences.

Asma Khader, a previous cabinet member and an advocate for equal suffrage for women, points out that Jordanian society is a male-oriented society in general, the belief that woman sphere is as a wife and mother more than a societal activist member specially in politics is widely accepted among males and considerable number of females in the society. Khader adds that the main obstacle in realizing the equal suffrage for women is, the lack of feminist consciousness among Jordanian women. The feeling that they should get together and work for their cause and common interest is not, at least, a dominant trend or feeling among. Mrs. Khader pointed out that may be the male is hesitant to admit the rights of women to equal suffrage, but it is in fact the weakness of women devotion to female autonomy and emancipation in the social system decreases women's organization from producing or regulating a form of public sentiments or opinion to support that political participation or to change the society's image towards their activities in the political system. The main points generated from previous interviews, stated that women in Jordan, as in most societies, suffered from stereotyping of women's role as mother and wives accepted by a large proportion of individuals and groups in the society of both gender. The same stereotyping also applied to young women. Their vocational training in and outside the home is focused on the patriarchal belief of traditional female roles as wives and mothers. They are prepare to prepare for stresses kitchen, needle arts, reception skills, teachers and secretarial jobs. They are raised and educated to take a marginal political and economical roles. On the contrary young males are trained and educated to pursue high-status jobs such as, lawyers, doctors and an active, premier political and economical roles and activities. Substantial demographic changes have accrued in Jordan during the 21 century effected mainly the population, revealed that women composed half of the total population in Jordan, which is about six millions. But their political participation is still very marginal in the political system. There is no balance between the proportion of women in the general population and their

political participation and membership in the legislative, executive and administrative authorities in the political system.

Table 1

Year	Men	Women
1984	60	0
1989	635	12
1993	531	03
1997	544	17
2003	765	54

The first table shows number of men and women candidates in parliamentary elections. The table shows that women did not run for elections until 1989. Yet the percentage of female candidates has not exceeded 3% in the best circumstances, before the elections of the 2003.

Table 2

	1989		1993		1997		2003	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
The House of senate	39	1	38	2	37	3	48	7
The House of deputies	80	0	69	1	80	0	104	6

Table 2 shows the numbers of elected and appointed members of the both houses of Jordanian parliament on the basis of gender. The rising number of women in the House of Deputies is due to the government decision to allocate six parliamentary seats as a women quota in the House of deputies before the election of the House which was conducted in 2003. It aims at encouraging Jordanians to accept the image of women as parliamentary member and as a political activists in the Jordanian political formula. Although women occupied ministerial posts in Jordan, their participation and numbers as managers in ministries and districts is no more than 5%. in the media field in both public and private sectors women do not exceed also 5%. Moreover, women participation in high ranking positions in the

private sector reached only 12.9% and in the sector of voluntary work reached 24.2%. Also women presence in the diplomatic field is very remote, they only made up 7.4% of the total diplomats in the service in the ministry of foreign affairs. Furthermore, women still suffer discrimination in the judicial sector, they make up only a very small percentage in this sector around 2.8%.

Moreover woman membership in political parties is very limited in general, on the level of rank and file membership women rarely compose 7%. While on the level of leadership position women are at the lowest level.

On the social level, the granting of equal suffrage for women to consider them as full citizens' under the law faces serious objections in the society. Marriage institution faces a crises because it is not looked upon at by society as a real partnership based on equality of interests and goods, rather it considered as a complete merging of the female in the male, and that the latter is absolute monarch of his home, which is mainly the reason of family clash.

Part 3: General discussion of the main Factors effecting women's role:

There are several factors effect the Jordanian feminist movement. First the role of the Queens of Jordan. Since its early days, women in general and feminist movement has enjoyed the support and encouragement of the Royal Hashemite queens. Hashemite queens were eager to transfer their royal prerogatives and powers granted to them by the Monarchs to obtain a legal and official ground to advance women's role in the society beyond their duties as mothers and wives. Also, royal support has generated policies, programs and initiatives enhancing women political participations, economic opportunities and social advantages as partners to men in various aspects of life.

Queens role started with the efforts of princess and later queen zein which initiated and supported the establishment of several, Voluntary and social welfare associations by several women in order to obtain rudimentary social services and financial assistance to needy families and individuals. Then queen Zein herself established a

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charitable association for orphans which is still serving and caring for orphans to the present time. The queen's efforts extended through the era of queen Alia-Al Hussein during the 1970s of last century, which witnessed the emergence of women political participation. In this period women were granted the right to vote in the general parliamentary election in 1974.

Then more women involvement in the political process was realized during the era of queen Noor-Al Hussein which extended from late 1970s to late 1990s of the last century. Four women were appointed as members of the National Consultative Council from 1978-1985, which replaced temporarily the National Assembly. Then for the first time a woman was appointed a cabinet member. Then more women were become cabinet members. In addition many women organizations were established to rally round more political participation, economic opportunities and social advantages. Feminism in Jordan then became a phenomena in the Jordanian political process.

In addition, Feminist movement has extended its scope of activities to join regional and international conferences advocate equal suffrage for women all over the world. On the international, and encouraged by queen Noor, a Jordanian women delegation attended Nairobi Conference which was held in Kenya in 1985 and the Beijing Conference which was held in china in 1995. These conferences has issued several recommendations for governments to take and implement policies, programs and strategies to enhance women political participation and economic opportunities for women. In the meantime many women were nominated themselves as candidates for the general parliamentary elections in 1989 and 1993. In 1993. a women candidate from Amman province was elected for the first time, in the general election of House of Deputies.

In addition, during this period more women were engaged in different social, economic, administrative managers, professional technicians, and many young women joined the police force and the military.

The queens support for women and Feminist movement continued through the era of Queen Rania Al-Abdullah. This period is characterized by the advancement of the roles of women beyond their roles as mothers and wives. Several legal, political and economic laws and regulations enacted by the political system to obtain adjust. Suffrage for women. On the economic level, for example, regulations concerning social security retirement civil service regulations, landlords and tenants were enacted to give women more security and assurance for their future. In addition, and on the Political level, the political system allocate in 2007 Six Seats as a quota for women in he House of Deputies. The king also appointed six women as senates in the House of senate. In the recent cabinet of prime minister Nader Al-Dahabi appoints Five women as ministers in his government. Moreover more women were appointed as general directors for several high-governmental post recently in the ministries of education, interior, and municipalities.

On the international level, Feminist organizations developed their relations and co operations with several Foreign organizations and centers, especially the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which participated in conducting several studies about women in Jordan. On the Arab level, Jordanian women participated effectively in creating Arab Women Organization to enhance and encourage more roles for women through the Arab world. Along with the efforts of the Hashemite queens, the feminist movement and women in Jordan has the continuous support and work of princess Basman the daughter of King Talal. She is involved as a main participant in planning and the execution of most national strategies, programs and policies aiming to develop women roles in the society. She supervised most of the work within and outside the feminist movement directly or through instructions or orientations to the teams involved in women issues. In a meeting concerned with women issues held in Amman in 2004.

Queen Rania indicates that (We in Jordan must attribute a great deal of success achieved in terms for women issues to the sincere ad persistent effort of princess Basma she added that prince Basma is a

source of enlightenment for us in this domain).

The second issue, is the elitist nature of the Jordanian Feminist movement's leadership. Most of the leading women and the members of the executive committees of feminist organizations are part of the elite affiliation in the society. They assume these senior positions, because they are descendants of families of higher social and economic levels, well-educated, and usually sisters or spouses of distinguished men in leading positions the political system. They are able to work on issues relating to improve and enhance women's role in a conservative, patriarchal Society, because the social flexibility of their families which enables them to move, socialize and speak freely about women's role beyond their household, without worrying about societal harassments or harsh family restrictions and surveillance to their activities, which usually hinders to a great deal, the freedom and ability of other women from other social classes from assuming these same roles.

This phenomenon has mixed effect on the feminist movement. From the positive point of view, this group of women has hold the responsibility to create environment which women advocate on matters of general policy, in a society where patriarchal structures do not encourage the recruitment of women into political activities.

They also were able to fill the vacuum in the strides towards enhancing women's political representation in political and civil institutions, especially the gap resulted from the political process and weakness of the general politics in Jordan. In addition, their liberal orientation combined with their social, economical and affiliation privileges enabled them to convince the government to allocate resources for the realization of women's political participation and economic opportunities. But, even these women are committed to enhancing women's role, their efforts and work, unfortunately, is directed to a limited number of women rather than at the societal, level, which make their scope of activity, short from reaching regular women in towns, villages, rural and remote areas in Jordan.

Their mode of work is mainly bureaucratic, based in general, on

symposium, organizing lectures, meetings, social gatherings and parties mostly in the capital. Even meetings or lectures in other provinces in the kingdom are also attended by limited number of women. They are self-appointed leadership, making their own rules and regulation that dictate and fits their own self-scheme, self indulgence, which make them unknown to the regular women in the society. The direct impact of this situation is represented in three main issues, firstly, many of the women in the leadership position who nominate themselves to the parliamentary election has failed to win seats in the House of Deputies. The government, then, appointed three of them in the House of Senate. Secondly, the political, role for women became a minor purpose for feminist leadership. Concentration in the movement effort is oriented mainly towards increasing, job opportunities awareness programs on socioeconomic Issues, encouraging women towards small income generating programs, expansion of revolving credit fund, projects of early childhood-mother-care and activities to contribute to poverty curbing in the society. Thirdly, feminist organization achieved very limited success in building a feminist consciousness among women in Jordan on national scope. Thus the feeling that they share political, social, and economic affairs and values is very remote. In addition women's organizations has failed to win the majority of women, especially the young women in the universities or in the work-places, which limited the number of its members and fans.

The third issue is concerning men attitudes towards women's role in the society. In Jordanian society men in general are reluctant to openly and firmly support or encourage more advanced roles for women beyond their roles as housewives and mothers. They are reluctant because of several social, political and personal factors.

Patriarchal belief has a great negative effect on men orientation towards women's status in the society. It regards the female as subordinate to the male. This perception gives the male guardianship of women and prevent her from enjoying her rights, and should obtain a permission from a guardian (father or husband or even son) to work, travel, study, or marry.

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Ordinary man, himself, lack social economic and political quality and, justice in society. So he doesn't consider any act of discrimination or inequality against women as a state of injustice, rather he perceive as part of societal culture and traditions. He doesn't look to the female as an equal partner on all levels. And women's political participation, in particular is not an important issue for him. Ordinary men who are less educated and has low income may fear female progress, because they are acting, based on their own inferiority and complex. They intend to push for suppressing women, denying them their rights, choking their voices and removing them from all participation in civil society. Actually not because they are religious, rather they are traditionally originated and raised with the desire of man to keep women subservient. May be he is modern in outlook, but he is in fact behave as an inferior. For the educated, liberal men, the issue of women equal suffrage is a part of their jobs as executives of governmental policiess and programs. For the non-officials of this class, they accept to incorporate the of equality of men and women, and to provide for realizing, gender equality But they proceed cautiously, because the general public viewed with suspicion men and women who advocate more role for women, especially more political activities for women as introducing foreign culture sin the society. Even men and women who work with local or foreign agencies in programs of family planning and mother-child care face determined attitudes of resistance from men and women alike.

The Fourth point is the role of the government in enhancing the women's political participation, create a positive societal image and perception towards and women.

In general governments in the Middle East region played a positive role in encouraging the formation of civil societies. In Jordan the government has played this role through enacted the necessary laws and regulations needed to obtain a legitimate arena of participation for different interests and allows them to organize themselves to obtain their purposes.

The government has dealt with conflicting policies with the movement and its organizations. The government has allocated

financial recourses needed to ease cultural and social restrictions on women's activities, coordinate and incorporate several governmental and private agencies, to conduct training and professional programs to help women in developing their skills and abilities. Governmental efforts concentrate on programs and policies to enhance women's economic participation and activities in the overall economic scene in the kingdom. It facilitates women engagement in activities that generate a sustainable income, through several private banks and public financial funds which submit short and medium loans, to help women pursue their own small economic business. Several personal projects has been initiated by women such as agricultural, live stock and poultry investment, vocational and handicraft. The government also in cooperation and coordination with several social associations has organized periodical bazaars to help displaying women's production to the public. The percentage of females who are actively involved in income generating programs is increasing very rapidly especially in badia and rural areas. Actually the proportion of economically active females increased from 3.3% percent in 1979 to 7.7% in 2002 to 14% in 2006. This rapid increase is a result of governmental agencies feminist organizations and private sectors deep involvement to curb poverty and unemployment on one hand and to convince society to recognise more women involvement in society activities through sharing the responsibility of cost of living as a full partner with the man (father, husband or brother). This economic activities for women probably will lead to positive change in the cultural and social perception of the women in the society and recognise a new political role for women, beyond their role as wives and mothers. This new political role allow the female to be a political activist and political partner in governmental and non-governmental institutions. Economic development and more participation to women in labour and productive force in the society is still the main purpose of government and Feminist organization's strategies, while enhancing political participation for women is still lagging behind other activities. The common understanding is that enhancing economic role for women may help realizing equal political suffrage in the political process. The cooperation and coordination between

government and Feminist organization also has developed very rapidly. In the 80s of the last century the government has dissolved some women organizations and discourage others because the organizations were controlled by Islamist and leftist political opposition. The recent leadership of feminist organizations is keeping warm and close ties with the government, which has a positive effect on the work and activities of these movements, and may help in realizing their strategies and policies, to enhance women's role in the political process. Recently, the government of Jordan has committed itself to the international treaty which require specific measures designed to eliminate all sorts of gender inequalities in the society and improving the well-being of women, and girls to ensure fairness and sustainable development and poverty reduction. It also committed to identified the full participation of women as equal partners in the sustainable development of their societies, Through economic, political and social empowerment of women through increased their economic security, and participation in decision making in the household and legal awareness and collective action for self determination.

Conclusion and recommendations

There are several features can be concluded from this research paper. Women in Jordan as all women over the world start recently to focus attention to enhance their role in the society, and to join regional and international Feminism to change social, economic and political circumstances to facilitate women enrollment into political process in the political systems. Feminism in Jordan is represented in several organizations aimed, in general, to advocate equal suffrage for women in the society, and in particular, to encourage women to compose an influential force in the system by reshaping gender roles and family relations to comply with their role and obligations towards society.

The Feminist movement faces several obstacles which are responsible for preventing women of full and equal participation in the public life, especially, women involvement and participation in political life.

The main obstacle is the prevailing of the patriarchal belief in the society which is based on traditional cultural stereo-type towards women that prohibit incorporation of the principles of equality of men and women in the society. Other obstacle is the chaotic nature of the political process in Jordan of both governmental and non-governmental activities and policies, in general, and of the feminist movement in particular. In spite of the formation of several feminist organizations, their work and effort is not influential in advancing principles of gender equality or abolishing discriminatory attitudes and actions against women. Because their inexperienced and the individuality type of their activities, and the lacking of central strategy and administration the work of women organizations is very laconic and periodic. Thus, there is still an existing gap between legislations and the lack of practical application of governmental gender equality and the traditional perception to women's role in the system. There is still a very remote political participation of women in the political process. One can speak of women presence not of women participation in the membership of the three branches of power in the political system, the legislative, the executive and the judicial authorities. The same weakness is crystal clear in social, economic, and cultural activities of women in the society. But, recently, political participation for women is very limited and her political power in the official process still marginal, in spite of the allocation of six seats in the House of Representatives and six seats more in the House of senate. And five women were appointed by the king as members in the recent cabinet.

Finally, the Hashemite queens play a very constructive role in realizing gender equality through enhancing the struggle of Jordanian women for equal and just Suffrage. The queens are using their royal prerogatives to convince governmental agencies and civil society association to enact laws, design programs and initiate policies to a polish discrimination against women, and develop women abilities and merits to facilitate women participation in political life.

Recommendations

1. The most essential procedure to enhance the ability of women's organization in realizing gender quality would be the establishment of a central council or union to coordinate and incorporate strategies, programs and policies of these organizations, and to redistribute governmental resources to move from women presence in the political life to women actual participation based on equal suffrage of women in political activities.
2. The central council or union should work also to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women and abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate laws prohibiting discrimination provides basis for realizing equality, and to take all measures so women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms to comply with their obligations towards society.
3. Governments and civil society's institutions should intensify efforts through policies and programs to incorporate principles of equality and abolish all discriminatory behaviors. They should also adopt appropriate legislations to provide basis for realizing gender quality. State and parties should take all measures so women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Adaptation of training programs for women to enhance their ability in political participation in voting, nomination, legislative work and grass root work to create influential forces shaping gender roles and family relation to enable women to comply with their obligations towards political system and society.
4. Women forces need to use the media for purposes of creating positive image building towards women political participation. Media role is a key to moving forward the impact of the media strength and determination to change attitudes and policies toward mainstreaming gender quality.

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