

تراجع القبول الشعبي للمرشحات النساء في البرلمان الكويتي

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ملخص: تقدم هذه الدراسة محاولة للبحث في مشكلة تراجع القبول الشعبي للمرشحات النساء في البرلمان الكويتي. سوف يركز البحث في الإجابة عن المشكلة البحثية على استخدام العديد من الأطر النظرية، مثل: نظرية الثقافة السياسية، والنظرية العقلانية، والنظرية المؤسسية البنائية، كل بناءً على عوامل واعتبارات تندرج ضمن كل مدرسة فكرية. وتتضمن الثقافة السياسية عوامل، منها الدين والوعي السياسي. وتتضمن النظرية العقلانية عوامل، أهمها اعتبارات انتخابية وأهمية المرأة ككادر مجتمعي مهم. وأخيراً، تقدم النظرية المؤسسية البنائية تفسيراتها عبر عوامل، أهمها غياب بعض التشريعات والقوانين، من مثل قانون الكوتا النسائي وانعدام مؤسسات سياسية مهمة، مثل الأحزاب السياسية. تستخلص الدراسة أن عامل الدين، والوعي السياسي، وعامل انعدام الكوتا النسائية، وغياب الأحزاب السياسية، من أبرز العوامل التي تسهم في تفسير ذلك التراجع.

المصطلحات الأساسية: المرأة، السياسة، الوعي، البرلمان، الكويت.

The Decline of Public Support towards Women Candidates in the Parliament of Kuwait

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Abstract: This paper investigates the issue of declining public votes in support of Kuwaiti women candidates in the Parliament of Kuwait. The paper proposes an explanation based on the variables and considerations outlined in a number of theoretical frameworks, such as: the political culture theory, the rational choice theory and the structural-institutional theory. The political culture theory includes variables, such as religion and the level of political awareness. The rational choice theory includes variables, such as electoral considerations and trust in addition to the importance of women who are considered as an ignored civil group. Finally, the structural-institutional theory includes variables, such as the absence of regulations like the quota law and the absence of political parties. The study concludes that the variables of religion, political awareness, absence of quota laws and political parties are the most prominent factors to explain the decline of support towards women candidates in the Kuwaiti parliament.

Key words: Women, Politics, Awareness, Parliament, Kuwait.

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Introduction

Women participation in the political life is diffused among many parts in the world. Where there is an increase in women representation worldwide in the political life. There are some countries that are facing a decline in women representation in parliaments. The international community has supported and promoted multiple treaties and regulations to help enhance women representation. The result of such endeavor is being hindered by each country's political and social context.

The Middle East region is bipartisan; on one hand, there is an increase in women representation in some of the region's countries (Jordan, Morocco, Iran, Turkey, Egypt and Syria). On the other hand, there is a significant decline in the support of women candidates in parliaments in countries (Kuwait, Iraq and Yemen)⁽¹⁾. This phenomenon is highly dependent on the political and social context of each country. This paper will examine the case of Kuwait in terms of the factors that are related to the decline of women candidates support. Historically, Kuwait's democracy was established in 1961, upon its independence from Britain. It is considered as one of the oldest parliaments in the region (Hirak, 2017). The decline of public support is clear in this case from 2005 until 2016, therefore; this paper will investigate this phenomenon.

The political scenery in Kuwait is facing a swing in the mechanism of voting between those who are supporters and opponents to women participation in the Parliament. The political instability between the executive and the legislative branches has been affecting the mechanism of voting in the Parliament in general and women candidates in particular; which has caused a decline in the vote to women candidates (Hirak, 2017; Olimat, 2011; Shalaby, 2015).

In recent years, especially since 2005, the year that Kuwaiti Women were granted their political suffrage to participate in the elections, there was an increase in the interest of the political future of the Kuwaiti Parliament and of the political empowerment of women. The ensuing turbulence of the status quo of women in politics in Kuwait rose up an important question regarding the stability of women candidates in the parliament.

(1) The data is available on the website Women in National Parliaments <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif010917.htm>

Research Problem

The decline of public support towards women candidates in Kuwait's Parliament is the research problem. This study will discuss the phenomenon in both political and social contexts. Political context reflects on political life and parliament, whereas the social contexts will relate to factors that hinder and influence voter's behavior and poll outcomes. It is a complex phenomenon: politically, socially, and structurally.

Women representation in Kuwait has had historical grassroots on the grounds of demands and rejections, and the problem of women stability after passing the rejection phase in 2005. Such complex phenomenon needs multiple analysis and studies to attempt to solve the causes of the swing mechanisms in the voter's behavior. In reaching such endeavor, complex theoretical framework should be considered.

The Significance of the Study

This study builds on previous studies that analyze women's participation in Kuwait's parliament. The approach of the paper, unlike others, focuses on the comprehensive vision of analyzing the phenomenon. Most, of the previous studies focus on one theoretical framework, yet as one could believe multiple theoretical frameworks help to enrich the analysis from different angles. Focusing on one theoretical framework is legitimate, but it limits the analysis scope and could lead to subjectivity.

The study will elaborate on addressed obstacles (Al Mughni, 2008; Olimat, 2011) that hinder women's political empowerment, yet from a different angle and methodology. The political culture approach is among the topmost theories used in this study with more precise scope, focusing on religious sects in Kuwait and political awareness. The political structure approach will address the absence of political parties (Olimat, 2011; Shalaby, 2015). To elaborate further, under the structural - institutional approach, the importance of quota law for women (QLW) will be discussed. The study will emphasize the importance of understanding the concept of "bounded rationality" and its limitations on the electorate. Olimat (2011) addresses the importance of time as a factor of bounded rationality, yet the study will utilize the concept differently, as will be illustrated in the theoretical framework.

The Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to try to provide adequate explanation to the decline of public support towards women candidates in Kuwait. To achieve this purpose, we will investigate the following:

1. Highlight significant theoretical frameworks that propose an explanation to the research question.
2. Address significant variables that can best help explain the analyzed phenomenon (i.e. the decline of the public support towards women candidates in Kuwait presented in the swing mechanisms towards voting behavior).
3. Focus mainly on the political culture approach via variables such as religion and political awareness.
4. Present a comprehensive approach to help explain the research problem via political culture approach, structural - institutional approach and rational choice approach.

Research Question

This research attempts to answer the following main question: What are the causes of the decline in public support towards women candidates in the Kuwaiti Parliament? To reach this endeavor, we will try to answer the question via raising minor questions:

1. What are the theoretical frameworks that can help address the research problem?
2. What are the significant variables that help explain the decline in public support towards women candidates in the Kuwaiti Parliament?
3. Is the political culture approach adequate to help answer the research question among other approaches?
4. Is it best to tackle the research question via a comprehensive set of approaches to avoid subjectivity?

Definitions and Concepts of the Study

1. **Political culture:** is an approach that stems from the social context of a society. This approach includes the societal composition, religion, religious sectarianism, values and beliefs and level of political awareness. It is concerned with the bottom- up level of interaction (societal level of the state). It is defined as the system of beliefs,

values, and emotions that specify certain political action. It is a partial culture of a general societal one (Almond & Verba, 1989).

2. **Structural and institutional approach:** is an approach that addresses the state level of interaction focusing on state's structure and institutions. Examples of these institutions and structures are: political parties, quota law for women (QLW), laws and regulations, parliament, executive and judicial branches and electoral rule system.
3. **Bounded rationality:** is a process of reasoning that is subject to restrictions and constraints of multiple variables, such as: time, information, thoughts and ideology of the electorate. Each of these restrictions will have an impact on voting behavior. It is based on restricted reasoning rather than ultimate reasoning that one couldn't reach (Simon, 1985).
4. **Religious sectarianism:** refers to the dominant religion of the country which is Islam, counting all its sects Sunni Islam (Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis) and Shiát Islam and their variances (conservatives, moderates and liberals).
5. **Secularization:** is the separation of religion and clergies from civil political life. This separation is to avoid any contradiction in the application of law and the clash between religious sectarianism (Alaradi, 2013).
6. **Political awareness:** is the level of personal awareness to the societal surrounding. This awareness is affected ideologically. Marxists will focus on economic awareness, socialists will focus on social class, capitalists will focus on the market and the individual and Islamists will focus on the Divine Law (Shari). Political awareness is the level of awareness, yet from a specific angel and scope (Yousif, 2014).
7. **Pressure groups:** are "people with permanent and continuous special ties and relations that tend to impose on its members' certain social behaviors and means of acquiring political awareness" (Yousif, 2014: 385). Those groups have a crucial role in directing the public towards certain issues. Examples of these groups include clergies, tribal groups, merchants and the aristocratic elite in a given society.
8. **Political Parties:** are organized groups that share similar political aims and political ideology. They seek to influence the public and the state

policies by getting their candidates elected to public office, i.e. parliament (Nafiá, 2008).

9. **Electorate and selectorate:** Electorate refers to voters and selectorate refers to candidates. This term is coined by (Bueno de Mesquita, et al., 2005) in the book titled *The Logic of Political Survival*.
10. **Quota law for women (QLW):** there are temporary laws to secure and ensure certain seats for certain groups or minorities under certain criteria and regulations (quota). Women are not minorities in percentage sense; they are minorities in political life and empowerment. QLW, if applied, will ensure their political involvement, will help change the societal awareness and will introduce gender balance and reduces political exclusion (Quota Project Data Base).

Methodology

This is a comparative - descriptive case study. Due to the type of the analyzed phenomenon; two methods will be utilized: 1. Comparative case study. 2. Descriptive case study (Babbie, 2004). The comparative approach is a crucial method to the study because we are comparing one phenomenon, yet within a different timeline. That is, the comparison is about the decline of women representation in Kuwait in different years of elections (2009-2016). Descriptive case study is utilized due to the nature of the study. Because the study is neither statistical nor quantitative; descriptive qualitative method has been applied.

Theoretical Perspective

I. Literature Review

Olimat (2011) mentions in his study “Women and the Kuwaiti National Assembly” different obstacles that face women’s political empowerment in Kuwait. He divides those obstacles into domestic and international ones. One of the most important domestic barriers, as he addresses is the conservative religious sect and patriarchal male dominance in the society. This barrier tends to limit women’s role from political public life and restricts it to family and motherhood. Organizational wise, Olimat (2011) mentions the lack of cooperation among women organizations in Kuwait, which, as he argues, caused the failure of women representation in 2008 elections.

There are multiple advantages of Olimat's stud. He emphasizes the role of political culture and limits it to religion, tribal and male oriental culture. Also, he emphasizes the structural approach via factors such as electoral rule and districts distribution. Olimat uses the historical approach in addressing women's status in Kuwait's parliament.

Shalaby (2015) addresses women's political representation in Kuwait by accounting for obstacles and corruption in the political scene. This study, like Olimat's (2011), focuses on tribal influence and religious sectarianism as factors of political culture perspective. Shalaby also emphasizes political structure by focusing on women's organizations and the electoral system, which is similar to Olimat's study. Both Shalaby and Olimat grasp the importance of the political culture and social context, which as one could believe is important and significant when analyzing a case such as Kuwait.

Hirak's (2017) study is also focused on the obstacles facing Kuwaiti women in the political realm. The study is a structural one, addressing electoral system, district change and distribution, lack of political parties, deficit of budget and financial support, and corruption. Hirak's study is beneficial to the core of the current study, yet most of the variables are addressed historically. The focus of political culture, religious sectarianism and tribalism is minimum in Hirak's study, which are important when analyzing political phenomenon in Arab GCC communities.

Maktabi (2016) approaches women in Kuwait differently. The study is a legal one, comparing women in both Kuwait and Qatar. One important aspect in Maktabi's study is the level of political pressure from below manifested through societal pressure. This emphasizes the importance of political culture on one hand and political awareness on the other hand, as will be supported in the current study. The continuous discussion of Maktabi's is enriching, yet due to the scope of the current study legal terms, family law and citizenship is excluded.

Al Mughni (2008) addresses women's suffrage in Kuwait via the lenses of both cultural and structural approaches; focusing on religion, tribes and electoral system. It is clear in Al Mughni's study - like in previous literature - that there is a sectarian division to support and/ or oppose women's suffrage religiously and ideologically, i.e. Sunni and Shiát, liberal, and conservative.

Ross (2008) in his article “Oil, Islam and Women” tackles the problem of the decline in women’s role both politically and in labor via economic approach “political economy”. Ross shows that as oil rate increases in the GCC countries, there will be lower rates of women’s employment; due to the economic dependency; especially if labor - free women are paid.

Although the previous assertion is correct to certain extent, cultural and structural scholars argue that the decline in women empowerment is justified along cultural and structural lines; especially in the Arab - GCC communities.

II. Analytical Framework

There are many theories and approaches that could help explain the research question, such as: feminist theory, political economy theory, political culture theory, rational choice theory and structural - institutional theory. For the scope and focus of this study only three approaches will be considered and utilized: political cultural, rational and structural - institutional.

The analytical theoretical framework will include the following approaches: 1. Political cultural theory via factors, such as religion and the level of political awareness. 2. Rational choice theory which includes the electoral considerations, such as the political trust of the candidate’s performance and the importance of women as a neglected group. 3. Structural - institutional theory which includes laws and regulations, such as the absence of a quota law for women in parliaments (QLW) and the absence of political parties.

The theories are selected based on certain justifications: 1. Due to the research question, one couldn’t neglect the political culture theory. Culture orders political priorities (Laitin, 1986: 11). That means cultural factors, such as religion, tribalism and value system should be included in this analysis. 2. The structure and institutions in Kuwait should be included in the analysis. Due to the history of Kuwait’s democratic experience and the obstacles that faced women to gain suffrage from 1961 until 2005; one couldn’t exclude this approach. 3. Rational choice theory is also important due to the scope of the study. The process and axioms of rationality should be considered when analyzing such political phenomenon. 4. The selection of the theoretical approaches is

comprehensive due to the limitation of each approach. As Almond asserts: “political culture theory imputes some importance to political attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions in the explanation of political, structural and behavioral phenomenon... [but] never seriously been advanced as the unidirectional “cause” of political structure and behavior” (Almond, 1990: 157). The structural - institutional theory is value - free; not depending on changing value system or societal beliefs and focuses on the political action of the state and its institutions. Rationality becomes crucial because it reflects on the scheme of political behavior and the assumptions of the individual. One could say that two of these theories, political culture and structure - institutional, could address the research question separately. However, the study will take the approach of synthesizing multiple visions to have a better understanding and can conceptualize the problem with a broader perspective.

1. Political Culture Theory

There are multiple definitions of culture, but Geertz’s (1973) definition is one of the most comprehensive ones. Culture is defined as a “historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about (and attitudes towards) life” (Geertz, 1973: 89). From this definition, one could assume that culture is considered one of the most important inherited entities, which people depend on in organizing their private and public life and its priorities. Culture becomes “schematic images of social order” (Geertz, 1973).

The political culture theory can include multiple variables; however, for the scope of the study only two variables will be included: religion and political awareness.

1.A. Religion

Religion is one of the crucial factors of political culture, which scholars shouldn’t neglect when addressing political phenomenon in general, and women representation in particular. Although Kuwait is a constitutional state, yet there are some specific constitutional articles that reflect on the religious bases in Kuwait. Kuwait is hybrid state; it is a civil state on one hand and religious state on the other hand; i.e. depending on

Islamic Law “Sharia” as one of the sources of legislations. Hence, regulations are legislated accordingly.

The second article of the Constitution of Kuwait asserts that “The religion of the state is Islam, and the Islamic Sharia shall be a main source of legislation” (The Constitution of Kuwait, Article 2). The problem arises from conflicts evolving between political and religious Islamic requirements. Two immediate questions arise:

1. The Islamic religion is multi - faceted. If one accepts Islamic Law in relation to political issues, such as voting and representation, which of the several Islamic schools should be applied? Choosing one over the other may lead to conflict, bias and instability. In Kuwait, religion pluralism plays a major role in: 1. Political life. 2. Parliament’s blocs. 3. Passing laws and regulations. One clear example to ensure the previous assertion is the rejection of the Emiri Decree of women suffrage promulgated by Emir Jaber Al-Sabah in 1999 by 41 votes opposing the bill (Al Mughni, 2008; Olimat, 2011; Al-Anba’ News, 2009). Another example of the religious blocs influence in Kuwait’s parliament is the number of their seats occupation “Islamists and tribal candidates managed to win more than two-third of the seats in 2003 Assembly” and “they occupied about 30 percent of the Seventh and Eighth assemblies, in 1992 and 1996 ” (Shalaby, 2015).
2. In this period, where globalization and political interdependence are a norm of international relations, the question arises about which law should take political priority: Islamic law, civic laws or a combination of both?

To address those philosophical questions, one should consider: a. sectarian and religious pluralism b. globalization and political interdependence.

a. Sectarian and Religious Pluralism

Religion in Kuwait is one of the most dominant factors that influence political life, parliament blocs and influence the voting scheme towards women. Religious bloc is composed of 57% of the Kuwaiti parliament with all its variations; e.g. Sunni Islam (Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi) and Shiát Islam (Assiri, 2012).

Although there are different religious views in Islam regarding women's political empowerment, there is some common ground that can be used as an agreement rather than a cause of dispute. Political Islam dating back to the Prophecy era had many examples of women participation and empowerment in general life. This was even more so in the time of war. It should be noted that, in the era of Prophecy, there were non-Muslim groups that lived in Muslim communities, where they gained respect despite their religious differences (Nasr, 2004). The cultures of some of these groups included varying roles for women in society; thus, pluralism has existed in past Islamic states. The Prophet was a civil leader who did not stipulate that non-Muslims must abide by the Islamic rule in private issues (Safi, 2013). The culture of that time was characterized by freedom, respect and tolerance, which is similar to a modern democratic state; hence, women are no exception to that rule.

b. Globalization and Interdependence: Religion or Civic State?

Secularization in Kuwait has, however, not been comprehensive due to the societal composition. Even though Kuwait has a certain liberal political bloc in the parliament and signed and ratified multiple treaties that are promoting women rights and women empowerment; there are scripted reservations on the signed articles that have hindered the original intent of this development. A particular example of this is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), which is a treaty that was signed by Kuwait in 1994⁽²⁾.

It was expected that the level of gender equality would be an outcome of the treaty. But it was not applied in Kuwait's governmental institutions due to the reservations and the opposition of the religious parliamentary bloc. Most of the treaty's articles were in contradiction to the Shariá (Islamic Law); thus, could not be applied comprehensively. For instance, all articles that are pro-women in the judicial sector are reserved by the officials due to its contradiction to the Islamic Law.

The most difficult task in all of this prior to 2005, the year of women suffrage in Kuwait, was the gaining of equality for women in the political arena. In more recent times, where women are given their political rights,

(2) Kuwait was the first state among the GCCs that signed CEDAW treaty in 1994. Then Saudi Arabia signed in 2000, then Bahrain in 2002, UAE in 2004, Oman in 2006, and finally Qatar in 2009.

the insurance of women representation stability rate is a dilemma. The obstacles that cause such a dilemma are: 1. The dominance of the religious bloc in the parliament. 2. The different political views based on religious sects and groups; i.e. Sunni (Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis) and Shiát. 3. The low level of political awareness in the Kuwaiti society.

1.B. The level of Political Awareness

In this section, the research paper will look at the nature of political awareness in Kuwait, ways of acquiring it and obstacles of developing it. We propose that an increased level of political awareness might lead to a more diverse and less polarized environment in Kuwait. Public opinion of political awareness is bipartisan; there are supporters and opponents. We need to be aware of this when we consider the level of political awareness in Kuwait.

a. Level of Political Awareness in Kuwait

Kuwait, as one of the topnotch countries in the GCC and the region generally, has faced both support and obstacles towards any political project. Women representation in Kuwait gains great support from the Royal family (Al-Sabah); for one, it is a phase of state's development and secondly it is an improvement of citizen's political right. The Constitution of Kuwait upon independence from Britain in 1961, granted equality, equity for both genders, focuses on acquiring free education, and didn't ban any organizations.

Women organizations in Kuwait have had historical roots and establishment back to the 60s. 1. Cultural and Social Society (CSS) in 1963, which this represented women from the merchant class. 2. Women's Development Society (AWDS) in 1963, which represented women from the middle class. Due to the lack of cooperation and communication between those organizations; governmental efforts established Kuwait Women Union in 1974 to bridge the previous organizations. But the governmental endeavor was wanting. 3. The Girls Club in 1976 was established due to the continuous rival between the previous two organizations (Olimat, 2011).

Most of women's organizations in Kuwait have specific agenda towards women's issues. One of the most important issues is women suffrage and political engagement (Hirak, 2017; Olimat, 2011). The dilemma between those organizations is the lack of cooperation and

communication. Hence, the strength of the women organizational body becomes weak. Such weakness can be illustrated in the elections from 2006 to 2016. Women didn't organize well politically; they lack coalitions between one another and between them and men from different sects. This lack of coalition in sectarian community boosts the level of women failure and exclusion (Olimat, 2011).

One important factor to help enhance and strengthen the level of political awareness is the following: 1. The collaboration between the members of different women organizations. The emphasis of such collaboration becomes one of the most significant factors of success due to its dependency on women themselves. 2. Organize educational seminars about political awareness addressed to both genders. 3. Emphasize women's percentage and formulation in the society. Women formulate 57% of the electorate percentage, which can be utilized wisely to the interest of women in parliament (Olimat, 2011). 4. Increase the level of confidence among women by promoting different roles to help change the notion of male efficiency (on women's scale) and women's lack of commitment to political life (Olimat, 2011). 5. Formulate coalitions between women and men from different sects and ideology. Such coalitions are beneficial, especially among tribal and religious sects (Olimat, 2011).

b. Political Awareness in Modern Political Thought

Positive popular dialogue in this case means the tolerance of another view despite ideological and theological differences. This concept is central in forming the political culture in a society, and raises political awareness (Yousif, 2014).

In Western culture, the history of political thought in relation to political awareness shows that there has been a significant evolution in the relationship between political awareness and positive popular dialogue over several millennia (Nafiaa, 2008; Yousif, 2014). The Ancient Roman culture established the basic premises of political awareness, which led to documented developments in the Renaissance and Modern eras. Philosophers such as Machiavelli and Bodan challenged religious thinkers like Thomas Aquinas and Saint Augustine, who called for Church dominance over the state (Nafiaa, 2008; Wootton, 1996). In contrast, in the Eastern Islamic civilizations, one finds more of a blend in the relationship between Islam and politics in both context and

spirituality. It is inevitable to acknowledge the importance of distinguishing between the Prophecy era and later Islamic civilizations. It is also important to understand the difference between Islamic political culture and that of political awareness of the public (Yousif, 2014).

Salem Yousif discusses in his book *The Challenge of Political Transformation* (تحديات التحول السياسي) that the manifestation of political awareness can be divided into three important stages (Yousif, 2014: 369): 1. Perception and knowledge (Allison, 1969). 2. Conscience and emotions. 3. Tendency and willingness (Russet, Starr, & Kinsella, 2010). All of which will be applied to understand the political awareness in Kuwait.

Perceived information in stage1 is crucial to the development and polarization of the public opinion, either positively or negatively (Baker, 2000). In the case of Kuwait, women MPs' situation can be explained by the previous mentioned stages. 1. Perception and knowledge: for a woman to be a member in the National Parliament (MP) there is a strong chance that she may need to distance herself from her family in some way, as there may be a domestic tension that develops. This exacerbates a negative perception of women performance in the Kuwaiti parliament, as well as a negative attitude towards women in general. 2. Conscience and emotions: these negative perceptions influence and affect the emotional milieu regarding women MPs within society and the parliament itself. 3. Tendency and willingness: as a consequence of the above women tend to be isolated in the national parliament elections or tend to lose votes accordingly. These aspects of political awareness are key elements of the decline of the public support towards women candidates in Kuwait.

This is an example of why it is necessary to reform political awareness in Kuwait. It is essentially a clash between traditional and modern thought, which can lead to tension and conflict. Modern democracy with its axioms: equality, liberty, political participation and competition, does not aim to cause harm to the established traditions, rather, it may seek to emphasize high level of mutual-responsiveness between authority and public (Dahl, 1971). Modern thought builds perceptions using objective and rational approaches as oppose to emotional and irrational responses (Yousif, 2014).

Despite that the previous arguments on political awareness can reflect democratic regimes' practices, yet democracy can be ruled by demagogues (Nafiaá, 2008). One would argue that this occurs when the public tend to determine their vote based on emotions, negative perceptions, and subjectivity. In this case, increased level of political awareness can be a solution, where a dynamic political culture can be more eager to correct the situation. So, no matter what the state of a nation is, political awareness is always required for a stable and polyarchic⁽³⁾ society.

c. Means of acquiring political awareness

The means of acquiring political awareness can be influenced by two types of institutions: 1. Primitive institutions, such as: family, school and university. 2. Other institutions, such as: political parties, pressure groups and political media (Yousif, 2014).

C.1. Primitive institutions

Key social institutions in modern society include the family and education. The family, as a first primitive institution, plays a vital role in refining a person's awareness. It is generally acknowledged that families who tend to be open to wider opinions and believe in the importance of awareness tend to have better outcomes of its members, than those in closed patriarchal families. In this case, let us consider the three stages of political awareness: perception, emotion, willingness (Russet, Starr, & Kinsella, 2010; Yousif, 2014,). The restricted perception of the closed, patriarchal and traditional families tends to lead to more isolated outcomes. This type of directed perception tends to influence and build a certain type of emotions, which is translated to negative tendencies and reduced willingness to support issues, such as women representation. The reflection of the identity and the culture in the traditional families is manifested in the previous way and is often passed on to their future generations (Norris & Inglehart, 2004).

Schools are another example of the primitive institutions that influence and affect political awareness; they are considered to be an extension of a family's culture and perceptions in the Arab world. The

(3) Robert Dahl uses in his book Polyarchy (1971) this term to refer to participation and opposition in one society.

effect of a directed education system is to hinder the spirit of openness and free thinking, when compared to a freer education based on questioning and debating. Therefore, if a family holds negative perceptions, the school of choice tends to reflect a similar attitude, especially in the traditional societies. The absence of an open education system reflects the influence of a negative political regime (Yousif, 2014). Therefore, this leads to the marginalization of women and their roles in society.

Universities are the third example of primitive institutions that can influence the level of political awareness (Yousif, 2014). In societies that led reforms or revolutions in countries such as in USA, Britain, Iran and Egypt, one could find that university students participated (even led) such movements and had a significant role in the stage of societal development (Abadi, 2011; Almond & Verba, 1989; Grugel, 2002; Yousif, 2014). Universities can also be a part of the process of increasing the level of political awareness. The dilemma stems from the notion of the continuous negative trend adopted by the family and school and its influence over the higher level of education.

C.2. Other Institutions: Political Pressure Groups and Media

One could argue that the absence of political parties in Kuwait have contributed to the decrease of the women parliamentary presence; which will be discussed in the structural - institutional theory. There are influential pressure groups that have had a distinctive role on the decision-making process and on the degree of political awareness. Examples of these groups include clergies, tribal groups, merchants and the aristocratic elite, yet the focus will be on pressure groups.

Pressure groups have a central role in directing the public towards certain issues. These groups are “people with permanent and continuous special ties and relations that tend to impose on its members’ certain social behaviors and means of acquiring political awareness” (Yousif, 2014: 385).

The role of these pressure groups should not be underestimated. According to Gabriel Almond’s structural - functional approach⁽⁴⁾, there are political functions that existed in all political systems. Those

(4) The figure shows the intellectual components of Gabriel Almond’s concept in analyzing the structure and function of the political system.

functions are divided into inputs and outputs. Almond divides functional inputs into: 1. Political socialization and recruitment, where all societal institutions such as family and educational institutions, play a crucial role in forming the political culture. 2. Interest articulation, where people should express their demands peacefully, others would use violent means. Usually different political pressure groups compose the majority in the societal sect that expresses their demands. 3. Interest aggregation, usually political parties aggregate the demands. In cases where political parties are absent, pressure groups tend to articulate and aggregate policies. 4. Political communication happens via different channels in the political system and depends on the mass media (Al Minofi, 2010). Political pressure groups, such as the clergies, tribal leaders and merchants, tend to influence the perceived importance of the existence of the women candidates in the parliaments.

Almond divides functional outputs into: 1. Rule - making, where both executive and legislative branches participate in this step. 2. Rule - implementation, where this mission is the core of the executive branch. 3. Rule - adjudication is implemented in cases of disputes. This mission is on the burden of the judicial branch (Al Minofi, 2010).

The proposed model of Almond, i.e. structural - functional model is dependent on a two levels game: functional inputs and functional outputs. The model is crucial to understanding the core of the political system, factors that influence the system and its outcomes, how inputs influence the outputs on one hand and how the institutional outputs play a major role in stabilizing the system when articulating public demands⁽⁵⁾.

(5) In this study, we apply Gabriel Almond's model because it focuses on the structure and function of the political system. The major components of the model (inputs and outputs) are similar to David Easton's model, but the difference is in the unit of analysis; Almond focuses on the functionality of the system whereas Easton focuses on the authoritative allocation in the system. In this study the function and structure of the system are crucial to the analysis.

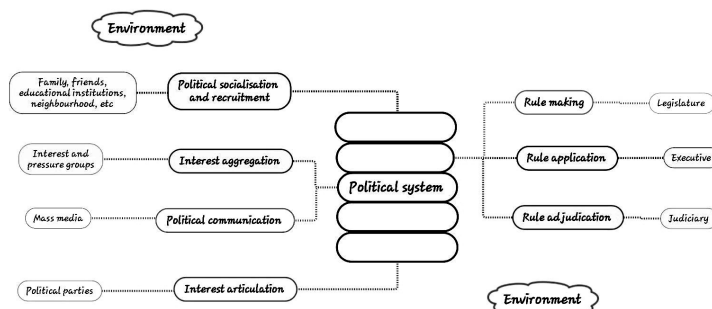


Figure 1: shows the intellectual components of Almond's concept in analyzing the structure and function of the political system

Pressure groups influence the mass media, which in return, influences the level of political awareness. If pressure groups could believe in the importance of the role of women in parliament, one might expect an increased level of support for this cause. The mass media is an important mechanism in this context (Albar, 2014; Grugel, 2002), which can be manipulated by such groups, or sometimes by the political system.

d. Obstacles in Acquiring Political Awareness

The types of obstacles that hinder the acquisition of political awareness are: 1. Intellectual/ rational. 2. Emotional. 3. Political (Yousif, 2014). In the rational choice theory, the focus will be on the intellectual and emotional obstacles (level of information, time, trust, societal perception and value system). The political obstacles will be discussed in the structural - institutional theory section (the absence of QWL and political parties).

2. Rational choice theory

Rational choice theory can be used to analyze political awareness. The three stages of political awareness (perceptions, emotions, and willingness) discussed earlier can be included in the rational choice theory discussion.

Rational choice theory's main assumption is that people should decide and make choices based on the premises of maximum benefit and minimum loss. It is based on the axioms of knowing and acknowledging all given possibilities. Since this perhaps is too simple to explain a phenomenon; scholars have suggested an alternative premise of

“bounded rationality”. Bounded rationality takes the level of information, time and intellectual restrictions and its effect on rational choice into consideration (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005; Lichback Zuckerman, 2007; Simon, 1985).

Bounded rationality emphasizes that people tend to analyze and decide based on the best alternative considering the restriction of time, information, and thinking process. One might assert that due to the lack of political stability in Kuwait, given the rival relation between the executive and legislative branches and the continuous dissolution of the parliament, voters tend to be restricted by the way they can select the optimum candidates. For example, voters should ideally attend all or most of the candidates' campaign meetings, compare their agendas, then make their choice. However, in practice there is always a lack of information on the agendas of the candidates; hence, informed choice can be difficult to obtain. Moreover, “time” becomes another important factor to consider in election time for both selectorate and electorate. The electorates are restricted by time in the campaign period. Selectorate also find themselves restricted by time, especially if election time is on a short notice like in 2006 (Olimat, 2011).

When applying rational choice theory to explain the decline of public vote towards women candidates, one could focus on two points: 1. Electoral considerations. 2. The importance of women empowerment (Safi, 2013).

2.A. Electoral Considerations

One of the main obstacles of gaining positive political awareness is the lack of trust and confidence between selectorate and electorate. Women's political experience came after a number of political failures and frustrations, by which societal hope became very high. However, this was naïve and the aims were not achieved, illustrating and ensuing the lack of trust between the electorate and selectorate in Kuwait. There are other issues that can affect the level of trust. One of them is the swing in the political agenda of the selectorate. The swing reduces trust and the confidence in women's political performance. This results in a decline of the perceived value of women candidates (Olimat, 2011).

The percentage of women candidates in Kuwait reached a maximum of 8%, which is a low percentage, in 2009. Male candidates have been in office since 1963, whereas women joined the National Assembly in 2009.

Thus, and due to the disparity in these time spans and representation, one could argue that it is unfair to judge the women candidates on performance alone. It is disappointing that there will be a probable decline in the vote pattern due to the lack of public willingness, based on negative perceptions and “bounded rationality”.

Table (1)

Shows a comparison of all parliament’s elections post 2005. This table will include: number of winner MPs and the percentage, names and districts, number of votes and their rank based on districts and percentage of public participation. The table will include elections starting from 2009 due to the exclusion of women in 2006 and 2008⁽⁶⁾

Parliament Election Year	# of MP and %	Names and Districts	# of Vote and Ranking of MP	% of Public Participation	Remarks
2009	4 8%	1. Masoma Almubarak: 1 st district. 2. Aseel Alawathi: 3 rd district. 3. Rola Dashti: 3 rd district. 4. Salwa Aljassar: 2 nd district	14247: First 11806: Second 7666: 7 th 4776: 10 th	58%	- First parliament election including women after gaining women suffrage. - Dissolved in November 2011 due to the rival relation between the executive and legislative branches and continuous protests from the opposition bloc.
Feb. 2012	None	-	-	59.5%	- No women MPs. - Religious bloc seats = 34 seats out of 50. Constitutional Court decree that reject the current election and cancel the newly - elected parliament and reinstated the parlia-

(6) This table shows a comparison between different elections from 2009 to 2016, which reflects the decline of public support towards women candidates. www.voteforkuwait.com

ment elected in 2009.

Cont/ Table (1)

Shows a comparison of all parliament's elections post 2005. This table will include: number of winner MPs and the percentage, names and districts, number of votes and their rank based on districts and percentage of public participation. The table will include elections starting from 2009 due to the exclusion of women in 2006 and 2008

Parliament Election Year	# of MP and %	Names and Districts	# of Vote and Ranking of MP	% of Public Participation	Remarks
Dec. 2012	3 6%	1. Massoma Almubarak: 1 st district. 2. Safa Alhashim: 3 rd district. 3. Zikra Alrashedi: 4 th district.	3227: 5 th place 2622: 4 th . 1283: 5 th	39%	- One vote system: single non-transferrable vote system (SNTV) - Increase level of opposition. - Cancelled in June 2013.
2013	1 2%	1. Safa Alhashim: 3 rd district.	2036: 5 th .	51.9%	- Participation change. - Resignation of MP Safa Alhashim in May 2014. - No women MPs after Safa's resignation. - Dissolved in 2016.
2016	1 2%	1. Safa Alhashim: 3 rd district	3273: 5 th place.	65.2%	The only women MP.

The table shows:

1. The elections of 2009, February 2012, December 2012, 2013, 2016. The 2006 and 2008 elections were omitted due to the absence of women MPs. February 2012 has no women MPs, but it was included because it was ended with a constitutional decree to return the 2009 elections, due to the unconstitutional election of February 2012.

2. The number of women MP candidates and voting pattern is declining. In 2009, the percentage was 8%, then in February 2012 none, then women were back in December 2012, but with a decline of 6%, 2013 had 2%, not to mention the MP resignation in 2014 and the vacuum of women after that. 2016 was the latest election in Kuwait, which restored 2% of women.
3. The number of votes and rankings are having a similar decline, yet the participation increased in 2016. For instance, Massoma Almubarak from the 1st district in 2009 gained 14247 votes, which gave her the 1st place in the district. In February 2012 she was abandoned completely. Even when she was back in December 2012, she was in the 5th place with 3227 votes and after that, she never had a chance.
4. With respect to the percentage of public participation, there is a clear swing and decline in the participation level, especially in December 2012. With the rise of the opposition eclipse due to the change in the electoral role vote system “one vote: Single Non-Transferrable Vote system (SNTV), the participation was very low⁽⁷⁾.
5. The table shows that most of the winner women MPs are from the first, second, and third districts. Fourth and fifth districts are tribal, where women can’t have a chance unless a coalition is made like the case of December 2012.
6. The table shows that between 2009 and 2016 there is a continuous rival and uncooperative relation between the executive and legislative branches which led to multiple dissolution and cancelled elections.

2.B. The Importance of Women Empowerment

It is important to prepare women to be able to handle political tasks and legislative workload by promoting good education and appropriate social and cultural support. The importance of engaging the primitive institutions (family, school and university) in gaining political awareness is obvious. The basic premise is that women are equal in capability and can potentially deliver just as successfully as their male counterparts. Women should be treated and seen as an integral group in society, and not seen as a second class. Safi argues that “When women are in office and in the midst of political life; the societal burdens, tasks and concerns become vital for women” (Safi, 2013: 166). Thus women’s culture will be

(7) All the data provided are from the website: www.voteforkuwait.com

refined based on these political inputs and will become a positive influence on the decision-making processes. Historically this is not a new idea. The argument of equitable gender responsibility was proposed by Rousseau, who called for the sharing of responsibilities between men and women.

3. Structural - Institutional Theory

This section will be elaborating on the analysis of the decline of the public vote towards women candidates. In the structural - institutional theory, we will be focusing on: 1. Legislations and regulations, such as civil laws, divine laws and the absence of quota law for women (QLW). 2. The absence of effective institutions, such as political parties.

3.A. Legislations and Regulations

This section will be divided into two subsections: I. Civil laws and divine laws; II. The absence of a QLW

I. Civil laws and Divine Laws

We have previously touched briefly on the contradictions between civil laws and divine laws; as well as emphasizing that one of Kuwait's main pillars of legislation is the Islamic law (Sharia). When explaining laws, the dilemma becomes the question of what should be prioritized by the state: civil laws or Islamic Laws.

It can follow that religious groups will dominate the civil state and its laws and regulations. The family code in Kuwait, for example, with all its varieties is based on the grounds of different religious sects (Maktabi, 2016). However, it is civil laws that are essential and pivotal for issues such as political representation, political participation, political decision making, and political modernization, and most importantly, women empowerment. Applying reservations on some articles of each international treaty will affect the importance of women activism. A minimum of 20% of women empowerment that occurs worldwide will not be acknowledged in such traditional communities. However, if 20-40% women empowerment could be achieved in all state aspects, and especially in the political representation, there could be a significant progress in the balancing of gender roles.

II. The Absence of Quota Law for Women (QLW)

One of the regulations that could help reduce the absence of women existence in parliament and boost the public support is the imposition of

a QLW i.e. “having a minimum percentage for women in a political party is crucial. It could include a regulation on the party list, such as name sequencing of the party list. In the legislative quota, the candidates might be required to have a certain percentage to be accepted by law for running elections” (Alaradi, 2013).

A QLW can be divided into two major types: 1. Legislative quota.
2. Party quota.

1. Legislative quota is one of the most recent trends that aim to create quotas of 30-40% of the parliamentary seats for women. This has occurred in several international regions. For example, after the third wave of democratization 21 Latin American nations adopted such quotas⁽⁸⁾, which varied in percentage and adoption. Legislative quota adoption was between 10% in Brazil (51 seats of 513) and 39% in Ecuador (53 seats of 137).

2. The Party quota, on the other hand, depends on the willingness of parties, or penalties for non-compliance if any. Party quota application varied between 13% in Guatemala (21 seats of 158) and 16% in Chile (19 seats of 120). In countries that combined both types, the percentage varied between 53% in Bolivia (69 seats of 130) and 37% in Argentina (94 seats of 257)⁽⁹⁾.

These examples show how new democracies are developing with a range of 10-53% of women legislative participation. In total, there are 128 countries that have adopted quotas, resulting in a 29.9% increase in women participation. This is pertinent to the development of Kuwaiti legislatures. An obligatory legislative quota would be the obvious choice; as a party quota would be ineffective due to a paucity of party structures in Kuwait, as we will now discuss.

3. B. Absence of Political Parties

The absence of political parties from the Kuwaiti political scene has contributed to the decline of women political empowerment. This is also

(8) Waves of democratization: “Huntington describes waves of democratization in the following way: a wave of democratization is a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time that identifies a third wave beginning with democratization in Portugal in 1974, followed by Greece and Spain. In 1980s, a number of Latin American countries began to democratize.” Grugel 2002: 32-33.

(9) Quota Project Data Base: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>

generally true for most Arabic political regimes. Nevertheless, the constitution of Kuwait does not prohibit or ban political parties. Instead, the absence is a result of the legislation formed by the Kuwaiti Parliamentary members.

Political parties are important. They “account for the diversity of the contemporary... nations which can be tracked back to the prevalence of certain cleavages at the time of mass electoral mobilization” (Mair, 1997: 20). The main dilemma of forming political parties in Kuwait is that this mechanism is perceived to be unsupported in the political arena. This is essentially due to a low political awareness. The negative perception of the public awareness results in the continuous rejection of the idea of political parties. Kuwait has a sectarian community and so finds it difficult to condone the formation of parties; as this would increase the effectiveness of sectarianism in political life. This is discussed in some literature which emphasizes that parties are perceived as tools of defection and divide communities especially in societies that do not understand the importance and aims of political groups (Albar, 2014; Al Minofi, 2010). This is the disappointing reality of the Kuwait political scene at the current time.

The necessity of being able to form political parties becomes evident when one focuses on their nature to provide checks and balances, and in some cases censorship, in political processes. Parties can contribute in this way at several levels: parliament, leadership, different institutional branches and legislation. The public can hold parties accountable to the passed and rejected legislations and bills and have them abide by their agenda. In a single - candidate parliament structure such as in Kuwait, the public cannot have these controls to the same degree. The Party quota system could provide a mechanism to attain a QWL in Kuwait, and thus lead to an increase in the percentage of women MPs.

There are two important factors to consider further when adopting political parties in Kuwait. First, the party should have a “closed list” rather than an “open list” (Matland & Taylor, 1997); where women candidates are placed on or near the top of the list. Second, apply a “carrot and stick” policy; where a party that supports women candidates and their empowerment can get governmental subsidies and incentives “carrot”. In the same way, parties that don’t comply in this way may

have fund cuts, or even be eliminated from running elections “stick” (Russet, Starr, & Kinsella, 2010).

Discussion and Conclusions

Women participation in the parliament has advantages and disadvantages, yet the former is much leveraged than the latter. In terms of advantages, women participation will provide societal equity, decrease the level of social cleavages, and will enhance the level of development as a result of empowering all the social sectors (Dahl, 1971). The disadvantages are about women social duties and motherhood nature, where this notion is affecting the level of societal awareness (Yousif, 2014).

The political experience in Kuwait regarding women representation in general and the decline of public support towards women candidates in particular, is dependent on multiple factors. The political culture of Kuwait is one of the most important approaches to help understand the causes of such a decline. Religion and tribalism, along the level of political awareness are among the crucial factors that one should address and analyze (Olimat, 2011). The political experience in Kuwait, like any other political experiences elsewhere, asserts that the public can never be rational. Rationality is based on assertions and axioms that usually are biased depending on certain social cleavages and partisans. Hence, “bounded rationality” becomes an important approach to emphasize the level of rationality and what affects it. Finally, the structural - institutional theory is among the most significant approaches that attempt to explain the research question. As in Almond’s model and other structurlists, the analysis of the structure of the political system or any related phenomenon is important. Women representation in Kuwait is highly dependent on the political structure, where laws and regulations are made and enforced. Both quota law for women (QLW) and political parties are of the most significant bills that should be ratified and applied in Kuwait.

To conclude, it is clear that each theoretical perspective gives partial diagnosis to the main problem. Synthesizing all of the theoretical perspectives gives a more thorough vision to understand and explore the research problem.

Recommendations and Future Research

1. This study recommends that both the legislative and executive

branches in Kuwait should work cooperatively on the issue of women representation to help enhance the support of women presence in the parliament. Law - making and implantation are among the most significant roles, both branches can exercise their power and illustrate support to women in the parliament. QW and political parties can never be applied without the previous branches' approval and endeavors.

2. Women should form coalitions with both religious sects and tribal groups; such coalition will help women to maintain the political presence in the parliament.
3. Reform educational institutions, societal value system, and policies to help encourage more public support towards women in Kuwait.
4. - Encourage public dialogue to understand the actual causes of the failure of women's experience in the parliament and increase the level of political awareness positively.
5. This study recommends that future researchers should attempt aggregating quantitative studies and public opinion studies to try to analyze women representation decline. Also, comparative case study between different societies will be enriching to the literature.

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