The Impact of Social Media on Women's Civic Engagement in Saudi Arabia

An Empirical and Critical Study of Saudi Women Councillors

By

Hanan AlSuraihi

Doctor of Philosophy

University of York

2019

Abstract

This study explores the impact of social media on women's civic engagement in Saudi Arabia. It investigates many issues related to Saudi society as democracy, civil society and human rights based on an empirical study of 20 elected women of the Municipal Election of 2015. This study was based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with the elected women, and on the NVivo data analysis program. On the one hand, the results of this study show the role played by the ruling family in improving the status of Saudi women through the enactment of various laws that provide them with education, employment and freedom of action. On the other hand, the study shows the many negative effects of traditional Saudi society, represented by traditional units such as the family and the tribe, in restricting the movement of women and discrimination against them.

The study's interviews reveal that women focus on philanthropy in the Kingdom without mentioning political action, which reveals a conservative view by women of the nature of change in society, and indicates a very weak level of political awareness. This limited feminist vision, in turn, is reflected in their concept of social media. They perceive social media as a new tool that helps them acquire knowledge, conduct scientific research and communicate among themselves; yet they do not mention using social media to form active feminist groups in order to make real changes in their interests, and to help them gain more rights.

On the positive side, the study shows that this conservative vision will change over time in the Kingdom in the light of the new openness of the ruling family and its support for Saudi women.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Maps

Acknowledgments

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or produced by me or another party in fulfillment of any other degrees at another university or institution.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Preface:

Social change is a very important topic in sociology. Perhaps it can be argued that the course of sociology from its earliest beginnings in the first quarter of the nineteenth century by August Comet was determined mainly by studying social and political changes and trying to identify the mechanisms of these changes, and their impacts on society. The study of social changes in any society is an important issue which identifies the movement of society in terms of the nature of the societal forces that lead these changes and the form of conflict between them.

Of course, social changes vary from one society to another depending on the degree of progress that the society has reached, and the nature of the structure of values prevailing in it. Societies which are closer to liberal orientations accept social and political changes easily and they can incorporate these changes into the structure of society as a whole, so that conflicts between the forces forming the society fade relatively quickly. This type of societies is able to adopt new ideas and associated changes at the social and political level.

In contrast with the previous type of society are more conservative societies. These conservative traditional societies are trying to bring about new forms of social and political changes that are in line with modern societies, and are in line with global transformations. These societies face dealing with both traditional and modern structures, creating a permanent kind of conflict between the old and the modern. Saudi society is considered as an example of this type of society.

Despite the tremendous modernization in the past decades in Saudi Arabia, society still retains traditional conservative structures such as the tribe, strict religious customs and male domination. In this context, Saudi society, like other human societies, is facing a conflict between the forces of modernization and the forces of tradition, which has yet to reveal change. However, the enormous transformations in Saudi Arabia during the reign of King Salman and his crown prince Mohammed

reveal a great desire of achieving modernization and social and political transformation in the Kingdom.

The present study has attempted to identify this situation of the struggle between the forces of modernization and the forces of tradition by focusing on the status of Saudi women, especially after the 2015 municipal elections in which Saudi women participated for the first time, either through voting or running for elections. The aim of the current study was not to describe and analyze these social and political changes in the Kingdom since the end of the twentieth century until now, but to use these changes as an analytical framework that helps to understand the reality of for Saudi women as a result of these changes.

In light of this, the study focuses on the participation of women in municipal elections for the first time in the history of the Kingdom among other transformations that have taken place for Saudi women, especially the expansion of education and access to the labour market. The study also focused on a very important variable, which is the Internet access in the Kingdom and the accompanying expansion of the use of social media by Saudis in general, and Saudi women in particular. The following section illustrates the nature of these elections and other changes that women face in contemporary Saudi society.

1- Municipal Election of 2015:

This study focuses on a new and unusual social change in Saudi Arabia, i.e. the Municipal Election of 2015. The Kingdom's acceptance of women's candidacy in the elections is a significant event in the light of the conservative nature of the Kingdom and the restrictions imposed on women, particularly their communication with men and other citizens in the Saudi society. The election of government officials in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a relatively new phase in the government of the Kingdom. (Despite this situation, we should not ignore that there were elections to some professional syndicates and chambers of commerce in major Saudi cities such as Riyadh and Jeddah. This type of election was sometimes carried out with the participation of Saudi women, as was the case with Lama al-

Suleiman and Nashwa Taher who were elected to the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce in Jeddah in 2005.) (Al-Hayat 2005).

Although women's involvement in an election is acceptable in many countries worldwide and is considered the norm, it was illegal in Saudi Arabia until the 2015 Municipal elections during the reign of King Abdullah. Therefore, this study focuses on a new and unusual social change in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom's acceptance of women's candidacy in the elections is a significant event for the conservative nature of the Kingdom and the restrictions imposed on women, particularly their communication with men and other citizens in the Saudi society (Kéchichian 2013; Le Renard 2014; Montagu 2015).

The municipal elections in Saudi Arabia were a new event in the Kingdom in terms of allowing women to run for office, and a number of Saudis going to the polls in a rare practice of democratic rights in the Kingdom. Despite the importance of the event, many writers and journalists saw it as just a step on the road to improving the situation of Saudi women. The election came at a time when many social changes were taking place in Saudi Arabia, a close ally of the United States. However, it must be noted that the Saudi political system is still largely closed, dominated by the ruling family. In the near term, it is unlikely that ordinary Saudis will play a role in selecting officials who manage the country economically, militarily and politically. (Al-Sulami 2008; Bray and Darlow 2015; Cordesman 2003; Haykel et.al. 2015).

The election process for municipal councils began for the first time in the Kingdom from 10 February to 21 April 2005, and continued for the second time in 2011, but the actual participation of females began in 2015. On the 12th of December 2015, the women of Saudi Arabia were granted the right of political participation through electoral suffrage for the first time in the history of both ancient and modern Saudi Arabia. Saudi women's entry into the electoral process is due to King Abdullah Al Saud, who announced on the eve of 2011 municipal elections that women would be able to vote and run for office starting in 2015. This announcement applies to municipal councils, which are semi-elected bodies in the Kingdom. However, the authorities and decisions enjoyed by these councils

to this date are few. In general, the December 2015 elections in Saudi Arabia resulted in the election of 20 women to municipal councils.

 The King also announced in the same year (2011) that women would be eligible to be appointed to the Shura Council (Consultative Council) that issues views on the country's national policies. Half of the members of the Shura Council are appointed and the other half by election. In January 2013 King Abdullah issued royal decrees granting women 30 seats in the Shura Council (Trenwith 2018). He stated that women must always hold at least five seats in the Council. According to the decrees, members of the Council must be committed to the teachings of Islamic law and not to violate them, and be committed to wearing their veil. The decrees also stipulated that members of the Women's Council should enter the council building from private gates, sit in seats dedicated to them and pray in their places of worship. During the sessions there will be a separation between the sexes, with the use of an internal communications network that allows men and women to talk and communicate without seeing each other's sex (Al-A'ali et. al 2017).

Because the participation of women in the electoral process is a new idea for Saudi society, it was necessary according to the King's decision for changes to take place in light of the Saudi religious context and the regulations associated with it. These predetermined actions of women in the Council may seem odd to other societies. However, it must be borne in mind that women's participation in the electoral process will not have community acceptance without women's commitment to the social aspects associated with Saudi society traditions (Al-Sudairy 2017; Thompson 2014). The context in which these elections took place was inevitably linked to the restrictions imposed in advance on women and a specific vision of what they would do and how they could act. Many believe that the elections are appropriate for the magnitude of the gradual and ongoing social and political change in the Kingdom.

The municipal elections in Saudi Arabia for the year 2015 are the third elections, which are especially important because of women's participation as voters and candidates for the first time in the history of the Kingdom. Although these elections have received local, regional and global attention as an important event

in the course of political change in the Kingdom, they have raised many concerns about weak participation and electoral restrictions, as well as the performance of weak municipal councils. It is noticeable that the number of men who are candidates for the election varies significantly compared to women, with 5,938 for men and 978 for women. This disparity not only exists with the candidates for the elections, but also with the number of those entitled to vote. The number of men reached 1.35 million men compared to 130,000 women (GDE 2015).

Despite the scale of the many fears that accompanied these elections, they should be seen in the framework of the slow and gradual political reforms begun by King Abdullah. It is therefore necessary to deal with the decision to allow Saudi women to participate in the electoral process as a step in the course of many future steps necessary to change the political atmosphere in the Kingdom. The municipal elections were not of great importance to the Saudis because of the limited opportunities offered by the councils in the area of political participation by citizens in Saudi political life. It was not surprising, then, that there was a lack of participation by Saudi citizens due to their deep sense of that the elections were irrelevant. The election should also be accepted in the context that the electoral process itself represents a new and unusual event in the lives of Saudi citizens (Al-A'ali et. al 2017; Kéchichian 2013; Thompson 2014).

Despite the small role played by municipal councils in the decision-making process in the Kingdom since they focused only on the daily problems facing citizens such as paving roads, garbage collection, lighting, renovation of water and sewage networks, the construction of gardens and parks, and medical facilities, the elections associated with these councils were important, as they were the only ones allowed in the Kingdom. Many hope these elections will be a positive start to expanding the circle of political participation in the Kingdom.

Women's voting was considered a highly controversial event in modern Saudi history. Many national, regional and international newspapers, media and websites referred to, and analyzed this event including: Al-Jazeera English, Al-Arabiya English, Sky News Arabic, The Guardian, Daily Mail, The Telegraph, Reuters, US Today, CBS News, BBC News, The New York Times, Foreign Policy, CNN in

English, The Washington Post, Welt Online (in German), Bloomberg, and Human Rights Watch.

However, for nearly two decades, the work of Municipal Councils has been limited to routine government projects at local levels, a matter which has led to criticism of the functioning of these councils as bodies with limited executive powers. Because the Saudi government appoints half of the municipal councilors, the elected members cannot impose their own agendas, and thus feel helpless because of the lack of clarity of the roles assigned to their work in these councils. They feel that the authorities are not interested in their proposals or, at best, find themselves accepting the tasks and projects set by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs (MMRA) (Al-A'ali et. al 2017; Al-Sulami, 2008). In most Arab countries there are many political councils, some of their members are appointed by the state and the others are elected. Many of these councils do not play a real role as much as they are established by the state in order to give the political system a democratic touch while actually supporting the sytems of the past.

The response to the municipal elections since 2005 in the Kingdom could be understood in light of the response to initiatives calling for political reforms in the Kingdom that began in the early 1990s. In 1993, King Fahd proclaimed the Basic Law of the System and announced the establishment of the Shura Council in addition to the municipal councils in order to establish a limited space for the political participation of Saudi citizens (Al-A'ali et. al 2017; Thompson 2014).

The political context associated with the establishment of these municipal councils in the Kingdom can be understood, despite their limited role so far, in the context of the Kingdom's desire to create some kind of political mobility in the Kingdom, especially after the events of 9/11, in which 15 Saudis were charged with participating in the attack on the United States. The initiatives of the political mobility in the Kingdom were not limited to the municipal councils, but expanded to include the launch of a comprehensive national dialogue on the levels of political change, reform of education and change of the judicial system in the Kingdom (Al-Sulami 2008; Kéchichian 2013; Thompson 2014).

This means that allowing elections for Saudi women is a measure among other measures taken by the Kingdom to expand political participation, and to form a new liberal image of the Kingdom to public opinion both internally and externally. In this context, the current study attempts to identify the effects of these transformations, in particular allowing Saudi women to participate in the electoral process, on women and on the democratic transition in the Kingdom.

2- The Elected Women's Views:

To understand and evaluate the impacts of the elections on the Saudi women, Saudi councillors were interviewed. The interviews follow their story from their perspective and the role of social networks in the election process based on their personal experiences. Talking about the role of Saudi women in the Saudi society and the developments that have taken place, especially their participation in the electoral process, did not gain its value without dealing directly with them, listening to their voice, and the experiences they have had.

It is important to take advantage of the great diversity of types of women, and not to limit visions to those who belong to a specific social context. This deepens the understanding of women in their differences rather than in imposing certain visions on them chosen by theorists and intellectuals.

This is to say that women have the intellectual formulations that enable them to articulate their visions of what has been institutionalized socially, which in one way or another exploits and dominates the structures that lead to their exploitation and domination. As a result, the dominant forces of social and intellectual structures are challenged by the women's views, which will inevitably change the reality surrounding them, as well as to take them into account given any possible and expected societal changes.

Given this approach, without understanding the Saudi social, political, and cultural context since the 1980s, these interviews are not enough to follow such an intricate story. This context helps in understanding and analyzing the main reasons which have led the Saudi authority to permit Saudi women to participate in the election and some cases elected to office. Allowing Saudi women to be part of the

Municipal elections is the outcome of the various and overlapping circumstances reflecting the nature of the social and political change in the Kingdom.

Furthermore, discussing the reality of women in Saudi Arabia, and comparing it to that of the Western world, should not always be the focal point with regards to analyzing gender equality in the Kingdom. Despite the predominance of women's feminist trends in their Western form; it is important to point out the importance of drawing distinctions between different societies and cultures when examining the status of women. What may apply to women in Western nations may not be right in other communities (Shalaby and Moghadam 2016).

However, the constant improvements in gender equality within the Kingdom, in terms of social, political and economic issues, that has been occurring since the 1970s, should not be ignored. The relationship between the status of Saudi women and the Saudi social and political reality is a dialectical one in which reality contributes a great deal of influence, but this also does not prevent women from playing an important role in influencing this reality and trying to change it.

This study attempts to analyze the reality of political and social changes in Saudi Arabia by focusing on the elected women in municipal councils. The choice of these women comes because of their new political experience in the Kingdom and what explanations they can add about the nature of this new political participation for them.

3- Research Questions:

The primary goal of this study is to examine the potential for greater democratic engagement of women within Saudi public affairs in the context of rising educational attainment and a social media environment. More specifically, the study examined this issue through interviewing the Saudi elected women of the Municipal Election of 2015. These interviews help in examining how the elected women see themselves as role models for Saudi women and how they use social media to communicate with other Saudi women and how it improves their awareness about Saudi society.

According to this goal, the current study tries to answer the following questions:

-What impact can the recent democratic election of female Saudi Councillors, within a context of more highly educated and socially networked women citizens, have upon the level and styles of civic participation and engagement of women in Saudi Arabia?

Emanating from the previous question are the following secondary questions:

- How do the elected female councillors perceive their role in relation to the development of democratic politics in the Kingdom?
- What are the new experiences of using social media for Saudi women councillors as a means of engaging with female citizens?
- To what extent and in what ways do Saudi women councillors feel that social media supplies them with a new space that helps them express their feelings and opinions without restraint?
- Can social media increase the social and political capacity of Saudi women councillors with regards to their activities and participation?

4- Research Limitations:

This study is related to social and political change in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It attempts to identify the nature of the social and political transformations that have taken place in the Kingdom over the past decades. Social and political transformations represent the general framework of the study, through which women's participation in the electoral process can be identified. This means that the focus of the current study is to examine the impacts of allowing Saudi women to participate in the electoral process either by voting or by running for the election.

The present study deals with the elected women who represent Saudi women throughout the Kingdom. This means that the present study, by addressing the 20 cases represented by elected women, approached the whole of the Kingdom in the east, west, north and south. The representation of women in municipal councils and their success in these councils throughout the Kingdom helps to identify the

general atmosphere of these elections and the various activities that women have undertaken in order to achieve this success.

The examination of the experience of the elections and their associated practices is not separated from two very important topics in this study.

The first is the role of social media in the life of Saudi women in general and in their success in the elections in particular. The second is the role of education in the life of women and the impact on their orientation towards active political participation in Saudi society.

5- Overview

This study has an introduction, six chapters and conclusion.

Following the introductory chapter, the first chapter provides a social and political background about Saudi society and its implications for Saudi women.

- The first section of this chapter gives an overview of the Origin of Saudi Arabia and the role of oil revenues in development.

- The second section discusses the role of the Saudi family in women's lives.

- The third section examines the transformation from Bedouin toward modernization with focusing on the importance of this process, although limited. All these sections demonstrate how the patriarchal system operates in the Saudi context and affects women's situation.

- Section four sheds light on widespread education in Saudi Arabia and its impact on Saudi women. This section clarifies the contradiction between the high rates of women's education and their low presence in the labor market.

- Section five and six addresses both civil society and political change in Saudi Arabia in light of the state's semi absolute hegemony of the public sphere and its restriction of civil action linked to individuals.

- The final part examines the expected role of the expansion of individuals in the use of the Internet and social media, and its impact on the creation of new spaces of their own, which could constitute a virtual alternative to the actual reality.

The second chapter deals with the role of the Internet and the various means of communication associated with it in influencing the level of political participation of women in general and Saudi women in particular.

- The first section of this chapter identifies the meaning of political participation. The study examines definitions of political participation in the narrow sense of belonging to particular parties, as well as various forms of political action such as sit-in and demonstration to the broader meaning associated with the pressure individuals put on governments to improve the reality of women with any confrontation.

- The second part deals with a set of theories related to political participation which included: Theory of Modernization; Dependency Theory; Institutional Theory; Agency Theory; Resource Based Theory or Civic Volunteerism Theory; and Mobilization Theory. These theories range from a focus on large analytical units such as social and political changes in general, to the state and its various activities, or to intermediate or small units such as political parties and other institutions of civil society.

- The third section deals with political participation and women in the Arab world, in terms of identifying the importance of women's political role as a factor of change in Arab societies firstly, and identifying the internal and external factors hindering their political participation secondly.

- The last section deals with the role of social media in the process of political participation. It focuses on the importance of social media in women's lives, although it is difficult to determine the impact on their political participation in society.

Chapter three deals with methodological procedures of the study. This chapter is based on five points:

- The first of which focuses on the research audience in terms of addressing elected women and clarifying the nature of their participation in the municipal elections, and the importance of this study compared to previous studies that dealt with Saudi women.

- The second point reveals the focus of the study on qualitative analysis compared to quantitative analysis. It also explains in detail the features of in-depth and semi-structured interview and the nature of the questions associated with it.

- The third point illustrates the ethical aspects associated with interviews in all regions of the Kingdom within the conservative Saudi structure. Finally, the following points deals with how to communicate with elected women, whether through mobile or e-mail, in addition to the various stages associated with the application with them.

The fourth chapter is based on data collected from the participants during the interviews, focusing on the democracy and women in the Kingdom.

- The first and second parts of this chapter deals with the various definitions associated with democracy, mainly in the Western literature. In light of this, it was necessary to know the validity and suitability of these Western definitions for application in Arab societies in particular, and in the Kingdom in general. In addition, these two sections dealt with the importance of the state and the importance of civil society and the nature of the relationship between them, and its impact on the reality of Saudi women.

- In this context, the third point discusses these many relations in light of their effects on the reality of Saudi women. It includes five points that dealt with the impact of civil society and the state on the reality of Saudi women, in addition to the extent of their awareness, the social groups that

express them, and the important role played by the ruling family to improve the reality of women.

- The last of these points is to identify the obstacles facing democracy in the Kingdom, of course, as in the previous points through the views of the elected women.

Chapter five addresses the situation of human rights in Saudi Arabia in general, and their status for women in particular, through in-depth interviews with elected women, and in the light of their different experiences, both through their daily lives, or through their experiences before, during and after the municipal elections.

- At first, this chapter addresses the different definitions of human rights and the different concepts associated with it such as citizenship and civil society. This approach is based on trying to link these concepts with the social reality that produces them.

- The second part deals with many vital aspects of human rights in Saudi society through various interviews with elected women. This chapter presents the influential role of the Saudi social context in dealing with women's rights and examines the legislative and legal aspects of Saudi women's rights. It also focuses on the role played by male guardianship in influencing the reality of women.

- It finally handles the important rights for Saudi women, including the right to education, employment, and the right to political participation.

Chapter six explores the effect of social media on the elected women's life. It demonstrates the tremendous impact of Social Media in contemporary societies and reveals the importance of modern technology in expanding the use of social media. The chapter also discusses the impact of social media use on the strength and weakness of civil society and the potential for democratic transformation.

This chapter concludes with an important set of points relating to the status of social media in Saudi Arabia in general, and its impact on the elected women in

particular. In the light of this, the chapter attempts to identify the different effects resulting from the use of social media in the lives of the elected women, and the forms of using social media during elections. It ends with an attempt to identify the effects of social media use by the elected women on the democratic transition in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 2

Social and Political Context and its Impacts

on Saudi Women

Introduction:

The Saudi context is of great importance in recognizing the reality of Saudi women and the changes that have occurred to them. It is difficult to address the situation of women in isolation from the social, political and economic changes the society has experienced since the late twentieth century until now.

The current chapter presents the Saudi context and how it affects the Saudi women's status quo and their participation in the election. Also, it describes and analyzes the story of modern Saudi Arabia; its social context, political arrangements and how in 2015 twenty women were elected to office for the first time. To do this, the chapter focuses on many important factors in the Saudi society such as: the impacts of oil revenues, the role of the Saudi family in women's life, the changed role of the tribe, and recent reforms in the Kingdom mainly under King Abdullah and the accompanying reform of educational and political arena.

This chapter does not provide conclusive explanations regarding the objectives of the study, which attempts to identify the effects of the participation of Saudi women in the municipal elections on their lives, and their various political and civil activities, and the role of social media and education in supporting their participation. It attempts to frame the status of Saudi women through many of the topics that I address in order to understand the historical circumstances associated with them and their impact on their political participation.

In other words, identifying the impact of the municipal elections on the political participation of Saudi women, the role played by social media in supporting this participation, and changing the reality of Saudi women were not monitored by social and political developments in Saudi society. Interviewing elected Saudi

women helped to identify the new political reality of women, the impact of elections on them, and the impact of social media in supporting their political and civic activities.

1- **The Origin of Saudi Arabia and the Role of Oil Revenues in Development**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1902 by King Abdul-Aziz. The country was established after the King captured Riyadh -the current capital of the Kingdom- with a surprise attack which allowed him to seize the Masmak castle. The monument is of great importance until now. Since then, Saudi Arabia began a new process of modernization, allowing it to engage in the modern world (Bray and Darlow 2015; Holden 1982; Metz 1992; Troeller 2015). Since then, oil has been the decisive economic factor in the kingdom's ups and downs. The enormous oil price boom after the October 1973 war helped the kingdom to embark on massive modernization plans to an extent that had never seen before (Rieger 2016: 36-40; Schliep 2017).

By establishing schools and universities, Saudi Arabia was able to modernize and create an educational system that caters for the needs of its young population. To pave the road for a new government, governmental institutions were set up, which provided services to its citizens. All of this would not have been possible if it was not for the discovery of substantial oil reserves.

Therefore, the main driving force of oil behind Saudi modernization and its contributions to both economic and societal developments cannot be ignored. Oil is the main factor in the economic, political and social changes that have taken place in the Kingdom in the past decades. It is difficult to deal with any social change in the Kingdom without dealing with the various impacts associated with oil (Al-Khateeb 1998; Baltimore 2014; Khunaizi 1993; Parker 2008).

On October 16, 1938, oil was discovered in commercial quantities. Less than a year later, May 1, 1939, the first cargo of Saudi Arabian crude oil was shipped from Ras Tanura (AlMunajjed 1997; Shams 1984). Oil production on a commercial scale is considered the primary source of income for Saudi Arabia since its discovery. As of 2019, Saudi Arabia was the world's third largest

producer and exporter of crude oil. Saudi Arabia has depended on the sale of large quantities of oil and its revenues to build the modern-day Saudi society. High oil prices have increased revenues in the Kingdom from $150 billion in 2005 to $283 billion in 2008 (Emirates Business, 11 January 2010, in Alghamdy 2011:37; see also: AlMtairi 1985; As'ad 1981; Bank Audi 2015).

The oil revenues have led the country's economic prosperity since the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, following the oil embargo on Western countries which supported Israel. It has played an essential role in changing the Saudi society and achieving broad plans for development. Saudi Arabia has invested this revenue in a variety of fields such as education, transportations, and establishing new and modern ports.

Also, oil revenues have contributed to many fields in the modern Saudi society such as: building new cities, establishing a new and modern infrastructure which has, for the first time, connected almost every part of the Kingdom. Other developments in the Kingdom include the launching of several high capacity trade ports, world-class health facilities, and building hundreds of modern schools and dozens of high-tech universities (Powell 1982; Shaw and Long 1982; Sohrab 1999).

The logic behind these investments is sound. Large amounts of income should be used to improve different aspects of the country. This mentality can be reflected in the improvement of the educational and health sector. Several universities, schools, and hospitals were built using this new wealth (Courington and Zuabi 2011; Hamdan 1990; Shams 1984). Although the main aim of Saudi Arabia's successive governments since the discovery of oil is to diversify the economic sources of the Saudi economy and avoid depending on the oil, the later still remains the primary source of economic change.

Also, oil has played an essential role in changing the structure of Saudi society from being a tribal society into, to some extent, a modern society (Al-Farsi 2013; As'ad 1981; Baltimore 2014; Mohammadpour and Soleimani 2019). The country moved from being dependent on agriculture and low-level trade into oil which has allowed the Kingdom to diversify its economic revenue, even though it has not yet

been successful in achieving that goal. The Saudi economy has not yet been able to make full use of the income derived from oil in various fields and activities, such as industrial, technological and agricultural activities (Haykel et al., 2015; Karl 2007; Parker 2008). The Saudi economy, despite numerous attempts by successive Saudi governments to diversify its sources, remains mostly dependent on oil revenues.

These massive changes made by oil revenues, mainly since 1973, were on all levels of society. They were characterized by a kind of slowdown in the moral aspect associated with the structure of the Saudi people. In various human cultures, the changes that take place on a material level are characterized by tremendous speed compared to those that are on the moral or non-material, intellectual and cultural standards, or about changing the vision of the citizens of the world around them. Despite the many changes that have occurred in this context, the difficulties of transition from a Bedouin and tribal mentality to that of citizens linked with others and interacting with them within the legal framework that is guaranteed by the State and institutions associated with them have been documented (Alfalah 1987; As'ad 198; Cole 2003; Sohrab 1999).

In other words, the effect that oil has had on the Saudi people has been observed mainly in terms of improvement in the financial status of the citizens, and the appearance of cities with quality services and first world infrastructure. Contrary to this, the ideological and social status of the Saudi citizen has not experienced much change and is still very much tied to its Bedouin values and past. Due to this, it is very logical to say that the position of females in Saudi society has not experienced much change. The material changes were more rapid than the non-material changes, especially in the structure of consciousness and values of individuals. Thus, the rapid material change came at the expense of non-material changes, which delayed social and political changes in Saudi society (AlMtairi 1985; Hamdan 1990; Haykel et al., 2015).

There is no doubt that this situation of uneven development between the material and non-material aspects reflected on the awareness of women on the one hand and on the community acceptance of their political and civil participation on the

other. The rapid development of the sudden oil wealth has not been accompanied by profound political and social changes in the structure of individual awareness and acceptance of women and improvement of their social situation in the Kingdom, which has continued since the inception of the Kingdom and continues until now, despite some slight improvement in the women's situation.

This is also reflected in the traditional units in Saudi society, especially the family. In spite of the enormous material impact on the Saudi family, particularly with regard to living in modern homes, the use of cars and modern technology, the Saudi family is still linked to traditional and conservative values, especially to women's life, as explained in the following section.

2- The Role of the Saudi Family in Women's Life:

In Saudi Arabia, as in all Arab countries, the family represents one of the most critical units in the society. The final word and decision within the family are for the father and the elder brother. Women cannot make decisions without the agreement of father or brothers or any other male guardian. A significant reason why such tacit laws still exist is that the traditional basis of a family is the tribe (Al-Khateeb 1998; Almatiri 1985; Hamdan 1990).

There is no way to improve oneself within the tribal, familial, relative, and neighborhood sphere. All these former traditional units determine the values and norms of their individuals. These traditional units still play vital roles in Saudi life. An example of the role of traditions associated with both the family and the tribe in the Kingdom is the woman's driving of the car. As for the Saudi general system, we cannot find anything which prevents women from driving cars. In addition, we do not find in Islam what prevents women from driving cars, but this rejection is linked to the values and customs of society, especially the refusal of the family.

The family is the unit to which individuals link throughout their lives, and they cannot separate from it under any circumstances. The children live with their parents, until they graduate from university, and after marrying with the blessing of their parents, the parents continue to have intimate contact with them.

In patriarchal societies, such as Saudi Arabia, the most significant impact of the family, community, and national cohesion at the expense of individuality is that it removes half the talent and labor force in the society: women. It not only does that but in some extreme cases, it limits the female involvement in society. Traditions, and more importantly religion, play an essential role in defining gender roles and women's rights. The Saudi culture has given particular importance to the protection of the honour of women. These women are the ones who are also in turn expected to raise the family (AlMunajjed 1997; Mies 1986: Nasseef 2004; Saudi Women's 2004; Tawfiq 2014).

There is a great contradiction in dealing with women. On the one hand family members views women as representing family honour and on the other hand she has pledged to raise children. This is an issue not only related to Saudi society, but it can be generalized to all Arab societies, albeit in different proportions. Of course, given the male domination of family space, these contradictions deepen over time at the expense of women's natural and societal rights.

Gender discrimination has led to evident gaps when it comes to political and economic rights between males and females as well as their social status. This means that because of the early socialization of females within their own traditional family, they have represented such conservative roles which were allocated to them and consciously or unconsciously support this traditional structure (Acker 1992; Carapico 2001; Lorbor 1998).

From the beginning of their life, women are socialized to understand they are women and because of that, they are different from men, and because of such biological differences, they should accept specific roles in the society. The primary and safe sphere for a female is her family, and because of that, she is not permitted to attach herself to any other sphere in daily life (Abramovitz 1988; Acker 1992; Ferree et al., 2001). Here, the family is the safest space for women. It is her protection against the outsider spheres. Despite the importance of the protection which provided by the family both before and after marriage, the family has many other negative aspects that come to the fore, including restricting her

freedom of movement and decision-making. The process of transferring the conservative ideas from one generation to another is still present today.

For women, despite the constraints imposed on them, the family is a haven away from various societal conflicts. In this context, the educated girl who was able to join the workforce cannot be separated from her family and living alone, as happens in Western societies. Women are separated from their families only after marriage when they go to their husbands' house.

In this context, we can only imagine the nature of the women who decided to run for the elections as well as the risks they face within their community. The patriarchal structure of the society in which they grew up has imposed on them not to mingle with the male populous, let alone contacting the general populace and publicizing themselves. This problem reveals the vital necessity and importance of the switch of the mode of communication from face to face to the virtual world or online using modern social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter. At this level, modern communication means a new port for them to express themselves freely, which they have never experienced before (Murthy 2012; Safranak 2012).

In general, the role of the family is inseparable from the dominance of the tribe as one of the most important social units in the Gulf societies. The family, despite its direct impact on its members, is ultimately governed by tribal affiliation and its strict social determinants. This has been particularly prominent in the success of many elected women because they belong to particular tribes.

Despite the attempts of the state to emphasize the idea of citizenship versus the tribe, the tribe still exercises its role in protecting its members, and in expressing itself in the Gulf societies in general, and in the Kingdom in particular, as explained below.

3- From Bedouin toward Modernization: An Essential but Limited Social Change

Despite the importance of the modern state, the issue here is not just about the country and its role, but the problem is rooted in the structure of Arab societies in

general, and Saudi society in particular. It refers to the question of the social structure, and variously associated relations, as well as the conflict between the forces of modernization and the forces of tradition.

Since the 1950s, with the emergence of the modern state in the Arab world, and after the end of the colonial era, the region is still suffering in its struggle between the forces of modernization and the traditions of their ancestors. Included in the modernization forces are plenty of intellectuals, writers, entrepreneurs and enlightened clerics. These people have been attempting for decades to rid the region of the traditionalist clergy and introduce modern Western concepts such as the development of education. They have also attempted to evolve the political system and introduce parliamentary elections (Alfalah 1987; Al-Mohsen 2006; Othman 1976; Parker 2008).

Arguably, the effect of the forces of modernization varies from country to another in the Arab world, highly influenced by social, political and economic conditions. In this context, one can say that the modernization process began late in the Gulf region and varied from one country to another. Kuwait was the first Gulf country to open up in education and accept change as well as the first when it came to the expansion of the elections and the various roles associated with women. Other countries such as Bahrain, UAE and Oman opened up next (Allen 2016; Al-Nakib 2016; Funsch 2016). After that, came the turn of Saudi Arabia, where the conflict between the forces of modernization and traditionalists intensifies because of the status of the country in the Islamic world as the land of two holy mosques and which millions of Muslims visited Mecca for Islam's annual pilgrimage.

The status of Saudi Arabia in the Islamic world imposes enormous restrictions on the pace of change sought by the modernists. Saudi Arabia is the location of Hajj, as well as the most crucial area in the Islamic world, makes itself a popular destination for religious ideologies. This significantly hampers opening up to the outside world despite the attempts of modernists.

However, the Kingdom started highly ambitious and inclusive developmental plans which have reformed the Saudi society drastically. One of the main impacts

of applying these plans is changing the Bedouin character of the Saudi society (As'ad 1981; Makki 2011). The tribe is one of the most important social units on which the construction of the Gulf in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, is based on (Abdul-Aziz 1994; Al-Humaidi 2016). Hence, it is a great difficulty for any development projects trying to transcend tribal affiliations to create a general sense of citizenship.

The Saudi royal family has developed many essential fields which have helped Saudi citizens in their own lives. The most significant improvement here is that oil revenues have changed the primary agent of development from depending on the tribe to depending on the state. This does not mean the end of the tribe as an essential agent in the Saudi society, but it means that it does not play such an active and essential role in the Saudi society as it previously did. One cannot ignore the part of tribe and family in the structure of Saudi society till now, but also, we cannot ignore the impacts of the modern restructuring of the Saudi society and the role of oil revenues in social change (As'sd 1981; Cole 2003; Hilden 2011).

Despite the strong correlation of tribes as social status, it is important to note that the emergence of the state, in the modern sense, in the mid-twentieth century, and what it has done to society using oil revenue, building massive cities and modernizing the society. Yet the tribes remain important social and political units in Gulf societies. Tribes are something that the country cannot be ridden of so quickly despite the attempts of upholding the value of citizenship (Makki 2011; Owen 2004).

Thirty years ago, the tribe was the most important social unit in Saudi society as it was playing a significant role in economic activities. Due to the harsh nature of the region, people were forced to follow the tribe wherever it went. Some people would have wanted to become farmers and settle down but selected not to as settling was scorned by many of the nomadic tribes. Many tribe members avoided farming as they would have been expelled by their tribe (Al-Zahrani 1986).

Thus, it can be said that what played a major role in changing the status of the tribe in Saudi Arabia was the resettlement of the Bedouins in new areas, and also the new job opportunities provided by the state, especially in the police and military sectors, in addition to the emerging state institutions of government. Since then, the relationship between the state and its citizens has been largely defined as as the state being the sponsor in all areas of living.

The primary field of work before oil discovery was the pastoral field where the population depended on camels and grazing. People used to live in deserts, in very modest houses, mainly tents, and work in the area of animals grazing. Most of the Bedouin tribes would spend the majority of the year in the middle of the desert raising camels and other livestock (Othman 1976). There are a large number of tribes in Saudi Arabia, of which some date back to the emergence of Islam in the time of prophet Mohamed more than 1300 years ago. Some of the largest tribes include, Al-Dwaser, Al-Murrah, Anaizah; Harb; Qahtan, Shammar and Tameem (Dickson 1972; Hilden 2011; Wynbrandt 2010).

Tribes have a closed relationship amongst themselves. Loyalty for the tribe is the most important thing. The individual gets his/her status from the tribe to which he/she belongs. The tribal system is based on the segregation between males and females which the highest rank is given to the men of the tribe over the women. Women do not have similar rights to men. It is a patriarchal system which considers men superior to women. Despite the significant role played by the tribe in caring for those who belong to it, the emergence of the modern state has withdrawn many of the functions it would be normal and responsible for. It has also led to a decrease in Bedouins in the pure image of association and dependency on the desert (Niblock 2006; Owen 2004).

However, the tribe is still an important social unit in Gulf societies in general, and in Saudi Arabia in particular. Regardless of what is announced from Gulf societies about the decrease of tribal links in favor of upholding the value of citizenship, the disparities between the various tribes, both in terms of size or status, makes the the name of a person's tribe a direct reflection of social status and personal wealth.

The effects of this can be seen, for example, during the municipal elections in 2011 in the Kingdom. People of the same tribe in different areas would unite to ensure the success of candidates of the tribe. This led to the failure of other candidates who could have arguably been more qualified but came from different tribes (Alhumaid 2016; Samin 2013). Hence, the tribe represents an important closed space for its members who wish to participate politically; it determines the size of the expected success for them regardless of their competence.

Despite the importance of the tribe in Gulf societies, the ruling families in these countries are trying to deal with the tribal struggle in a balanced manner, by showing neutrality to all tribes and upholding the value and shape of the modern state. The Saudi royal family controls and leads the economic development of the Kingdom. It also plays a role in leading balanced and neutral efforts required to deal with the spectrum of social ideologies that are present in Saudi Arabia.

This impartial and unbiased strategy has created an image within the minds of the Saudi public that the Royal family is very serious about both modernizations and the traditional fabric of the Saudi society, which revolves around tribalism and Islam. Within the era of King Abdullah, the Kingdom has allowed females to run as candidates in Municipal elections; however, only within the traditional sense, where women cannot have contact with men. Even though Bedouin and tribal mentality is still prevalent, nonetheless, it has been weakened considerably. This is because many Bedouin societies have been relocated and split from each other by the government, due to the construction of modern cities (Bray and Darlow 2015; Hamdan 1990; Powell 1982).

In the post-oil discovery era, people began leaving the desert to live in new cities which were built by the government. In this regard, the main reason was a change from poor traditional Saudi neighborhoods into new prosperous cities with world-class infrastructure is the oil wealth. The movement from desert to cities played a very active role in the declining of the Bedouinism in Saudi Arabia, at least on the level of the residence. Saudi Arabia witnessed an increase in urban population and a decrease in the rural community. According to Alghamdy "The urban population

in Saudi Arabia stood at 48.7 per cent in 1970, 65.9 per cent in 1980, 78.2 per cent in 1990 and 88.5 per cent in 2005" (2011:92).

No doubt the appearance of cities and the creation of urban areas has changed the culture of the Saudi society and has many impacts on how people communicate and interact with each other. There is a big difference between living in a desert or rural area and living in cities and urban areas. The appearance of cities was accompanied by a central government which controls everything in the society from the Bedouins themselves to land distributions. This has resulted in a dynamic shift of the hierarchy. The Bedouins, and for the first time, feel that they have lost their power and strength and have followed the state's laws and legislation.

Until the 1980s, the majority of the Saudis were nomadic or seminomadic. Under vast spreading of urbanization, the number of Saudis who live in cities has increased very significantly. The appearance of urban cities in Saudi Arabia has played a very effective role in changing people's mentalities and, to a great extent, their way of thinking and life. This change has, and in many aspects, had an impact on Saudi women. In the city, women went out to education, and then to work. In the city, women often leave their houses, even if they cannot drive (Al-Ankary et.al. 1989; Wald 2018).

In general, life in the city is significantly different from life in the tribal space or rural space; the former means a certain amount of individuality, opening to the outside world, and a great deal of privacy, while the second means attachment to the group and not to separate from it. This has undoubtedly granted women a different kind of system to work with which was never seen before.

It was the first time that women received an education, work, and had to deal with various government institutions. Despite this large amount of openness, it is essential to keep in mind that all of this is still in the light of the generally accepted rules of the Saudi Society. This makes us feel that the form of societal modernization that has occurred with the oil boom is shackled by the older generational traditions (Al-Khateeb 1998; Al-Mohsen 2006; AlMunajjed 1997; Alsayah 2012; Azimova 2016).

Hence, the discussion of the change in women's status in the Kingdom faces constant clashes and struggles between the conservatives and the more liberal part of the society. It is hard to determine which side is winning this battle of traditions and modernism as many variables come to play. These include the royal family, religious groups, and liberal activists. Most of the clashes are won or shut down by the conservative groups, but this doesn't mean that the progressive side hasn't made any progress.

This kind of inherent conflict between the traditional unity found in tribes and those who support the idea of a modern state has led to a degree of incompatibility between traditional conservatives and modernists. Apart from the State or Tribes, there is a conflict in the Saudi public sphere between the clergy and those seeking to emphasize the religious values in its traditional form, and among intellectuals, activists, businessmen, university professors and even the liberal clergy seeking to change Saudi society, and the system of associated values. In this regard, we will see a struggle between the conservative powers in the Saudi society such as religious groups and Sheikhs on the one hand and the liberal groups such as journalists, university professors and other writers and activist on the other hand. Some of them support the elections in the context of preserving tradition, while others see the need for radical change which will transcend traditional structure. The conflict between conservative forces and progressive forces represents a general context for whether there is development or backwardness in the reality of Saudi women. Progressive forces provide support to women and their political and civil activism, as much as their reality can be changed, and vice versa.

Education emerges here as one of the most important agents of change in human societies in general, and Saudi society in particular. It is not enough to live in cities without building schools and universities. These modern educational institutions are one of the basic elements forming the structure of the contemporary city, and the driving force for real change in societies seeking to develop and grow as discussed in the following point.

4- The Widespread of Education in Saudi Arabia and Its Impact on Women:

The crucial element here is the spread of education in every corner of Saudi Arabia which has had effects on the population in general and women in particular. Contrary to the present, education depended on religion in the past. There were no formal schools as in modern societies, contrary to this, both boys and girls went to the sheik's house or went to the Mosque, and memorize the Quran under his supervision. In addition to the Quran, boys and girls learned the Arabic language (AlDoubi 2014; Al-Mohsen 2006; Courington and Zuabi 2011).

After the discovery of oil, the education moved from being informal to being formal. In this situation, Saudi Arabia has witnessed the appearance of public schools in its precise meaning. The state has established thousands of schools across the country which helped spread education in an unprecedented way, particularly among females.

Higher education in Saudi Arabia lasts from four years to six years depending on the major. There are 24 government universities in the Kingdom, of which, most were founded in a short period. The King Saud University, founded in 1957, was not only the nation's first university but the first amongst all the Gulf States. Saudi Arabia has seen significant changes in gender roles when it comes to education over the previous 50 years. Currently, females make up 60 percent of all university students in the country (Valby 2016). This percentage is higher than other secular neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia.   Females, however, only make up about 14.4 percent of the Saudi national workforce.

Also, the Kingdom is home to the largest female-only university in the world. The Princess Nora bint Abdulrahman University, eight million square meters in size, cost $5.3 Billion to build. It has over 60,000 students in 15 colleges. According to Saudi Statistical Yearbook of 2009, there are more than "19,000 k-12 schools in the Kingdom. These schools teach over six million students. The Kingdom also has 24 universities offering at least 210 schools teaching over 600,000 male and female students" (Alghamdy 2011: 92). As a result, education opportunities have become widely available to Saudis in general and Saudi women in particular.

Education under King Abdullah has become a priority. Never in the history of the Kingdom has massive amounts of money been spent on education. When King Abdullah became the King of Saudi Arabia, he invested heavily in education. "King Abdullah has had a commendable vision towards the educational sector. Over the last six years, the Saudi government's budget has increased markedly. It was $ 28.12 billion in 2008, $ 32.62 billion in 2009, $ 36.63 billion in 2010, $ 40.10 billion in 2011, and to the highest-ever level of $ 54.54 billion in 2012." (Arab News 2013). In addition to this, King Abdullah established new scholarships program which affected many Saudi families and has allowed them to accept women's traveling abroad for studying (Aldawsari 2016; Smith and Abouammoh 2013). Also, King Salman ordered in 2017 that each woman be allowed access to government services such as education and healthcare without the need of consent of her male guardian.

There are many aspects of such investment which are documented in many ways such as the increase of 18 percent in education funds in the 2009 budget, in addition to constructing 3,600 schools between 2006 and 2008, and an expansion of universities, private sector cooperation, and scholarships for study abroad programs (Courington and Zuabi 2011: 139). Saudi Arabia's public schools are sex-segregated across all levels. In almost all cases, each gender has its school. However, international schools are not required to abide by the same segregation rules.

Education for females in Saudi Arabia has advanced a long way since the 1970s where it was estimated that only two percent of females could read and write compared to the current 81 percent. However, it should be pointed out that Saudi Arabia still implements a strict male guardian system. Every female must have a male guardian. They are typically directly related. The guardians have several duties such as initiating marriage or divorce, granting permission for travel if the female is younger than 25, education, certain types of surgeries, and employment (Human Rights Watch 2008). This means that a woman must have a male guardian acting on her behalf for most important life events that women in other parts of the world are permitted to do on their own.

The strict male guardian system has meant that the spread of education among females did not embed itself in the overall societal structure, which in turn could have meant a broader vision of the roles of women, and acceptance of their roles in society. Even if a woman is a doctor or an engineer or a teacher, she will not be able to act independently but must follow the decisions of the sponsoring man, whether he is a brother, or a father, or a husband. This issue was not always clear when interviewing the elected women. When they discussed indicators related to education or work, they frequently did not refer to this reality faced by women. Despite the importance of the role played by the state in the field of education, the social reality of the Saudi society is that they still have not fully accepted educated women and given them a proper status they deserve (Al-Doubi 2014; Al-Mohsen 2006; Courington and Zuabi 2011; Smith and Alouammoh 2013).

It is essential to consider in this situation that the state focused on education significantly, through the construction of a large number of schools, as well as the substantial expansion of the network of universities covering all parts of the Kingdom. The opportunity for females to learn has been provided, both in primary education and in university education. This massive expansion in education is in contrast to the societal structure led by conservative clerics who are for the continuation of stagnant perceptions of women. These conservative clerics believe that women should be under the full subordination of the man, and that their freedoms should be restricted.

Although there is a high rate of education among Saudi students, either in primary education or university education, Saudi citizens have suffered from a high rate of unemployment, mainly amongst women. Saudi regulations still limit women's current equality with men. For example, the employment structure is a clear example of the depth of this disparity between men and women; with women accounting for only 15% of the total labor force in the Kingdom (Wilcke 2012).

A large number of youth entering the workforce has led to a high unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia. In the Kingdom almost 20% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24. This growing youth population suffers from unemployment and there is a lack of a qualified workforce to meet the needs and demands of the

private sector. This has been one of the main reasons that there has been a particular emphasis on education in the Kingdom. In particular, Courington and Zuabi criticize the lack of opportunities among graduated Saudi females in the labour market. "It is thought that women are extremely unutilized in the Kingdom. Saudi women comprise over 60% of university graduates but only represent 14% of the workforce" (Courington and Zuabi 2011: 140).

To combat the unemployment rate, substantial investments were made in private sector cooperation. King Abdullah understood that just as the Kingdom had to diversify its economy, it also had to modernize its universities and expand their curriculum and course offering, even at technical schools. The Kingdom has tried to improve the quality of graduate students to meet the different needs of the labour market.

 Despite efforts by the state to expand the fields of education and work for Saudi women, traditional units such as the family and the tribe continue to play a significant role in reducing women's emancipation and societal contributions. This requires the efforts of civil society and its associated organizations to work towards the dissemination of discrimination against women and to support their acquisition of their various rights.

5- **The Impact of Civil Society on Women's Situation:**

Although it is hard to talk about real political activities in Saudi Arabia, one cannot ignore the role of the civil society in improving the women's situation (Montagu 2015 & 2010; Nassef 2004; Sohrab 1999). This study analyzes the influence of the political, economic and cultural developments on the social change of the Saudi Arabian society while focusing on the strategies used by Saudi women, the successes Saudi women have achieved and the obstacles they are confronted within their struggle toward obtaining more rights.

Within such conservative conditions, there have been liberalization demands dating back to the 1980s in Saudi Arabia. Also, the study examines the importance of meetings and association in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom has some traditional representation and consultation mechanisms, mainly depending on the traditional

meetings, the *majles* (an Arabic and Persian term meaning "council", used in Saudi Arabia.).

In Saudi Arabia, as in other developing countries, there are some differences from developed countries in the way that organizations play an important role in creating a public sphere. According to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere means an area in social life or society which allows individuals to come together to discuss freely their social problems and depending on such discussion, they will be able to influence the political arena of their own lives. (Habermas 1991:27-31). So, according to this concept, civil society is a part of the public sphere which helps people in gathering, communicating, and creating their world.

In general, developing countries depend mainly on the integration between formal and informal organizations; in other words, they rely on the integration of traditional organizations with modern ones. In this regard, we will find some differences between the developing countries in what types of organizations are allowed to take their tasks into civil society and charity works. Some developing countries enable political parties and other social movements to be active in social works, and others enable traditional ones such as religious organizations to be active in society.

In regards to the role of the civil society in the Kingdom, Montagu suggests that the informal discussions, or voluntary, in the country is a catalyst for socio-political dialogue which in turn can lead to social reforms and more civil liberties (2010: 67). Also, civil society has led many different people to try to change the Saudi society and advance their agenda. When Montagu interviewed a female activist and academic in Riyadh (2005: 72) she marked that:

The officials have no choice but to make changes, as they want to appear to be changing. However, the changes are not far reaching but touch the surface only. It is foreign influence that matters, not the Saudi grassroots. Reform is not sincere; look at the municipal elections: they gave only half the places for the elective process.

We should keep in mind that this election took place in a traditional and conservative society. In Saudi Arabia, many agents and constituents play very effective roles, not only in the election but also in any communal and societal action and behavior. These agents and constituents include the tribe, family, and any other traditional ties in Saudi society. In this way, the tribe and/or the family play an essential role in determining which candidate can win the election.

On the one hand, one cannot ignore the impact of modernization and economic development on changing some aspects of the traditional social structures of the Saudi society. On the other hand, in addition to the former, one also cannot ignore that the Saudi society still preserves its traditional way of life such as keeping family and tribal values. This does not mean that modern Saudi Arabia depends only on traditional units of family and tribe; it also has tried to move toward a new identity which depends on citizenship as a new element in the Kingdom (Afolabi 2007; Alfalah 1987; Alhumaidi 2016; Al-Mohsen 2006; Makki 2011).

The Kingdom has two sets of identities- the first being the more traditional set that existed pre-unification of the Kingdom dating back hundreds of years. The second set came after the establishment of Saudi Arabia or the unification of the tribes. This set of identities includes the Saudi national identity as well as the reaffirmations of the tribal characteristics in the concept of family (Alghamdy 2011: 140). This means that old institutions coexist with new institutions side by side without confrontation or conflict. Generally speaking, the entire Arab region faces the same coexistence between institutions. The family plays its traditional roles governing its members, while these individuals deal with modern institutions.

Religion also played an influential role in the municipal election of 2005. Alghamdy states that many were elected because of their religious views and ideologies and not so much because of their political beliefs. Many of those who won were Islamists. (The New York Times, 24 April 2005, in Alghamdy: 53). Simply put it, the religion factor might have encouraged some Saudi religious voters to choose specific candidates; hence the number of those voters was limited. The essential element here in regards to analyzing the election of 2005 is to

determine if we can describe it as a result of political reform or as a result of imposition by the conservative Saudi society.

Civil society in Saudi Arabia depends on the traditional representation and consultation mechanism to support people and change society. One of the essential tools of the Saudis to communicate among each other and to help each other is the majles, which refers to how people gather and communicate among each other in one place of somebody. Diwaniyya and Majles refer to social gatherings and cultural forums held in private houses. These forms of the gathering are considered as a replacement for political parties and have played a significant role in Saudis life (Majles 2015; Matejka 1983; Nassef 2004).

The *Majles* (Singular of *Majales*) represents a public space of the traditional society in which the Saudi people meet to discuss various cases in their community. It is an excellent example of the overlapping between the modernized and traditional factors in the Saudi society, which people depend on until now in their meeting and communication. It is historically linked to the tribe and how they managed the affairs of its members, where the tribal sheikh met with the members of the tribe to discuss all matters related to the tribe.

In the light of the separation between male and female, there is one Majles for men and another for women. This separate Majles clarify the ease with which women candidates for the municipal elections meet with other women relatives and tribal members and district residents. It also explains the difficulties they face in meeting with men and convincing them of the importance of the nomination of women and the role expected of them. In cases such as this, the alternative has been indroducted and some progress has been made through the use of various social media sites and dealing through the virtual world (Alothman 2013; Margetts 2015; Obeid 2015; Safranak 2012; Shirky 2011; Storck 2011; Strandberg 2015).

Most consider meeting is an essential aspect of any civil society. It allows people to communicate either directly depending on face to face or indirectly depending on the virtual reality of social media. Civil society represents the informal area of

interaction among people and how they mediate between people and government to facilitate, alleviate, and improve their own lives (Sternberg 2014).

The main problem of the Majales is that they are not sufficient to help Saudi to be in contact with the government and be able to modify its policy. In regards to the population growth of Saudi Arabia since the 1980s, it is hard for the people to depend on the Majles as an effective mechanism to achieve a democratic process and accomplish social and political changes. The Saudi society constitutes mainly from the population younger than 21 years who make up more than 60% of the population. The problem here is that young people have difficulty finging a channel to express their own opinion and discuss their future (except social media-savvy) although they are permitted to take part in the Majales.

Due to the exceptionally large youthful population, a mjor problem which faces the new generation is a high rate of unemployment. Hence, young people need to discuss this problem in the public sphere and find solutions to improve their reality. Unfortunately, the only and available tool which they depend on now is social media, which will continue to be the focus for young people's dissent and dissatisfaction.

It is essential for the Saudi authorities to open new channels for young people to engage in the civic society and improve their own country. (It might be noted that the most critical element that Saudi authorities fear is the influence of radical Islamic groups which oppose the royal family and try to enforce the will of the society according to their understanding of the *Shari'ah* - Islamic law).

Within such a political framework, which determines the nature of political forces in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi authority makes its decision of allowing people to behave politically. The main aim of the Saudi authority is to keep the stability of the society regardless of the power which must be used to achieve such stability. Because of that, one cannot say that the Saudi authority supports radical Islamic or liberal groups; on the contrary, the authority has tried to create a sort of balance to control society and because of that have not allowed any faction to have the upper hand over society.

To balance the radical Islamic power, the authority allows Saudis the opportunity to be elected, and for the first time in their history, allowed women to be elected as well (Alfalah 1987; Alhumaidi 2016; Alothman 2013).

Allowing Saudi women to run for municipal elections does not come as a result of long and sustained efforts of formal and informal social and political activities of women. The decision to allow women to run for municipal elections came as a direct and clear result of what the ruling authorities in the Kingdom allow and decide for their citizens including women. The tremendous transformations of King Salman and his crown prince in the kingdom, which allowed women to drive and travel abroad without the consent of their guardian, as well as the wide acceptance of associated entertainment, may confirm the role the ruling family can impose in the process of social and political change in today's Saudi society.

6- Political Change and its impacts on Saudi Women:

Even though the Saudi society seems very stable; closer examination reseals that there have been continuously many social changes since the 1980s. It is safe to say that the Saudi society experiences a social and political change in terms of small gradual steps. It is unreasonable to think that the Saudi society will undergo a rapid social and political change, given the fact that a significant portion of the Saudi population is very conservative and may denounce such shifts, which are based on the Western style of governance. However, it is very natural that most societies eventually encounter social and political change, no matter how serious are the attempts of denying it from happening, and the Saudi society is not immune to such things (Al-Turaiqi 2008; Mady 2005).

In the 1980s, liberals, of both genders, begin to approach sensitive and taboo topics found in newspapers and magazines. Some of these topics include that Islamic laws permit a man to have up to four wives or that in the event of a divorce, it gives the man custodial rights over school-aged children. All these arguments and discussions still take place today in one form or another. Although these issues are debated by the conservative wing of the society as well, these arguments are, however, debated in a completely different manner.

In 2003, a document called "Strategic Vision for the Present and the Future" was presented to the government by a group of liberal Saudi men and women. The report was based on early proposals from 1990-1991, which was initiated by a group of former Aramco (Arabian-American Oil Company) government officials, who set the path for the discussion on the future of liberalism in both the Saudi government and society because it was the first time of real political activities by Saudi people. For the document presented in 2003 to gain more attention, and to show that it was not the sames as the 1990 proposals, religious terms were used, such as prophet Mohammed Hadith which urges believers to follow rulers (Kraidy 2012: 93: 55; Thompson 2014: 55).

We often note that most of the proposals for change presented by citizens, regardless of their political orientation, take place in a context that combines the emphasis of obedience to the rulers and the desire to achieve some changes compatible with the global changes necessary for Saudi society. This is noticeable in most political movements in the Arab world, where change is predominantly conservative despite the suggestion of change that characterizes it.

Due to this document, Saudi rulers initiated a series of National Dialogue meetings to motivate citizens to tackle domestic issues using freedom of expression. The first meeting was held in 2003 and included some religious figures, merchants and reformers. A second meeting was held in 2004 to address the issues of women, concerning employment, driving and their legal rights.

The National Human Rights Society was launched in 2005, by King Abdullah, to improve the position of women in the workplace, tackle issues related to bureaucracy and corruption. In 2010 and 2011, the National Dialogue sessions commenced. Important topics were addressed such as religious extremism, issues of youth, labor issues, health care in the Kingdom, improving the position of women in society and the economy (Doğruel 2015; Karl 2007).

The changes over the past 30 years have created small but significant changes to the ideological beliefs of society which could be leading to a social revamp of political change. The reform that King Abdullah has enacted during his tenure has

led to the development of several factions which include the conservative, the less conservative and the liberal. Although some changes have been made to the Saudi political system such as having elected officials, in the short term, this split in beliefs may hurt the implementation of any reforms.

On the positive side, under the rule of King Abdullah, a significant number of reforms have passed. Furthermore, a political and social outlook, which is estimated to take 20 years to implement, is on the horizon in which a political system with an elected legislature will be present, and also citizens will become more engaged with the political life due to the availability of more roles for them. However, as a large portion of the Saudi society is still significantly conservative, implementing such reforms is likely to become more and more difficult. Therefore, such a political atmosphere is unpredictable as to whether or not it will lead to the progression or regression of women's rights. Furthermore, as the Saudi crown is soon going to fall into the hands of a younger generation of successors, it is uncertain to what extent the liberalization of social policies will take place (Akande 2007; Al-Ahmadi 2011; Doğruel 2015).

Historical trends point to the conclusion that the leaders of the future will expand the role played by women within the Saudi society. This is not only due to new generations holding more liberal views, but also due to the contemporary position of women in Saudi society. For example, female literacy rates have significantly increased, and hence women are much more engaged and able to contribute more to society than before. Also, the widespread presence of social media has allowed for a more liberal atmosphere to develop in the Kingdom (Aifan 2015; Al-Anzi 2002; Alothman 2013; Margetts 2015; Murthy 2012; Obeid 2015; Shirky 2011).

Although, in the last decade, when it comes to women rights, it can't be denied that progress has been made as well as efforts to change for the better, there is still a great deal that needs to be improved. Some of these fields that could be improved on, as mentioned by the Human Rights Watch in 2013 includes the right to travel, education, employment, health, equality before the law and equality in marriage. The report also looks at the guardian system which puts limitations on what women can and cannot do in her daily life.

The traditional role of women in Saudi society stems from the teachings of the Quran. Furthermore, a significant amount of the Quranic interpretations by Saudi Islamic scholars, which relate to the issues of women, are known to be extremely traditional and conservative. These interpretations are usually a source of debate between the scholars of the Islamic world, as they sometimes have more to do with the scholar's ideology.

An example of this occurred when Sheikh Ahmad Qassim Al-Ghamdi, Chairman of the religious authority of the area of Mecca, stated that opposing gender mixing has absolutely no basis in Sharia Law. However, Abdul Rahman Al-Barrak, a well-known Saudi Islamic scholar, has issued a *fatwa* urging the killing of people who promote and back gender-mixing. Another example is the *hijab* (veil) and covering the shape of the Saudi woman. According to the teachings of Islam, there is no specific form of the nature of the woman's robe and the veil she wears, but according to Saudi customs and traditions, the Saudis believe that the *hijab* should cover the entire body of women. Therefore, the reality of Saudi women is not explained only in light of the teachings of Islam, they can also be interpreted in the light of Saudi social reality (Meijer, Online).

The rights sought by a group of Saudi women, though both aiming at improving their lives and fighting segregation, can be broken into two main categories. Firstly, women should not be detached from the public sphere. Therefore, obstacles should be removed for women to be able to study, work and travel freely without any interference from men, or the government. Furthermore, women should be provided with sufficient rights to help them fight any cases of domestic abuse, in which they might be affected by. Secondly, women should have equal legal rights and representation within the Shari'a courts. This will help protect them from domestic abuse, forced marriages, and divorce (Akande 2007; Al-Ahmadi 2011; Doğruel 2015).

In this regard, women should thrive on two fronts. The first relates to their appearance in daily life, i.e., studying, traveling, going to the governmental offices and finishing their official papers. Although this is not related to the political arena, it has played an essential role in overcoming segregation between males and

females and allows women to have their rights to finish their interests by themselves. Even though the segregation among males and females is still persistent, women can do many things by themselves without depending on their guardians. In Saudi Arabia, there are many places; either related to government or private sectors, facilitates dealing with women and which allow them to finish their requirements easily. These facilities are for women only, so they do not mix with males when completing these activities.

The second front relates to the legislation and laws. It is critical here to improve Saudi legislative structure for the sake of changing Saudi women's reality. Women need improvement in two fronts, the daily life, and legislative structure. Without improving both of them, Saudi women will suffer from segregation, discrimination, and inequalities.

It has to be noted that the presence of legislation, which protects the rights of women and strives for gender equality, does not necessarily mean that the position of women in society will drastically improve; this has been the case in other Arab countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco. To achieve proper change, society as a whole has to be very serious and accepting the idea of gender equality, and this is not the case in many Arab countries. Hence, legislation and government initiatives will not be sufficient to produce equality, without the willingness of the local population in accepting the idea. The guardianship system placed in Saudi Arabia, which enforces gender segregation and prevents women from their full societal rights, has caused damage to the progression of women's rights (Al-Mohsen 2006; Azimova 2016; Doğruel 2015).

In 2012, two Saudi women were allowed to join the Saudi Team in the London Olympics. This participation was a first in Saudi history and considered by many a significant step in the right direction. King Abdullah, who rules the country via strict Sunni Islamic law, is advised by Al-olama Shura Council. That is until 2009 when he hired the first women cabinet minister, Nora AlFaiz (born 1956) is the first woman to hold a cabinet-level office in Saudi Arabia.

The appointment of a Saudi woman as Deputy Minister of Education for the first time has been viewed as a significant step towards equality. However, this should be considered to be a step in a gradual process towards changing the position of woman in Saudi society. However, we must pay tribute to King Abdullah for his vision that has strived to expand the participation of women in all matters of society.

To further empower women and attempt to engage them in politics, the King appointed 30 more women out of 150 Shura members by 2013. He also promised that women could vote and run in the municipal elections by 2015. 2013 was also the same year that the Kingdom passed the Protection from Abuse Law. This law gives women some more independence, where they can now file a complaint at the police station without the need for a male guardian with them (Hamdan 2013; Jamjoom, 2013).

Some women's rights campaigns take place publically, while other activists prefer social media. Facebook, Twitter, and blogs are widely used to raise awareness, gain support, and conduct petitions. This method is preferred as it helps women to remain anonymous and prevent direct collision with security, religious police and or conservatives, which might occur in a rally (Sternberg 2014; Wyngarden 2012).

The growing activism of Saudi women is traced from both Islamic and secular, liberal feminist intellectual trends. Their gender consciousness is awakening by their experiences, public involvement, and works of women in neighboring states such as Bahrain and Kuwait, from the Western world and from reports of international human and women's rights organizations that follow human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia. There is a difficult task as they have to struggle with religious fundamentalism as well as global cultural, political and economic forces to be able to progress.

Being highly aware of this challenge, Saudi women very wisely focus on campaigns and protests targeting specific demands and consciously avoid being exposed to the pressures created through divisions within the feminist framework. What they do varies between passive personal resistance and organized campaigns.

They emphasize the peaceful nature of their activism by declaring their loyalty to the King and their endeavor to uphold the unity of the Kingdom.

The Saudi women's multidirectional strategies for enabling implementation of women's rights is described as "patriarchal bargaining" according to Doğruel. They try to legitimize their activism through both traditional and modern sources: either on the basis of the rights given by Islam to women or the decisions given by the King, or on the basis of the international agreements signed by the Kingdom on the elimination of discrimination against women (i.e. The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)) (Doğruel 2015:118-119).

Women still face many struggles when participating in the social and political life in the Kingdom. Women, like all other Saudi citizens, have to adhere to their culture and traditions when it comes to their activities and ideologies. Furthermore, women have to protect the reputation of their families and tribes, which is an essential matter in Saudi Arabia.

Also, loyalty to the royal family has to demonstrate when engaging in social and political activities. It is evident that for women to be able to participate equally in Saudi society; the stigma against women having a leading and equal role has to be removed. A prominent Saudi feminist (Wajeha Al-Huwaider) has criticized the travel restrictions imposed on Saudi women and has repeatedly tried to cross the border without an appropriate document, as a form of protest, however, to no avail. She believes that having to produce such documents is a humiliating experience that women should not have to endure (Doğruel 2015: 97).

As the level of women's education rises, and as the Saudi youth are becoming more and more engaged on a global scale, the more pressure there will be in the society to make room for change. However, this does not guarantee gender equality. A radical change in the traditional social structure of Saudi Arabia is needed, and also a powerful and equal liberal entity which opposes Saudi traditionalists must be present. Only the coming years will tell if such change is possible (AlDoubi 2014; Courington and Zuabi 2011).

In conclusion, the political change in the Kingdom is still facing many difficulties represented by the slow change on the one hand, and the conflict between the conservative and liberal forces, which has not been resolved in favor of either party or even through a formula for peaceful coexistence between them on the other hand.

In addition to these difficulties, any significant changes which occur in Saudi Arabia are dependent on the will of the King and the royal family. Therefore, any political changes or reforms must fulfill and fall within the general outlook of the King and royal family. Montagu believes that Saudi Arabia is different than other Middle Eastern countries when it comes to where the power is localized within the country. For example, in authoritarian regimes, power is usually held outside the state in the hands of elites or presidents. However, in Saudi Arabia; significant power is maintained by the state, as civil societies function within the government in accordance with the state's norms and rules (Montagu 2015).

This means that social and political change occurs from within the state. Therefore, any deviations from the social and political norms and rules set by the state will lead to unexpected consequences. This has been observed from the recent incidents of women challenging the state, by driving their cars, even though it is not allowed. This has led to the women involved facing the wrath of both the Saudi society and the authorities.

Despite the semi-absolute hegemony of the state in controlling the public sphere and directing them towards what it wants, the emergence of the Internet and its associated new and unprecedented means of communication create new spheres that are unfamiliar to individuals. This may help them, to some extent, to compete with the State in its absolute powers, and give them a new virtual form of exercise of their powers.

7- The Appearance of Social Media:

Change movements in the Arab world are often accused of being based on universal, mainly Western references, which distorts many of these movements despite the sincerity of many of them. This issue is particularly prominent with

regard to Arab feminist movements, whose reference frameworks are based on Western attitudes. This must be taken into account by these feminist movements, which requires taking into account the domestic context. We will see later that many Saudi elected women believe that it is only through their efforts, and that of activists, that a change in their societal position will occur.

Western writers and monitoring groups do not have an understanding of the society or the political life in the Kingdom and hence will only lead to the negative portrayal of the country by Western media. Zuhur believes that Western media will be the only factor which shapes global opinions on the Kingdom, even though such sources are unfamiliar with Saudi society or politics. This is unless Saudi intellectuals gain the ability to speak and write without restrictions, especially through using social media (in Doğruel 2015: 114). Here, the Internet and its associated media have played a major role in creating new spaces for the Saudi citizens in general, and for Saudi women in particular, to express their opinions and engage in many new discussions about Saudi society.

The large use of social media in Saudi Arabia is largely due to Saudi intensive use of Smartphone. Because of the availability of the high-speed Internet, and the living of nearly 84% of Saudis in cities where the Internet is available easily, many Saudis use social media as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Saudi's use of the Internet and Social Media

Total population of Saudi Arabia	33.25 million	100%
Internet users in Saudi Arabia	30.25 million	90.98%
Active social media users	25 million	75.19%
Active users accessing social medias from mobile devices only	18 million	54.14%

In: Saudi Arabia Social Media Statistics 2018 (Online)

The above table draws attention to the rise in the percentage of Internet users in Saudi Arabia in general and the increase in users of social media in particular. However, this use is still being made in the recreational use of fashion, travel and

games, and has not moved to a higher level of social and political practices related to the context of Saudi society (Noor Al-Deen 2012; Obeid 2015).

The Crowd Analyzer's State of Social Media 2018 reports that the Saudis are very active on Instagram, and are the highest active in the Middle East, which can also be said on Twitter and Snapchat. Saudis are very active on Facebook, with approximately 16 million people active on the social networking platform. Saudi Arabia is also one of the most active countries on Instagram within the region. Men tend to be more active than women on both Facebook and Instagram. The report also reveals that Saudi users are dealing with Facebook by focusing on gaming, shopping, fashion and music. Compared to the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, Saudi Arabia has the largest number of active Twitter users in the region, who use Arabic when writing their tweets, as with Instagram and other social media. The report also states that they use Twitter to talk about gaming, travel, fashion, and fitness (State of Social Media 2018).

In this situation, some activists depend on public campaigns by using mainly social media to present their requirements, such as Facebook, Twitter, and other personal blogs. The importance of social media is that it allows activists in general and female activists, in particular, to arrange their campaign on a very wide scale without any obstacles in meeting people face to face. By this way, Saudi women will be able to overcome societal segregation between male and female and the barriers which result from the restriction of women's movement. The most essential element of using social media here in the new political arena is that it allows activists to publicize any abuses which Saudi women may face in their own daily life.

In a society that largely confirms the importance of the segregation of sexes; face to face communication has created plenty of obstacles for women to communicate with their constituents. Hence, the use of new media, especially Facebook and Twitter, has created for all Saudi citizens in general and Saudi women in particular, a new sphere where they can communicate on all issues and various topics (Alamadi 2017). In this sense, the means of social communication is a new

sphere for women through which they can communicate with other women and become more aware of the general social context.

It is a development that has been associated with plenty of new characteristics of society. This development brings the ability to engage in discussions of community issues and the sharing of opinions and advice. Even so, the new online sphere for the Saudi citizen means that it has created a state of democracy and useful dialogue. It is observable that the conflict between traditionalists and modernists has found itself a new sphere to be discussed and examined regardless of how this development is linked to the modernists. Here we cannot talk about democracy in its Western sense, but we can talk here of an online context that allows individuals to put up topics, discuss them and express their views, which help to create a climate for real and effective democratic practices (Alghamdy 2011; Mady 2005).

As thinkers and intellectuals who want change in the society have used the online realm, the conservatives and traditionalists have used it as well, both transferring their battles from face to face types of communications to the online world. Perhaps participation of women in the electoral process may seem for any Western observer normal and acceptable, and even well-established in Western societies that accept the mixing of genders, but the opposite is true for any observer of social and political change in Saudi Arabia.

Because of the restrictions imposed by the family on women, and in particular the restriction of their movement and practice of their affairs, women use access to the Internet world to achieve opportunities for community participation and communication with others in a way that hides their identity and does not expose them to accountability. Despite the size of the Internet's impact in Saudi Arabia, it takes time to verify the role of social media in Saudi society in general and for women in particular. This study attempts to interview the elected women in the Municipal Council to learn about the role played by the social media in their lives in general and in their candidacy to the municipal councils in particular.

Despite the importance of the significant political changes initiated by King Abdullah, the traditional structure which is dominated by clerics still exerts tremendous pressure on the women's movement and even restricts the public space which it uses to get the message across. This is something many of the changes may face, in the near future, through higher rates of women's education, and large numbers of women joining the workforce, traveling abroad, and freedom of movement through the means of modern communication (Abu-Nasr and Nereim 2016; AlMunajjed 1997; Doğruel 2015; Smith and Abouammoh 2013; Tawfiq 2014).

The Internet has played an important role in supporting women's participation in new worlds away from family control and conservative characteristics. It was the new space for Saudi women, especially in the framework of university and pre-university education. The internet helped to inform them of new worlds and their participation in various social, cultural and political dialogues (Alothman 2013; Alsharkh 2012; Amer 2016; Arab Social Media Influence 2015). The study therefore takes into account the importance of this new sphere of the Internet, especially in the area of women's political participation, which will be revealed by interviews with the elected women of municipal councils.

The next chapter will show how the Internet has affected Saudi women's political participation in detail.

Conclusion:

As I mentioned earlier, the purpose of this chapter is not to focus on the historical aspects of the Kingdom as much as to try to identify the impact of these social and political transformations on the reality of Saudi women, with special emphasis on municipal elections. Municipal elections was a new event in the Kingdom in terms of allowing women to run for office, and a few Saudis going to the polls in a rare practice of democratic rights in the Kingdom. Despite the importance of the event, many writers and journalists saw it as just a step on the road to improving the situation of Saudi women. The election came at a time when many social changes were taking place in Saudi Arabia. However, the Saudi political system is largely

closed, dominated by the ruling family. In the near term, it is unlikely that ordinary Saudis will play a role in selecting officials who manage the country economically, militarily and politically.

No social, political or economic changes can be addressed without reference to the role of oil in the Kingdom. Oil has played a major role in modernizing the Kingdom, especially at the material level. However, this massive material modernization has not been matched by shifts in the level of thought and awareness and the transition from traditional units such as the family and the tribe to accept citizenship and work according to its foundations.

Despite the many changes that have been made for women, especially education, employment and the possibility of traveling abroad, the Saudi context is still constrained by many social and political forces, including the family, tribe, customs and social norms. The family is one of the conservative structures in the Kingdom in terms of imposing specific behavioral frameworks on women, especially with regard to issues of honour and ethics and the difficulty of moving freely from one place to another.

The family's conservative role cannot be separated from the more conservative tribal space, which is strictly governed by the strict rules and limitations that its members must abide by. Despite the tremendous changes that have occurred in the tribal structure due to many variables such as government resettlement policies and the change of work from grazing to work within the state and associated institutions, especially the institutions of the police and the army, the tribe still plays an essential role as a traditional and conservative institution in Saudi society. In general, it is contingent upon the state's ability to make citizenship the primary and ruling sphere in Saudi society.

This conservative situation in its perceptions and limitations towards Saudi women contradicts the enormous expansion of their education. There is an unprecedented expansion in the acceptance of women at all levels of university and pre-university education. The state allocates a large proportion of its budget to building schools and universities which have led to a dramatic increase in the proportion of

women's education which has significantly exceeded many of the Arab countries historically older in the education of women such as Egypt and Iraq. Despite the high rates of education of women in the Kingdom, they face significant discrimination against them in relation to their access to employment. In short, the Saudi reality has changed in favor of accepting women's education but remains conservative in terms of their work opportunities.

Saudi civil society remains very weak. Under state hegemony, the ability of individuals to establish their own organizations is diminished, and individuals are increasingly associated with their traditional Majles. In this light, the new "from the bottom up" political changes in favour of women and their freedom, as well as the Internet and associated means, emerge as new societal spheres that allow women greater mobility and associated rights.

It should therefore be emphasized that the success of any social and political changes related to the status of women in Saudi Arabia should combine the development of their social frameworks, which are closely related to their families, tribes and related customs, in addition to the necessary legislation that enable Saudi women in all areas.

In this closed context, although women are allowed to practice the electoral process through nomination or voting, social media creates a new sphere for all citizens to practice a new form of communication among themselves. Therefore, the next chapter of this study will attempt to identify the role played by the Internet in general and the social media in particular in helping women to participate politically, through previous studies. This will help to identify the nature of these studies, their results and what distinguishes the current study from them.

Chapter 3

The Internet and Political Participation

Literature Review

Introduction:

After studying the nature of the Saudi context associated with women, the study revealed the extent to which this conservative context affects the status of women. Political participation is one of the most restrictive activities of life in Arab societies in general, and in Saudi society in particular. The state still sees any political activity by citizens as a threat to its existence, which is reflected in the arsenal of laws restricting freedoms, and the enormous restrictions imposed on the establishment of civil society institutions, not to mention the existence of political parties that reflect the nature of political forces in reality.

Women suffer twice from weak political participation; they suffer because of gender through the family, tribe and other institutions of society, and secondly because of the society's refusal to perceive the possibility of women participating politically and engaging in political activities with men side by side. Perhaps because of these severe restrictions on the political activities of women, both socially and institutionally, the step of allowing Saudi women to participate in the political process through voting or nomination is a very important step in the process of political transformations in the Kingdom.

In the current chapter, I explain the nature of the political participation and the different theories associated with it, how different studies dealt with this subject and the important role of social media in supporting women's political participation. To achieve these aims, the study starts with defining the meaning of political participation, depending mainly on the Western literature. The study considers, at the same time, the cultural and political differences between the Western societies and the Arab societies.

In addition, this chapter addresses many Western theories of political participation, such as modernization theory, institutional theory, agency theory,

resource and civic volunteerism theory, and mobilization theory. I try to present the theoretical foundations of each theory, explaining its positive and negative aspects and what it could contribute to analyzing the political participation of Saudi women later on.

In this chapter, I present a number of studies that dealt with the political participation of women both locally and globally. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the reality of Arab women, especially the level of their political participation on the one hand, and the role of social media in determining the level of political participation on the other.

In general, this chapter provides theoretical understanding of the reality of the political participation of Arab women in general and Saudi and other Gulf countries' women in particular, which clarifies the difference between the current study and other studies theoretically and methodologically. In short, the main aim of this chapter is to try to come up with a set of determinants that distinguish my study from other previous studies, thus helping to clearly define the methodology in the next chapter.

1- The Meaning of Political Participation:

Political participation is an essential process in human societies because it allows individuals to express their opinions on the one hand and influence decisions taken by the government on the other. In our modern world, political participation is more or less linked to democracy and human rights; the more political participation, the more the society becomes democratic, caring and respectful of the human rights of its citizens. Although political participation is linked to freedom and expression, it is also important to relate to the procedural and organizational aspects that allow citizens to influence their governments and impose their visions on the path of public policy. This means that an optimal democratic system is what allows its citizens to have a high degree of political participation, especially those with high knowledge and organizational skills (Alghamdy 2011; Howard and Hussain 2013; Peltzman 1998; Verba 1987).

The definitions of political participation are determined according to the ideological orientation, which differs from one researcher to another. Some see it as merely a political practice in general (Bystydzienski 1999:1). Others defined it as the participation of large numbers of individuals and groups in political life (Pye 1966:52-55). Some transform the definition of political participation from the level of mere participation in political life to influence it and guide the government and political system to the desired destination. Huntington and Nelson defined political participation as "the activity of ordinary citizens in order to influence government decision-making, be it individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, continuous or fragmented, peaceful or violent, legitimate or illegitimate, effective or ineffective" (1976:3). Also, Ford defines political participation as an "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those choices" (Ford, 2011: 91).

This means that political participation involves two types of influence, the first of which is the direct one, which concerns the impact of decisions taken by governments, and the second is indirect, which involves influencing the individuals themselves and motivating them to participate according to certain desired trends and policies. Also, there is a predetermined approach to the nature of participation, the goals to be achieved and the nature of the mobilized individuals.

As for the current study, it considers the importance of the political practice of individuals, through various forms of expression, including social participation and social work, but emphasizes the role of these efforts in the political influence on the government and the possibility of taking different political decisions to the benefit of individuals and their social and political interests. This is consistent with the current study, which sees the importance of the individual efforts of women in Saudi Arabia and the importance of their entry into the electoral process, taking advantage of the new spaces in front of them, especially the new means of social media, but it is necessary that these efforts contribute to changing their social and political reality by influencing various government decisions.

The issue of political participation is an important subject in the social sciences. Many theories attempt to understand the nature of this participation and the various elements that help it in society. In the following section, I present the different theoretical approaches that dealt with the subject of political participation, while trying to present the strengths and weaknesses of each and focus on what can benefit the current study, bearing in mind that these theories are mainly Western; some of them may be suitable for Saudi society while others do not.

2- Theories of Political Participation:

Chapter one provides a framework for the nature of the social and political transformations that have taken place in Saudi Arabia since the discovery of oil, the modernization of the Kingdom, and the conflict between conservative and liberal forces. The importance of this chapter stems from its analysis of the situation of the Saudi citizens in general and Saudi women in particular regarding social and political participation in Saudi society. During all these enormous social, economic, and political transformations, in addition to the new influences of social media, the roles and contribution of individuals in one way or another must be changed. Hence, it is important to discuss some theories that dealt with the political participation of citizens and try to identify the positive and negative aspects of them, with a focus on what is appropriate to the subject of the current study.

The Theory of Modernization may be at the forefront of the interpretation of development and economic growth. This theory asserted that modernization is linked to economic growth and its associated political and social aspects. In this context, the Western model represents an important one for the countries that wish to achieve modernization through imitating its steps.

In regards to political participation, this theory is one of the first theories to provide explanations regarding the reasons why some people accept political participation in exchange for others who do not. A group of Western thinkers such as Walt Rostow, Daniel Bell, Ronald Inglehart, and Russell Dalton presented this theory through a set of social indicators supporting political participation such as

the high standard of living of individuals, the growth of the service sector, and the expanding of educational opportunities. These indicators have affected the postindustrial societies to a great extent and have empowered citizens to involve profoundly in political participation (Bell 1999; Dalton 1998; Inglehart 1997; Rostow 1971).

The concept of modernization refers to a model of gradual transition from a "traditional" society to a "modern" one. The theory seeks to identify social variables that contribute to social progress and development in societies and seek to explain the process of social development. The theory of modernization emphasizes not only the process of change, but also the responses to this change. They also look at internal dynamics with reference to social and cultural structures and adapt to new technologies. Many see education and cognitive skills as one of the most critical factors driving political activity in society (Bell 1973; Giddens 1990; Inkeles 1983; Verba et al., 1995). The modernization theory is primarily related to Western societies, where it is considered necessary for developing societies to imitate the Western model of modernization if it wishes to start and achieve some measure of growth and modernization (Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Roxborogh 1988).

The theory of modernization is a conservative theory in its view of how different societies develop, where they see that the factors of progress are one in all societies, and do not differ from one society to another. The changes that took place in European societies after the industrial revolution, which led to the transformation of Western societies from agriculture to industry, were associated with a wide range of important social, economic and political changes that led to greater political participation and hence further development of these societies. These changes includes massive expansion of education, increased income and wealth levels, massive urbanization, expansion of communication, such as newspapers, radio and television, increasing of the working class members, the emergence of a managerial and professional class, the expansion of the members of the bourgeois class, and finally the expansion of the civil society and its various organizations.

This theory emphasizes that this model, which has succeeded in Western societies, can easily be applied in other societies and ensures its success. It ignores the different cultural, religious, political and social frameworks governing each society. The application of development models that have succeeded in some societies does not necessarily mean that they can succeed in other societies.

The theory of modernization is based on a major problem: how to ensure rapid growth and continuous capital accumulation, helping to ensure the development of society? Daniel Lerner's The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East is one of the first books to develop a psycho-social theory of modernization. The book was based on research funded by the State Department in the USA in the late 1940s. The original purpose of the research was to determine whether people in the Middle East were listening to Voice of America, and to confirm their reactions to the various programs of the station. In the mid-1950s, Lerner reconstructed the data in the light of a new conception of the idea that Western values and Western media ideas could help transform Middle Eastern countries from traditional and primitive to countries with modern social structures based on modern economic and political organization (Lerner 1958).

Walt Rostow's book "The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto" which was published for the first time in 1960, is an important book on the theory of modernization which focusing on the stages of economic growth and how they occur. Rostow introduced the take-off model of economic growth, which is one of the classic models of development theory, conceived through the development of human societies through five stages: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and high mass consumption (Rostow 1971).

The Rostow approach is characterized by a rigid framework that assumes the transition of societies from one stage to the next, which is mechanical in analysis and difficult to implement and verify. This was the same as Marxist thought in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when it was assumed that the expansion of the capitalist system outside Europe is a positive factor for the development of the underdeveloped societies and accelerating them to the stage of capitalism and then

the realization of socialism. The modernization model of Walt Rostow is an expression of a Western model of development that may not be socially and culturally compatible with other societies such as Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (Scott 1996; So 1990; Tylor 1979).

It is difficult to apply development experiences related to specific social contexts to other societies. Political participation depends not only on the degree of economic growth and modernization. Otherwise, Gulf societies would be the highest in the world at the levels of political participation, and India would be the least.

However, modernization theory has dramatically helped to provide a model for political participation that supports intervention in public political action through direct action, new and diverse social movements and protest groups. These various activities greatly help in the future policy-making of the state. Also, this theory emphasized the role played by political participation in weakening traditional loyalties such as churches, parties, and traditional interest groups. Perhaps the last point is mostly related to the Gulf states in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, in that modern political participation and entry into new groups inevitably lead to the weakening of the traditional structures of society, including the family, tribes and traditional religious institutions (Shaw and Long 1982).

On the modernization of the Gulf societies, the methods that have been carried out, and the related results, Al-Tamimi (2018) argues that there are two factors contributed to the rearrangement of traditional society in the region, namely oil and modern education. Oil revenues have produced a rapid boom in a very short period of time despite the often random and unplanned results. Education was at the forefront of contemporary renaissance in the Arabian Gulf. But the problem was related to education that it became a quantitative education and not a qualitative one, that is, it only fills the market need.

Modernization in the Gulf countries was characterized by elitism. It did not have a radical impact on society. It was unplanned modernization due to the huge oil revenues, and the modernization of education was achieved only for creating jobs

for the labor market. The Gulf modernization, despite some positive aspects associated with it, did not create a critical attempt to deal with and change the heritage, and created a major problem of increasing expatriates at the expense of the local citizens.

Although Al-Nagar's book (2018) on the difficulties which face modernity in the Gulf confirms modernization of the Gulf, it is consistent with al-Tamimi that the Gulf did not witness real modernity that affects the Gulf mentality and creates its own pattern of ideas. What has happened is a sort of modernization that has been achieved through enormous oil wealth but has not yet reached real intellectual change. In his book, Al-Nagar, describes many various manifestations of modernization in the Gulf, especially the proliferation of the Mall culture, and its impacts on the spread of consumption especially among women.

Al-Nagar refers to a structural crisis in the Arab culture that is due to the social and political reality, which prevents the emergence of a creative Arab culture that is compatible with the requirements of the current Arab reality. He identifies the absence of modernity and creative culture through a series of obstacles some of which are similar with Al-Tamimi. These obstacles include:

1. The constraints of the rigid political structure, and the absence of the alternation of power, which will be reflected in the closure of opportunities for political change, and the aspects associated with it.
2. In addition to political challenges emanating from the state and its associated institutions, there are challenges related to the structure of society, and the various forces that are relevant to it, such as family and tribe, and the prevailing pattern of patriarchal social relations.
3. The challenge generated by the intellectuals themselves as they are the users and producers of creative culture and their weak local and regional presence, and their contribution to creating a new critical culture.
4. The challenges associated with the weakness of the educational system, and its inability to be an engine and an incentive of new critical culture.

5. The Tension in the relationship with the West, in the light of the conflict between those who favor its values, and who emphasize the need to uphold local values and Islamic heritage (Al-Nagar 2018).

What can be concluded from the very few studies dealing with modernization in the Arabian Gulf is that the Gulf societies have been able to a large extent, depending on oil revenues, to achieve a great deal of remarkable physical development in society. This development included all aspects of society from education, health, roads and bridges. But all these changes have not been able to move society from modernization to a state of modernity based on a new cultural structure that changes the ways of thinking and the social and political relations between all the different forces in the Gulf societies. This leads to a sort of modernity in the Arab world only being modern on the surface of society, without being rooted in its structure.

The Dependency Theory comes as an attempt against the theory of modernization, in terms of its focus on the relations between the developed and developing countries. Since the 1960s, some elements of classic Marxist thought have come together with various emerging interpretations to form the so-called Neo-Marxist or the broader framework of the so-called Radical Political Economics, producing in the framework of development what is known as the dependency theory.

Dependency Theory was embodied in Paul Baran's theses on economic and capitalist monopolies, Charles Bettelheim on the historical differences hindering historical capitalist growth, Andre Gunder Frank on centers and peripheries, Samir Amin on central and peripheral capitalism, Arghiri Emmanuel and Geoffrey Kay on unequal development, Fernando Cardoso and Dieter Nohlan on the internal dynamics of the economy, Emmanuel Wallerstein and his theory of world systems, and Bill Warren and his theory of the self-liquidation of the imperialist regime (Amin 2018; Arghiri 1975; Baran 1966; Bettelheim 1975; Cardoso and Enzo 1979; Frank 2011; Wallerstein 2004; Warren 1980).

Dependency Theory rejects the theory of modernization regarding the progress of developed societies, apart from any relationships with developing societies, either through colonization or trade. For example, Frank sees development and

underdevelopment as two sides of a single coin; at the moment when some countries have developed, others lag behind. According to Amin, developed countries have advanced because of the exploitation of surplus value in underdeveloped countries. In general, the common factor of the dependency theory is that the rich countries developed because of the exploitation of the poor countries or what is known as the Third World. According to this theory, underdevelopment is not only due to internal factors, but also due to external ones.

The other theory which focuses also on the internal factors is the institutional theory. It focuses on the state itself, and the opportunities for participation it offers to its citizens. As Powell and Jackman have pointed out, electoral laws issued by the state, the party system, and the constitutional framework are all institutional factors that help to understand the differences between states regarding the political participation of their citizens (Jackman 1987; Powell 1986). The common factor between the theory of modernization and institutional theory is that both are linked to the structural analysis of reality, but the difference lies between them that the first focuses on the general changes associated with the structure as a whole, including the state, while the second focuses on the structure of political institutions, especially the state and political parties.

The importance of institutional theory stems from the fact that it is an addition to the theory of modernization in terms of the nature of comparisons between countries in the level of political practices of its citizens, despite the similarity in the level of economic growth. Institutional theory, by focusing on political institutions such as the state, political parties and civil society organizations, reveals the degree to which these institutions contribute to supporting political participation, whether negatively or positively (Amenta 1998; Amenta 2005; Jepperson 199; Swank 2001).

Theorists of this approach employed the Tocquevillian argument about states in an explanatory manner and have added some issues related to the construction of the large-scale political institutions such as political parties (Skocpol 1985). While Tocqueville said that freedom cannot be founded on inequality, but must be based on the democratic reality of equality of conditions and maintained by institutions

as he found its model in America, the institutional theorists assert the importance of democracy and focus on studying its manifested aspects, i.e., state and political parties.

The institutional theory varies between the emphasis on large units that affect the lives of individuals such as the state, and the focus on patterns of interaction between individuals in light of their presence in the medium or small units such as political parties and other political institutions (Amenta 2003 & 2005; Amental et al., 2012). The actors play their different roles within the context of their institutional constraints, in addition to the constraints associated with other sources and means of action, and their attempts to influence the public policies of the state. Changes in the state's public policies in turn identify processes that are in the course of forming and that affect the interests and strategies of the actors and will determine whether the results of programs will be implemented in a way that strengthens or undermines these programs or leaves them open to other possibilities of change in subsequent periods (Amenta 2003; Goldstone 2003; Jenkins and Form 2005; Meyer and Minkoff 2004).

The institutional framework considers that large political institutions constitute politics and political actors, who play their roles under the influence of constraints and obstacles that may affect their relations with the state and the policies associated with them, which inevitably leads to a new restructuring of political institutions and so on. The institutional theory stems from a prior perception, like theory of modernization, that the nature of political institutions determines the degree of political participation of the actors. Therefore, countries differ not only by economic and social level, but also by the nature of their own political institutions, and the level of obstacles they pose to their citizens for political practice and electoral participation.

The institutional political theory rejects the argument that social and political forces can conduct the same behavior in all capitalist societies, but argues that political identities, behaviors and organizations will depend on institutional and political situations. This means, contrary to the theory of modernization, that access to a level of modernization and economic growth will not lead to a political

participation of the same degree. According to the political institutional theory, political institutions play a dominant role here in supporting or weakening the political participation of citizens (Amenta 2005; Luke 1974).

Political-institutional thinkers draw from the direction of state-centered approach in their analysis, viewing it as a decisive and fundamental force in politics. The State represents the largest influential political units and of course affects the rest of the other political units, including political parties and civil society organizations. The role played by States and their degree of independence depends on the presence of other political and social forces that can limit state domination, thereby helping to impose a good and acceptable system of balance in political forces and achieve broad political and democratic agreement (Amenta 2005; Luke 1974).

There is no doubt that the state plays a major role in supporting the process of political transformation in the Arab world in general and in the Gulf countries in particular. In light of the state's influence as the dominant political institution in the Arab world, the process of political change, by establishing political parties and supporting civil society organizations, in addition to allowing women to participate in politics, will only be achieved with the consent of the state and its relative relinquishment of some of its hegemony (Al-naqeeb 2014; Ayubi 1995; Choueiri 2000; Sassoon 2016).

If one tries to compare between the institutional and agency theory, it can be said that these two theories focus on the role played by the State on the one hand in supporting and facilitating political participation in society, and on the other the role played by other agencies in supporting this process. The Agency theory focuses on the vital role played by traditional organizations in mobilizing civil society, particularly political parties, trade unions, and religious groups. All these traditional organizations are based on recruiting, organizing, and engaging activists in particular (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). In this view, individuals tend to participate politically not because of their social status, but because of political choices and incentives. These incentives range from reaching political changes,

gaining certain positions, or achieving interests of specific social groups (Lawson 1980; Lawson and Merkl 1988; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

In this view, the importance of political organizations other than the State and its accompanied organizations is important and political parties are at the forefront of this attention. In general, the work of modern democracies in Western societies is basically done through the different roles of political parties and their advancement to citizens. The political parties provide many functions for citizens at the general level, such as providing political advice, conducting conferences and workshops, developing their awareness levels, mobilizing citizens to vote, selecting candidates who represent these parties and agree with their policies and directions.

In this context, political parties fill the distance between the state and individuals and play a major role in limiting the absolute hegemony of the state and its monopoly on power. It can be said that political parties play the role of an informal state in this case, but through its members, it is a political and legislative control factor for the state and its institutions (Ware 1996). The role of the parties is not limited to those belonging to them, but it plays many other roles, foremost among which is encouraging marginalized groups to practice politics, vote and demand their rights. This is most evident through parties with a broad ideological orientation, such as labor parties and socialist democratic parties (Kitchelt 1994).

Unlike semi-formal political parties, there are some agencies that can support the political participation of individuals such as local communities, voluntary associations and various social networks. These organizations help push friends, neighbors and relatives toward the political process, thereby stimulating their political participation (Aldrich 1996; Huckfelt and Sprague 1995).

This trend is one of the most valid trends to apply to Saudi Arabia in terms of political participation. Given the state's hegemony of political space and the absence of political parties in the Kingdom, informal organizations become the space through which individuals engage in a kind of alternative political debate and discourse of the political parties' usual roles. In this case, as noted in the previous chapter, traditional Majles plays a role in supporting political knowledge

and related discussions, as well as on social networking via the Internet. In general, there is no fully enclosed space. Despite the almost absolute dominance of the state in the Kingdom, individuals find an outlet for social and political dialogues through home Majles, as well as new spaces connected to the Internet. The importance of the present study is highlighted by its attempt to identify the nature of the Internet space and what it offers to women in general, and the elected women in particular.

The resource-based theory or civic volunteerism theory is trying to describe political participation online in light of the existence of many politically marginalized groups such as women using this type of participation. In this view, the availability or absence of specific sources or possibilities can affect the size, nature, and level of political participation in human societies. This theory suggests that the availability of resources such as time, skills in dealing with civil society, communication with daily life, and the capacity to engage with other members and organizations of society, are specific determinants of individuals' decisions in the community and political participation (Verba et al., 1995).

Verba and his colleagues see three essential elements of any political activity in society. According to their study about American citizens, the responses of American respondents show that individuals do not participate politically because they cannot firstly, they do not want to secondly, and because no one asks them to participate thirdly. In other words, individuals do not participate politically because they lack resources, lack political engagement with politics, and because they find themselves outside the recruitment networks that drive individuals to political participation (Verba et al., 1995 a). In conclusion, Verba and his colleagues focus on three essential factors, time, money and civic skills. By applying their model to the American citizens, they classified Individuals into six different groups which clarified in table (2).

Table 2: Political Participation of Individuals according to
Civic Volunteerism Theory

Individuals' Participation Types	Level of Individuals' Political Activities
1- Inactive Individuals	Individuals do not engage in any political or social activity from near or far.
2- Voting Specialists	Individuals are always keen to participate in the elections by voting and do not do any other activities.
3- Parochial Participants	Individuals exercise their activities by contacting government officials for a particular problem and do not carry out any activities after that.
4- Communalists	Individuals engage intermittently in political activity in their general social sense but do not involve much further.
5- Active Individuals	Individuals participate in all types of campaigns largely and deeply.
6- Fully Active Individualist	Individuals are involved in all different activities and practices.

Verba et al. (1995 a)

Despite the importance of this approach in terms of its applicability and the use of many of its elements, its focus on social status and its link to high participation rates is not confirmed by many studies (Anderson 1996; Broadbridge and Horne 1996; McAdam and Paulson 1993; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991). Despite the high social status of many citizens, they move away from political participation and do not involve in it. The other problem of this trend is that it focuses on the sources of individuals and the elements they possess such as the abundance of time, money and the abilities of communication with others without focusing on their incentives of political participation instead of any other kind of participation.

The other theory related to political participation is the mobilization theory. It focuses on the fact that individuals participate according to the political opportunities available in the social context in which they live, and within the stimuli, they receive from those around them. Some people participate politically and socially because of the many opportunities available to them, and because they are persuaded of the need to participate by others. This theory is linked to the Resource-Based theory in part in terms of its reliance on the available possibilities that help individuals to participate politically.

Opportunities for political participation are clearly and undoubtedly available to individuals belonging to the high social status of society. That means individuals belonging to the high socioeconomic status can engage in political action and participate in political parties and deal with various interest groups and voluntary organizations. In contrast, individuals belonging to lower status cannot do such things because of their limited possibilities. In this way, this theory is very close to the previous one but adds to the group's efforts to encourage individuals to contribute to political participation (Johnston et al., 1989; Johanston et al., 1996). Despite the importance of this theory, it did not provide an in-depth explanation for the nature of the participation of people, and its focus on the role of others in influencing us to participate is not clear and did not reveal the nature of differences between different social contexts.

In light of the above models, it can be said that the theories of political participation emphasize several different aspects. The first focuses on the need to achieve development at all economic, social and political levels, thus helping to increase the level of political participation. The second asserts the importance of sources which help in participation such as money, time and the level of education. The third is the community institutions, whether formal or informal, which is headed by the State institution with its strong influence, and the enormous potential of it. Table (3) shows the main differences between political participation theories.

Theory	Unit of Analysis	Level of Analysis	Positive aspects	Negative Aspects
Modernization Theory	Country: Social, economic and political aspects	Macro level	It gives a broad perspective about the development of the society.	It Ignores the political organizations.
Institutional Theory	State: The role of state in political life	Macro level	It focuses on the state as the main unit of analysis.	It neglects the other institutions in society.
Agencies Theory	Political Parties and other intermediate organizations	Meso level	It analyzes political institutions mediated the distance between the state and the individuals	It disregards the impacts of developmental level of the society.
Resource and Civic Volunteerism Theory	Individuals and Resources	Micro level	It focuses on the role of the individuals.	It ignores the impacts of the social structure on the individuals.
Mobilization Theory	Individuals	Micro level	It examines the political opportunities which the individuals have in the society.	It does not provide an in-depth explanation of people's political participation.

Table 3: Theories of Political Participation

It is clear from the above that theories differ among each other regarding political participation in society between focusing on society as a whole or focusing on large units such as the role of the state or intermediary units that fall between the state and individuals or finally on the different material and moral sources that help individuals to engage in the process of participation. Certainly, each theory as it is clear from the previous table involves some positive aspects and some other negative aspects. While these theories provide an abstract theoretical explanation

of political participation in human societies, addressing the political participation of women presents a real social and political situation that helps to reach the reality of political participation in human societies in general and Arab and Gulf societies in particular.

3- Political Participation of Women:

According to the former theories, this study tries to discuss an important issue that has long preoccupied the world public opinion, which is related to political participation. It is the issue of empowering women and increasing the effectiveness of the role they play in society and the role they play in politics in general, which came in response to the global trend towards the promotion of human rights in general.

The issue of women's participation in political action is one of the most significant issues of great importance. In recent decades, this issue has been raised on various levels. On the one hand, it raises the issue of activating the political participation of citizens in general. On the other hand, women's political participation is part of the international discourse on women, which appeared in many modern occasions as the Mexican conference of 1975 and with Nairobi Conference in 1985. Because of the importance of the subject, the issue was re-introduced at the Beijing Conference in 1995 with an end of The Second World Decade for Women, within the process of empowering women in all areas, including the political field (Afolabi 2017; Marwa and Moghadam 2016). In addition, the feminist movement through its various speeches and trends raises an issue of women's political participation as a priority and an entry point for social change for women through the provision of some mechanisms and means to strengthen participation.

This study reveals what women can play in the policy inputs and their components, making policy and decision, contributing to the formation of public opinion, as well as trying to get to know all the obstacles facing women towards playing a more significant role. Women's study and political participation have gained increasing importance in recent years as a reaction to the revolution of women's rights issues in the world, and reaction to international women's conferences. My

choice to study the political participation of women has been due to many considerations. Women are half of society, contribute to its development, and have played an essential role in developing countries. If women organized their rights and used their creative potential, they would be able to change the balance of political forces, work on the success of the best political parties and select the best legislation.

In the development process in the country, the experiences proved that women are a ruling element in making the future, and the issue of political participation has become one of the most essential topics. The importance of this issue is not limited to the local or Arab arena, but all countries. It has become essential to emphasize the role of women and encourage them to be aware of the issue of women's participation in the society at all levels. Women's participation remains an important issue and faces many obstacles and difficulties that require effort, determination and the will to remove it from the road. The issue of women's participation in political life remains the most important and pivotal issue in our contemporary Arab world as women are still excluded from political life due to traditional male power and authority in society.

Although today's civilization has enabled women to know and defend their human rights, such as their right to education, work and political practice, including political decision-making, there are some extremist views on the Arab and Islamic world that deny women the enjoyment of political rights, and some take Islam as an excuse for that. Nevertheless, many developments in women's political practice cannot be denied, which vary from State to State, depending on the nature of their progress. Below I discuss several studies on the nature of women's political engagement and the various developments associated with it, particularly in developing countries.

3-1. Women's Political Participation between Internal and External Factors:

Despite a large number of studies on women's political participation in developed countries (Conway 1999; Conway et al., 2004; Dáil and Wells 2018; Ford 2017)

there is a great deal of scarcity for studies dealing with the political participation of women in developing countries, including Arab countries. (Afolabi 2017).

Although the Matejka study was presented in (1983), it dealt with the issue of political participation in most Arab countries through the vital role played by the Majles. Matejka addresses the Majles as the informal mean through which citizens communicate in the Arab world and interact with the rulers. She sees the necessity of understanding the Majles and its importance in the light of the Arab political culture that is different from the Western one. Matejka emphasizes the importance of the Majles as a mean of political participation in the Arab world but stresses that the Majles as a traditional means is not enough for effective political participation, nor is it sufficient if the Arab countries want to move into the world of development and modernization.

Abukhalil (1993) is trying to identify the political role of women in the Arab world, emphasizing the different status of women in the Arab world from one society to another depending on the circumstances under which they live and pass through. Nevertheless, the study results that there are commonalities in the Arab world that hinder women's political participation. The researcher summarizes these obstacles in the relationship between culture and Islam, where he assures that the cultural structure plays a significant role in hindering women's political participation in the Arab world. Also, misinterpretation of religion reinforces the society's rejection of women's participation in general and their political participation in particular (See also, Ahmed 1999).

By focusing on economic, political, cultural and religious factors, Haj- Ismail (1994) tries to show the relationship between urban middle-class women and political participation in the Arab world. Haj-Ismail shows that the city in the Arab world is a great help for women in political participation, but women political participation still very limited in comparison to the level of women's participation in Western societies. In this context, unlike the city, the percentage of political participation among citizens, male and female alike is very weak in all Arab countries (see also, Mohamed 2011).

The concept of patriarchy has been used so that Haj-Ismail can make comparisons between the various countries of the world regarding the participation of women in the political process. He argues that the importance of this study stems from the lack of data on the values, trends and the size of the actual participation of women in the Arab world. Hence, it relied on secondary and statistical sources in addition to its observations regarding the status of women in the Arab world.

Rizzo's study (2000) focuses on the activities of women's groups in Kuwait. Because of the weak participation of Kuwaiti women in the voting and the electoral process, Rizzo tried to study the various organizations that are distributed in many directions, including religious and social organizations and trying to identify their different roles in pushing Kuwaiti women to political participation and social empowerment. The study revealed that professional associations define their objectives to improve the status of women in politics and society, more strongly than service associations that are more interested in encouraging Islamic lifestyles and charity among their members.

Rizzo's survey of several associations in Kuwait discusses the Kuwaiti women's sense of inequality in the political system and their desire to work for the promotion and achieving of their rights. The importance of this study stems from addressing the various societies in Kuwait in light of the focus on the compatibility of the relationship between Islam and democracy in the Middle East, which may help or obstruct the participation of women in the political arena.

El-Ghannam (2003) says that many factors affect the extent of women's political participation in the Arab world, such as the economic, political, social, cultural and educational situations. In his attempt to identify how these independent factors affect the political participation of women as a dependent factor in parliaments, ministries, and other organizations, El-Ghannam reveals through his study of all Arab countries that these factors affect positively and negatively the reality of the political participation of Arab women. Small family, living in urban areas, and the high level of economic and educational factors all contribute to the high level of political participation of women in the Arab world and vice versa.

Al-Oraimi (2004) attempts to show the relationship between women's political rights and their role in the economic development process in the United Arab Emirates from 1982 to 2002. The study attempts to understand how different factors of a cultural structure such as religion, customs, traditions, societal norms and constitutional laws affect the nature and practice of women's political life. The study also attempted to show the interrelationship between many elements such as gender, tribal identity and neo-patriarchy in the United Arab Emirates and how this affects the social change of Emirati women and the developments associated with their status in public life. The importance of this study stems from its focus on the interdependence of social, cultural, political and economic aspects in a complete integration so that it is difficult to focus on one side without the other.

The study relied on secondary data, personal observations, and face-to-face interviews with 65 Emirati women. It ends with a set of results that included: The achievements of women in the labor market did not push towards further achievements in the political field. This means that women's access to suitable work, while necessary, does not mean that they can enter and participate in the political world. The study clarifies the role of oil in the process of modernization, which created a neo-patriarchal structure in the UAE society, where the possibility of women's political participation was closed while the fields of work were opened to them. At the end of the study, it emphasizes the need to empower women through the social movements they form and belong to. This means that this study while stressing the importance of community support for women, considers that this will not happen without the collective work of women and the initiatives they instigate.

Depending on both cross-national statistical and case study analysis, relying on data gathered over two years of fieldwork and from 100 interviews across Bahrain, Morocco, and Jordan, Welborne (2011) finds that that international capital plays a significant role in supporting local acceptance by governments of women's political participation and equality with men. Through international assistance, women become more socially involved, thus helping to further their political participation. This shows that the work of international organizations and foreign

investment helps to some degree in the social and political empowerment of women.

This means that the researchers clarify that the important role of international capital and development organizations in pushing the governments of developing countries to work to improve the status of women socially and politically in order to receive more assistance and investments. In this light, the issue of women's participation is no longer a local or regional issue, but rather a global level and the strengthening of relations between different States and organizations.

The importance of Aldhaheri and Al-Noaimi study (2012) stems from the fact that they are dealing with a new phenomenon related to the political participation of Emirati women. In this new phenomenon, they are trying to study the attitudes of the UAE public toward political participation of women in order to analyze and understand the phenomenon. This study attempts to identify the views of the UAE elite towards women, how they evaluate the status of women, and the role of social media in forming the UAE public opinion towards women.

The study concludes a set of results regarding the participation of Emirati women in politics in the parliament, including supporting the elite in the UAE society for the political participation of Emirati women. The UAE public opinion still argues that the political participation of women needs some time to be accepted. Finally, the study ends with clarifying the role of the UAE media in defining the participation of Emirati women and encouraging UAE society to accept its political participation.

While Afolabi (2017) and El-Ghannam (2003) have focused on many factors affecting the degree of women's participation in politics, Yousefi and Kim (2013) have focused on the role the "Islamization" plays in determining the degree of women's political participation. By addressing the concept of "Islamization" and its application to four countries, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Morocco, they show how Islamic parties have played very effective roles in influencing the legislative structure and the structure of the state and how their regulations affect women's rights negatively. The authors attempt to show how the reality after the

Arab Spring revolutions was influenced in Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries by the arrival of the Islamic groups, which made them impose their conservative vision on the society in general and women in particular (see also AbuKhalil 1993; Rai 2000).

Alazami (2014) tries to understand the role and impact of one organization, the Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS), in the struggle to bring about women's political participation in Kuwait. The research method depends on studying the WCSS since its establishment in 1960 till now by examining primary and secondary documents and interviewing the WCSS members and leaders. The study ended with a series of important and valuable results relating to the WCSS. It was confirmed that the WCSS was recognized as a liberal and feminist organization in Kuwait which makes it perceived differently from other more conservative organizations, whether Islamic or tribal. Despite the importance of this organization, the members of the WCSS stressed that its impact was minimal on them.

Depending on multivariate regression techniques, including Ordinary Least Squares and Logistics models using data from the Arab Barometer II of 2011 and the World Values Survey of 2014, Hassan (2014) tries to study women civic engagement and political participation in Yemen. He concludes that there were no differences in the political participation rates between males and females in 2011, while there were slight differences in the 2014 elections. There were also significant differences between males and females in the membership of political parties. Hassan reveals the weakness of the membership of citizens aged between 18 and 25 years in political parties compared to their elders. Finally, Hassan shows that political stability encourages political participation compared to times of political turmoil, which reveals the weakness of political participation in southern Yemen compared to the north, whereas the war's results significantly affected the south of Yemen more than the north.

Al-Subhi (2016) reveals the lack of scientific work on the level of women's representation in the different institutions associated with political and electoral practices in the Arab world compared to the Western world. A matter of great

importance is that many of these Western studies link women's non-participation and non-representation to Islam and culture. She reveals that understanding the weakness of women's political representation in the Arab world must take place in the context of other important factors linked to the informal political context, especially tribalism and the practices of social elites in this region.

Al-Subhi studies the determinants of voting for women candidates by using the material collected through the first election in the Sultanate of Oman before the elections of October 2015 of the Shura Council. Nevertheless, the results of the study were in favor of Western studies in some respects, and different from others. The study showed the influence of the religious aspects, in that most religious people are less supportive of women in the electoral process. The study also showed that tribalism has no direct and determinant role in the electoral process, but revealed that the more the tribe gives the individual the freedom to choose the candidate the less biased towards women he/she has.

If some thinkers and intellectuals expose many of the different factors associated with the political practice of women, Azimova (2016) has linked political freedoms to political practice with applying to Saudi Arabia; the more political freedoms, the more political participation, and vice versa. The study reveals the pressures on women in Saudi Arabia, despite the area of participation that has become available to them recently, especially in the field of government work and employment. Nevertheless, it still suffers from a significant lack of participation of social, political and community action.

Depending on the Voter Registration & Voter Confidence Assessment in Tunisia Survey conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in March 2011, Abdo-Katsipis (2017) tries to examine the constraints to female participation in democratizing Tunisia. She found profound differences between men and women in their political awareness which produces an obstacle against women participation in Tunisian society. She asserts that this gap between males and females has been deepened by the differences between them in university-level education, income levels, place of residence, and a lack of access to information about politics.

Through an analysis of the various democracies between 1900 to 2015, Afolabi (2017) states that, depending on 5 African countries, the political participation of women between 1900 and 1950 was very slow, citing many reasons that slowed down such political participation by women such as traditions, ignorance, colonialism, and lack of education. At the same time, the same post-1950s data, which can be defined as the postcolonial era, have shown a change in women's political contribution, although this contribution cannot be described as constant or static. Women's political contributions have brought together both positive and negative aspects, which are due to many factors, such as environmental, social, cultural and educational factors, and country-specific political mobility. Afolabi concludes that despite the differences between countries in Africa, there is no doubt that there is a rise in the level of political participation of women in Africa, despite the fluctuation of this rise (see also, Hannon and Schumm 2017).

Almal (2017) identifies the participation of Qatari women in the Central Municipal Council since their first participation in 1999 by relying on secondary sources that dealt with this subject analytically and statistically and through many interviews with Qatari women. The study concludes that the weak political participation of Qatari women can be attributed to the Council's institutional framework and to family social barriers, which can be met by more government support and community initiatives in support of women's political participation.

Given the impact of external factors, Talani (2017) also reveals that globalization has affected the reality of women in North African countries, mainly through technological influences. Talani argues that if the North African countries are not integrated into the system of globalization economically and politically, this will undoubtedly affect the reality of women, and further marginalize them.

It is clear from previous studies on women's political participation that there is a lack of studies on the role and political representation of women in the Arab world, as compared to those in Western societies (Alsubhi 2016). Some studies focus on inter-state comparisons of women's political participation (Abukhalil 1993; Al-Folabi 2017; Al-Ghannam 2003; Welborne 2011; Yousefi and Kim 2013) while others focused on a particular country such as the study of the Sultanate of Oman,

Kuwait; Tunisia; Saudi Arabia; Yemen; UAE and Qatar (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Alazami 2014; Aldhaheri and Al-Noaimi 2012; Almal 2017; Al-Subhi 2016; Azimova 2016; Hassan 2014; Rizzo 2000). A number of important analytical aspects have emerged from these studies.

They emphasize the importance of combining different analytical aspects, socially, politically and economically, when studying the factors affecting the level of participation of women in the Arab world. They also highlight the importance of the urban reality of women and its role in the high rates of political participation in the Arab world.

There is a significant influence on the cultural structure of the Arab world, especially when it is integrated with conservative religious perceptions regarding society's view of the political participation of women. However, the widespread prevalence of education and widespread of women's work facilitate, to a certain degree, their social acceptance and thus facilitate their acceptance into the political structure and associated partnerships, which requires more time to be accepted by all segments of society in particular among the conservative groups.

Although all these factors are related to the internal social structures of the Arab States, some studies have emphasized the important role of international institutions in supporting women's political participation because of the grants and investments associated with these institutions. Despite the importance of the above point and the associated international support, it is necessary to focus, as many studies have shown, on the role of domestic organizations in supporting women's political participation, especially those organizations formed by and associated with women. The role of the State itself and the official institutions associated with it is crucial here in supporting women's political participation and community acceptance.

Finally, although most studies emphasize the importance of studying the reality of women's political participation, and despite the many interviews they have conducted with women in many countries, studies do not interview women with political experiences, such as female candidates or elected women. The current

study by interviewing Saudi elected women has added a new and vital dimension to the former studies.

The present study adopts some of these factors in the overall vision of the study and in analyzing the responses of the elected women. The study considers the importance of a comprehensive holistic approach that addresses all societal factors surrounding women, socially, economically, and politically. Despite the importance of these factors, it is necessary to place the influence of the cultural structure on political participation, especially in the light of the various modernization attempts that have taken place in Saudi Arabia and consequently on the status of women and the traditional structures of family and tribe. The importance of the role of the state, represented by the ruling family internally, and the impact of foreign international institutions on accelerating women's political participation and support should also be emphasized. Here, the role of the newcomer of Saudi Arabia, the Internet, in creating a new space for Saudi women to benefit from in discussions and dialogues and to acquire new rights of self-expression and opinions cannot be ignored.

4- Social Media and Political Participation:

The Internet is one of the modern inventions that has played a dramatic role in increasing communication between and among people. In recored history, there has been no means of communication that brought about such proliferation as the Internet did. Individuals around the world use the Internet in all social, economic, political, educational, cultural, commercial aspects of their lives. The impact of the Internet has not been limited to scientific research and other vital areas, but rather to social and political communication among people around the world. The Internet and related social media such as Facebook, Twitter and others have created new and unprecedented spheres through which individuals can achieve new worlds of their own through their communication with each other (Brockman 2011; Cavalier 2005; Noor Al-Deen and Hendricks 2012).

The Internet and its accompanied social media have played a major role in politics. It has created a new space through which individuals can discuss many political

issues, whatever their nature and importance. If the spaces of communication and political dialogue are numerous in Western societies where political participation is easy and multifaceted, this is not the case in many countries that do not allow political pluralism and the alternation of power. Thus, individuals in cyberspace and associated media find new and safe spheres for political practice away from the ruling power and state hegemony (Park 2010; Richardson 2016; Smith 2017).

Since the 1990s, the Internet has played a significant role in supporting citizens' political participation. Many social scientists have studied the role of the Internet in political participation and democracy, emphasizing many new Internet-related features that have helped to promote political participation and dealing with it. In addition, many have emphasized the great diversity that is connected to the Internet through the vast amount of information it provides, the ease of collective work among individuals, and the ease of forming online organizations (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Highfield 2016; Sternberg 2014; Storck 2011; Strandberg 2015).

Several studies around the world dealt with the role of modern media in the political participation of citizens (Bimber et al. 2015; Hamilton 2013; Strandberg and Carlson 2017; Vaccari 2013). The number of this kind of studies is relatively limited in the Arab world, which makes my study important in this context (Aldhaheri 2012).

Reda (2017) suggests that blogging has already started in the Arab world through three countries - Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia - since 2005. This has given women ample space for political criticism of the regimes in these countries. She also supposes that the emergence of political blogging on the Internet has broken the barrier of fear not only among women but among all citizens in general. However, Reda asserts that women's political blogs are still very limited in comparison to the political blogs of men. For example, in her study of the situation of Algerian women, it is clear that women are concerned with issues related to women, such as attention to literature and cooking, despite the existence of few cases that concern the political issue.

Reda determines a set of principles that push women to participate in political work, including satisfaction with society, where she argues that the greater the satisfaction with society, the greater the participation of women politically. It also says that one of the most important points of political action for women is their desire to participate politically and improve the status and conditions of society. Also, she argues that various community institutions such as the family, school, university and religious institutions all help to develop the motives for women's political participation. Reda asserts that the state and its associated constitutional institutions can push women towards political participation. Finally, there is satisfaction with a subjective issue of psychological stimuli that drives some women to political participation in search of fame and appearance as a public person.

Al-Salem (2015) draws on a debate about the impact of the Internet on women's political participation. While some say that the decline in the low costs of using the Internet helps women to participate politically, others argue that the Internet has a limited impact on women's political participation. This study is a serious attempt to identify the role that the Internet can play in the political participation of Kuwaiti women by questioning the women themselves and identifying their points of view on the Internet and its importance in political participation and political action. The study attempts to identify the impact of the Internet on the political participation of women based on a sample of 800 Kuwaiti women. Al-Salem tried to identify the extent of Kuwaiti women's use of digital media and to identify the size of their posts, whether online or offline. About political participation via the Internet, the study attempted to identify the quality of the political content that Kuwaiti women are dealing with.

Al-Salem's study revealed an important set of results. The study shows that local political issues emerged as the most valuable political material for women on the Internet, as well as some prominent regional political themes. In addition, it explains that there is a lack of relationship between the time spent by women in the follow-up of news and political programs and their political participation on the Internet. The study showed that although a minimal percentage of women

characterized the level of participation either on the Internet or offline, because of the nature of the cultural structure and socialization of Kuwait, it revealed that online participation contributes to increasing the actual participation rates in offline. The study finds that the use of the Internet, in terms of privacy and anonymity, contributes significantly to participation through it. Finally, the study concludes that the use of the Internet and digital media greatly helps other social institutions to empower women and increase their contribution to society.

Shishinka (2017) shows great importance to digital media and its associated means during the Arab Spring in Egypt, where it reveals that the use of the Internet has played a significant role in supporting the revolution and mobilizing young people in particular. However, she discusses that using the Internet needs to raise the level of education for young people. The Internet has also helped girls in political practice, and advocacy for the crowd, which has expanded the practice of girls in the actual reality of the revolution. Nevertheless, Shishinka says that the Arab Spring, while revealing the importance of the use of the Internet in political practice, also revealed that the use of the Internet should not be the only means used in political practice, as it is a means used by all conflicting parties. Therefore, it should be used as a means of political participation along with all other available means.

Although Eum (2014) reveals that the status of Arab women has not changed since the Arab Spring, she reveals that the status of Saudi women has changed relatively since 2015, where they were allowed to run for and vote in the elections. The study points to the reform efforts initiated by King Abdullah since he came to power in 2005 and sought to empower women and expand their rights. In this context, it can be said that the King led the process of reforming the situation of Saudi women by himself after those Saudi women themselves have begun to benefit from this situation in the community and to benefit from the social media in forming various social movements that advocate women in Saudi society. According to Eum, what is remarkable is that Saudi women began to form women's grass-roots movements using various tools of social media. The Eum's study points to the vital role of media in facilitating women's work and the ease of their mobilization to raise

women's awareness and gain new activists. However, the critical aspect of her study is that it has mainly focused on the social activity of women in Saudi society more than any other activities.

Amir (2016) attempts to study the paradigm shift in awareness and status of Saudi women after the use of social media, which, in his view, led relatively to an intellectual shift in the women's mentality in general and in the Saudi women's mentality in particular. Amer suggests that freedom of opinion used to be restricted for Saudi women. Hence, social media plays a significant role in providing a new environment that helps women to participate and express their views. The study seeks to identify the extent of the change made by the use of means of social media among Saudi women and to identify the possibilities that led to the use of social media in terms of restructuring the Saudi cultural formation and the consequent strengthening of the political and social participation of women. Depending on the in-depth interviews with Saudi Arabian women, Amer ends with the conclusion that although there are differences in the goals of Internet use among Saudi women, there are common themes among them such as independence and rights; freedom; self-expression; culture and tradition; accepting difference in attitudes of younger versus older generations; equality between males and females and finally driving issue.

Sun et al. (2007) figure out how the Internet, especially among young university students, is used in a group of Gulf States that include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman. Through the application of these countries, the study attempts to identify the impact of the use of the Internet on social change in the Gulf region. The study limits four important issues about the subject of social change in the Gulf countries: religious and cultural identity, sub-culture and the generation gap, class affiliations, and the social status of women.

The Sun's study (2007) examines the impact of using the Internet on the spread of the mingling culture (Ikhtilat Culture) in Saudi society. Given the Saudi reality based on the separation between males and females, and the absence of mingling culture, the study attempts to reveal the nature of the change that occurred in society, and the impact of the use of computer-mediated communication on the

prevalence of this culture in Saudi society. According to this study, the spread of computer-mediated communication produced two worlds: the first is the real world in which the relationship between males and females are separated, and the other is the virtual world in which this communication can take place.

The two previous studies, although I could not know their results because of their Korean language, are of great importance because they focus on the role of using the Internet to change the constituents of the Gulf culture in general and Saudi culture in particular. Hence, they focus on the deeply rooted structures of Saudi culture such as religion, identity, intergenerational and gender interaction, which are very important in social change and play a significant role in the same political change in the Gulf societies (see also, Fageeh 2012).

Depending on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research techniques, Oshan (2007) chooses a sample from more than 700 male and female university students at King Saud University. She tries to identify and analyze Saudi students' use of the internet by focusing on the elements affecting the female use of the Internet. The study found that gender has a significant impact on the use of the Internet, e-mail, and chat. The culture also affects women's perception of the use of Internet networks, the reasons for using specific sites, and the activities carried out through these sites. Culture also determines the kind of individuals who communicate with them online. She concludes that females face challenges and difficulties when using the Internet that differs from those that males face. The difficulties for females are cultural aspects such as family restrictions, lack of available time, and psychological aspects such as security, privacy and the complexity of the Internet. Overall the study finds that most male and female students have positive attitudes toward the Internet, but females are more aware of the size and nature of the challenges they face on the Internet.

Aldhaheri (2012) attempts to study the attitudes and behaviors of Arab women while using the Internet through a comparative study of women in the UAE and Oman. This study was conducted between 2007-2008. The study found that there are no profound differences between the nature of women's use of the Internet in both countries. They use the internet at an average of one to four hours a day.

Women in both countries use the internet for the same purposes; sending and receiving e-mail, searching for some information, reading newspapers and magazines, chatting with friends, and learning some of the necessary skills. However, what is different among women in both countries is that 80% of UAE women use the Internet to express their feelings, compared to 30% of Omani women. What is remarkable here is that women in both countries have confirmed that using the Internet has helped them to learn about different women's issues around the world and to know their circumstances.

In the light of previous studies, the impact of the Internet on the nature of political participation of individuals in general and the political participation of women, in particular, is still difficult to determine because the Internet itself is a recent phenomenon and because of the lack of studies on this subject, especially in the Arab world. Some aspects can be drawn from previous studies.

The enormous role of the Internet in modern human communication cannot be denied. It provides new contexts of communication that have privacy and anonymity that are not available in reality. It helps to some extent to use them and to engage in many subjects without fear or anxiety. The Internet provides a new intellectual space for individuals in general, and for women in particular, through which to deal with various issues of society and to discuss them easily and naturally.

The cultural elements of the structure of Arab societies such as religion, family, tribe, identity, and gender all affect how the Internet is used and other related issues. There has been no substantial relationship between the use of the Internet and the size of political participation. If the means of social communication have gained considerable importance during the Arab Spring revolutions, the direct link between the use of these means and the success of revolutions, or the outbreak of new revolutions or the high level of political participation, is still in need of many studies and diverse in all countries of the Arab world. In this regard, this study is an addition in examining the relationship between the use of the Internet and the means of social communication and political participation in the Kingdom.

There are some elements associated with the use of the Internet that have been emphasized in the previous studies. The role played by the Internet in women's paradigm shift is through the ease of using the Internet, searching for topics, exchanging e-mail, and finally chatting with other individuals. One of the most important features of the Internet is that it plays a significant role in mobilizing and building a public base through which to expand social movements aimed at serving the community and the poor groups. Finally, there is a high tendency to use the Internet socially, especially in the Gulf States, through awareness campaigns, or improve the reality of women, or help disadvantaged groups, but what cannot be said is whether this social aspect will include political aspects later or not; every rally must include political aspects sooner or later.

Conclusion:

This chapter deals with many definitions of political participation, by combining the political expression of individuals with the ability to influence and direct the government to their interests. In light of what has been presented in chapter one about the social and political construction of the Kingdom, the expressive capacities of individuals have evolved to a limited extent, despite the enormous material development of the Kingdom in the last few decades. This is certainly reflected in their ability to influence the political and economic decisions of the government.

In order to understand these changes in the Kingdom and the extent of their impact on individuals, it was necessary to discuss a set of theories that dealt with the political participation of individuals and the factors associated with them. Despite the different approaches of these theories, each of them provides an aspect that helps to understand the Saudi society and the position of women's political participation. The theory of modernization provides an accurate description of the material transformations in the Kingdom over the past decades; transformations that have made a great development that cannot be ignored or minimized. But this theory stands helpless in explaining the non-reflection of these transformations on the value structure and intellectual society of Saudi Arabia, which is evident in the position of women and the weakness of community acceptance of their political

participation. Institutional theory and agency theory also provide an important explanation for the nature of political institutions, such as the state and the political parties and other civil society institutions. The state enjoys great hegemony and control over the Saudi political space, in the absence of the political parties and a clear presence of civil society organizations in their charitable form.

This chapter also deals with former studies on women's political participation. These studies have helped the current study to adopt a comprehensive vision in dealing with the nature of the factors affecting the political participation of women, and not neglect a factor at the expense of another one. Finally, this chapter ended with a very important issue concerning the role that social media can play in influencing the political participation of women. These studies have demonstrated the importance of social media as a new space for women through their low cost and positive effects in opening new knowledge horizons for citizens in general and for women in particular. These studies have also shown the importance of education in helping to deal with social media. The most important results of these studies were the importance of these new media for communication in the political engagement of women, although they stressed the need to combine social media and other means of political activities.

These studies have shown significant methodological aspects, particularly in the diversity of the nature of the samples, which included students, women and other social strata. They also have revealed the use of quantitative and qualitative analysis programs, and the combination of them.

The importance of the current study lies in the nature of the sample that deals with it, namely the group of Saudi women elected to municipal councils. Despite the importance of previous studies, it was closer to opinion studies. The importance of the current study is that it met and asked a sample of women who exercised the electoral process with all its social burdens, using all means available to them, including modern social media. In chapter three, I will present many methodological issues related to meeting the Saudi elected women and having information about their political participation and the role of social media in their own life.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

Introduction:

This chapter attempts to focus on the methodological aspects associated with the study in the light of what we discussed in chapter one and two. The first chapter presented an analytical background on the nature of the Saudi society, and the various aspects associated with it, socially, politically and economically, and their impacts on the status of Saudi women. The second chapter examined the role of social media in supporting political participation of women in Saudi society through dealing with some previous studies that dealt with this subject. In light of this, the present chapter attempted to determine the methodological procedures and how I understood the status of Saudi women through the pre-defined sample represented by the Saudi elected women.

This chapter is divided into different issues. At the beginning, I justify why I choose the elected women more than any other groups in Saudi society. I discuss the importance of using semi-structured interview. These issues help in comparing between the current study and other studies which dealt with political participation of the Saudi women. In addition, this chapter deals with the division of the interview form, the nature of its questions, and its relevance to the subject of the current study.

1- Focusing on the Saudi Elected Women:

This study examined its questions through interviews with the newly Saudi elected women. As the first elected women representatives, they are at the forefront of the debate about democracy and the role of women in the Kingdom. Their opinions about their contribution, their ambitions and how they see their own future are a valuable source of data for understanding contemporary political developments. The focus was on how the Saudi elected women, see the value and threats that arise from social media for their work. To be specific, the study examined how Saudi women have been affected by social media, and how they have been involved both socially and politically with Saudi society.

There are many studies that have dealt with the reality of the political participation of Saudi women, whether theoretical or empirical, whether they focused solely on the political participation or on the other factors that help to achieve it as education and social media. In addition, there are many studies that have been based on quantitative analysis,

by conducting social surveys for a large number of respondents and some focused on qualitative analysis depending on limited and in-depth interviews, and the last chose to integrate both quantitative analysis with the qualitative one. I present below a set of these various studies that have been carried out in Saudi society.

In his study, Hamdan (1990) tried to compare two samples, the first of which included 600 husbands and wives equally representing old families, and 600 husbands and wives equally representing young families in order to identify the characteristics of the change that occurred to the Saudi family in Riyadh. The study confirmed the extent of the social changes that have taken place in the Saudi family, including the change in the family situations through improvements in living conditions, high level of education and health services provided, and technological progress in the Kingdom.

Through an interview with 100 women in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from different social, economic and educational levels, AlMunajjed (1997) tried to identify new roles of Saudi women associated with education and work versus traditional roles as mothers, wives and homemakers. The study appears to be an attempt to identify the status of Saudi women in traditional society versus their status in modern society and the associated education and work outside the home.

Depending on a sample of 430 Saudi students representing freshmen and senior students at the College of Education for Women (CEW) in Saudi Arabia, AlMohsen (2000) tried to reveal the female attitudes towards modernization in the Kingdom. The study concluded that students support some aspects of modernization in the Kingdom, but emphasize that this modernization must be carried out in the context of family traditions and responsibilities. The study clarified that most female students support work outside the home, and the right of the girl to choose her partner.

Akeel's (2003) study focused on identifying the difficulties and barriers Saudi women face in traditional media. The study was based on a limited sample of six Saudi women whose work experience ranged from 4 to 24 years in press, radio and television. In addition, the study conducted a wide survey of many women working in other media institutions, which attempted to document cases of oppression and injustice which face women workers in the media. Although women recognized being subjected to many inequities in media work, such as income inequality and lack of access to senior positions, they rejected Western feminist theories that do not agree with Saudi traditions.

Gazzaz's (2006) study tried to combine the interview and the questionnaire in a similar manner to Akeel. In his study, he tried to identify the influences and regulations associated with the Internet in Saudi society. It was based on limited interviews of senior policy makers in the Kingdom, as well as a questionnaire on a large number of Internet users in the Kingdom. The study concluded that, despite the large number of Internet users in the Kingdom, there is a great debate on the extent to which the Internet can provide freedoms in the Kingdom. But despite this controversy, the study suggested that the Internet opened up a number of social and political spheres that could not exist without the Internet.

Depending on a sample of Saudi youth of 617 students from the University of Dammam, aged between 18 and 24, Alsharkh (2012) tried to show the impact of social media networks on their relationships with their families and traditional society. The study concluded that there is some impact on the lives of young people by social media networks, including their communication with their families and the social context surrounding them. In addition, there are some other influences associated with these sites since they appear to assist young people in making their own self-decisions and accepting differences of opinion. Finally, the study showed that women are more active in the use of social media networks.

Alothman's study (2013) sought to identify the role played by social media in Saudi social life and the Saudi political environment. A sample of 1361 Saudis was selected to identify their use of social media for political and social purposes. The study concluded that Saudis are routinely utilizing social media for political and social purposes, especially with regard to having access to up-to-date information.

Adopting a theoretical framework, Doğruel (2015), asserted the importance of liberating Saudi women and emphasized the importance of accepting them in the democratic process and the general political transformation. This study explores the perception of social media and the role these tools play in the social lives and political environment in Saudi Arabia through diffusion of innovation theory and uses and gratifications theory.

Many studies, regionally and globally (Akeel 2003; Alghamdy 2011; Alothman 2013; Alsharkh 2012; Doğruel 2015; Gazzaz 2006; Margetts 2015; Strandberg 2015; Uldam and Vestergaard 2015) analyzed how social media has played an active role in social and political mobilization, so the current study examined the worldwide literature to evaluate the role of social media in modern Saudi society. The current work connected with existing literature and debates on the effective role of social media in our daily life. While

few studies used the in-depth interviews (Akeel 2003; Alghamdy 2005; Ghazzaz 2006), many used quantitative analysis depending on online surveys (Al-Ahmadi 2011; Almohsen 2000; Alothman 2013; Alsharkh 2012). What distinguishes the current study from other studies is its focus on the newly Saudi elected women. Other studies focus on studying students or public and governmental employees.

In the current study, I focused on studying the elected women and how social media has affected them in social and political activities. This means that this study focused on some a specific form of political activity, namely the desire for political candidacy in municipal councils. While the former studies focused on students and other government officials, the current study dealt with a societal segment that seeks to engage in community work and social activities.

The study identified itself as focusing on the municipal elections. The event itself was not the subject of interest of the study, as much as the participation of women in it through their candidacy. In addition, the study was not primarily intended to examine women who voted in the electoral process as much as it focused on women candidates in the elections who were elected to municipal councils in Saudi Arabia.

There are many reasons why the study has focused on women candidates in municipal councils. The study aimed at interviewing women with experience for running and succeeding in the electoral process through their actual participation, and not through other parties, whether ordinary citizens or public officials. It is possible to ask many questions to ordinary citizens and public officials, but it would not be sufficient and adequate to get a deep understanding of the nature of women's participation in the electoral process from the inception of the idea until the announcement of the outcome.

In addition, the study did not intend to make any comparisons between the responses of women candidates to municipal councils and other ordinary citizens and public officials. The main goal is to identify the experiences of political candidates through their personal experience, not through any other social or political forces.

Interviewing these women in depth shed more light on the social, political and economic transformations in the Kingdom, as well as representing all parts of the Kingdom because of their different regions. From this point of view, this sample, although small, represented the Kingdom clearly.

Because the main aim of the study is related to the role played by education and social media in supporting women in political participation, it is logical to interview these women themselves and not any other parties. Learning how they use social media does not achieve the goals of the study unless the women themselves are interviewed.

The study of the relationship between the means of social media and the political change applied to Saudi women is what the methodological procedures tried to achieve. It is a matter that calls for specific methodological analysis in a sample size of 20 women. This analysis was based on the personal views of the interviewees, which gives this study the depth required and the ability to connect their personal and social world. Determining the methodology depends on the research questions, which aim to understand the experiences and perceptions of Saudi elected women. In this regard, the most effective method is the qualitative one, which helps in understanding both personal experience and social context of the interviewees.

2- Qualitative Analysis and the Importance of the Semi-Structured Interview:

To examine the impact of the recently Saudi elected women on the patterns and modality of civic participation and engagement for women in Saudi Arabia, face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews with as many of the 20 elected women were conducted. A full interview schedule was utilized for consistency and comparison. These interviews were conducted in Arabic, and were translated into English later.

The value of semi-structured interviews is their flexibility for eliciting rich data about the perceptions and personal opinions of the respondents. As public representatives, their contact details are publicly available. Saudi women's face-to-face interviews helped, to a great extent, in identifying the role played by education and social media in their political and civic engagement (Have 2004; Kvale 1983; Mann 2000; Marvasti 2004; Miles and Huberman 1994).

After examining different sources to gain a sufficient understanding of the Saudi culture in general and Saudi women in particular, the focus was on coming up with the research questions and determining a defined scope. Secondary data is examined in detail as the initial phase of the research design. The study framed on secondary data that examines the current condition of Saudi women's participation in society, as well as filling any gaps in the data. Many covered areas helped in understanding the current situation of Saudi women. This included the educational development of Saudi women, as well as the

development of their civic engagement based on social media usage (Beck 2018; Vartanian 2010).

Secondary data helped also in understanding the development of mass media in Saudi Arabia as well as the development of social media. The study also used statistical data which helped in understanding social media's involvement in the Saudi society and how it has affected the Saudi women. The secondary data provided a framework to use when preparing for the collection of the primary data (Beck 2018; Vartanian 2010).

The main bulk of the primary data was collected through interviews. A set of goals was determined before any interview. After every interview, it was important to revisit the goals and attempt to readjust any of them based on any new information or insights gained. This systematic approach means that the questions used in every interview were continuously developed. It also means that the interviews were semi-structured.

An inductive approach is useful for semi-structured interviews opposed to deductive approach (Jones 2009; Ruane 2016). It gives the opportunity to make observations and then establish patterns. These patterns can, in turn, be developed in a tentative hypothesis and then into a theory or a theme. A deductive approach is better used for more structured interviews. It requires the development of themes and theories before the interview. After that, observations are made of the data collected and then a confirmation of the theory (Bernard et al., 2016; Miles et al., 2013).

After conducting the interviews, I was satisfied with amount of   data to be examined. This data ranged from the elected women's use of specific words, sentences, and phrases to concepts and themes. This means that there are a variety of methods and perspectives available to analyze this data. When examining certain keywords and phrases, or even entire themes, a content analysis was helpful. If I looked at the themes and examined the ways they are expressed, a discourse analysis was more helpful. However, if the focus were to be on identifying certain concepts and exploring the relationships between these concepts, how they were expressed and communicated, a relational analysis was useful. This means that there are different analytical levels, which can be determined by the micro-level, the macro level, and finally the relational level, which tries to test the relationships between different concepts (King et al., 2019; Kvale 1983; Morris 2015; Mosley 2013).

I used the micro level in particular when analyzing the various interviews with elected women. I relied on the content analysis that based on the word, sentence or paragraph in order to identify the different topics covered by these interviews. At the macro level, however, I focused on all women's interviews as a broad feminist discourse to explore the various topics involved and to reach the most common concepts involved (Chambliss and Schutt 2015; Engelder 2007).

I ended with the third phase in which I tried to establish the different relationships between these many concepts or issues, and how they affect each other. The primary goal was to understand the standard features and characteristics of interviews with elected women. Beyond the many differences between them, there were common denominators that the present research determined and identified (Bazeley 2013; Grbich 2012).

I used the NVivo program which helped me to do a qualitative analysis. This led to a set of topics where we could divide into three related to democracy in the Kingdom, the rights of Saudi women, and finally the role of social media in political participation. In addition, the program helped to identify the nature of the issues that could be discussed under each topic.

Although the secondary data is not as important as the primary data in the research, it represented a background for understanding. It helped in creating a framework which narrowed the research focus. After examining all the pertinent available information, the most effective methods of data collection for the chosen topic depended on primary information which is based on the qualitative analysis.

In general, the current study linked methodological and theoretical aspects in terms of working towards a degree of homogeneity between them. The study focused on the theoretical trends associated with the process of modernization in the Kingdom and public sphere according to Habermas, which defines the nature of the activities carried out by individuals in society and through which they try to bring about a measure of social and political change in society (Habermas 1989). In the light of this, the identification of the modernization process is made through the secondary data, and addressed the mechanisms of modernization in the Kingdom and the effects associated with it. As for public sphere, it is conducted through open interviews with elected women by asking them about their relationship to the social space, the nature of the activities they performed, and the magnitude of the impact associated with them.

Adopting qualitative or quantitative analysis in sociology is related to the researchers' philosophy of how they see reality and how they understand and examine the relationship between people, according to Marvasti (2004: 5).

Generally, most sociologists would agree that constructionism, as an alternative and a reaction to positivism, is predicated on the assumptions that our knowledge of social reality is: 1. subjective; 2. situationally and culturally variable; and 3. ideologically conscious.

According to this approach, constructivists believe that our knowledge of social structures is primarily related to and determined by ourselves, as well as knowledge related to the societal contexts in which they are generated, and ultimately, the knowledge that is determined by our ideological awareness. This perception certainly puts the social actors in the forefront of social knowledge, in contrast to the positivistic perceptions that put social structures at the forefront of the production of this knowledge, at the expense of individuals producing it (Burr 2015; Reichenbach 2006).

In this regard, constructionists have focused on the meaning of the event from the respondents' points of views, their reality, culture and how they aware of them. Researchers must pay deep attention to how respondents understand and give meaning to their own experiences and interaction with others.

It is related to the understanding their views towards specific societal themes and events, and what different interpretations they make regarding these events. For example, let us say that we asked one of the respondents about her opinion in the running for the municipal elections and her feelings after the success; it is possible for one of them to say that she is happy and that her success is a success for every Saudi girl. Here we can say that this answer is the expected cliché answer, and perhaps more importantly when another woman answers with how she felt for the first time in her life that she is a human being with rights and duties. In the latter answer, we need to know why the woman considers herself as a human being for the first time and what the election adds to such feelings.

The issue of meaning is of great importance in this context; the language of numbers, statistics, ratios, etc. does not bear fruit in dealing with the limited cases of the study sample (Berkowitz 1997). The meaning is what the respondent adds to the different

questions of the study, which is not revealed by the language of numbers and statistical analysis.

The meaning indicates the ability of the respondent to make known what he or she sees, touches and feels about the subject studied, which are frequently far from the language of numbers, the stalemate it causes, and the neutrality that claims. It requires the high capacity of the interviewer, high sensitivity in dealing with respondents, as well as an understanding of the social, cultural and political contexts in which he or she deals (Bazeley 2013; Beck 2018; Berg 2001).

It is also necessary to know the ideological position of respondents, identify them, and determine the degree of awareness associated with them, which helps to assess the attitudes of the respondents in the light of their awareness, and the reflection of this awareness of their political and social positions, and the extent of their knowledge, and the level and depth of this knowledge.

Constructionists contend that one should take people's experiences and their interpretation into consideration. This means that it is necessary to take the personal experiences of individuals into account, which is ignored by the quantitative trends. Qualitative analysis keeps individual and collective differences in mind and tries to take the associated experiences into account as an essential source of insight into these differences, while not neglecting the relative achievement of different research disciplines (Burr 2015; Reichenbach 2006).

Contrary to this, the positivists have ignored the matter of meaning and consciousness to focus on the reality itself. For them, we can reach out to social facts without giving any attention to the people, and their subjective understanding of reality. In other words, one can reach the social fact without people and their social interaction.

For these differences between positivism and constructionism, the qualitative analysis helps to a great extent in understanding the meaning of what people have done or said more than depending on the numeric analysis of quantitative research. The qualitative data is used when compared to quantitative research when the words are organized into incidents and has a meaningful flavour that proves more convincing to a practitioner, a reader, or a policymaker (Berg 2001; Dey 1993; Have 2004). Collecting qualitative data was selected as the most appropriate approach, for ensuring correct meaning (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Qualitative research and quantitative research have different uses and allow the achievement of different goals. These differences are essential to understanding. Quantitative research, although mostly numerical, can provide a greater understanding of specific topics. In fact, in some incidences, this understanding could allow a person to recommend a suitable course of action. This is because quantitative data can show if there is a consensus on a particular issue through random sampling of a population (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Leavy 2017).

Quantitative research can also provide a description and reveal the tendencies and characteristics of a specific group of people. What is probably the most important benefit of using this numerical method is that it also allows us to test a hypothesis or theory as well as understand any relationships. Even though there are plenty of benefits to this type of research, it does have limitations that affect the approach I used. This approach is explained later on.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, allows us to overcome the limitations of quantitative research. This type of research gives the opportunity to explain and narrate the findings of a quantitative study. What it also does is that it allows us to understand the different themes and concepts that can be taken from the information gathered. In our case, the main bulk of information came from in-depth interviews (Beck 2018; Seidman 2013; Strauss and Corbin 1999).

This means that qualitative analysis depends initially on the opinions and trends of the respondents. It is the raw material that guides the process of analysis and identifies the specific subjects. It helps the researcher to reach the concepts of the study and then construct a specific theoretical framework. In contrast to quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis requires, as mentioned above, deep research skills that are not only related to how data are collected from the respondents, but also related to the social contexts surrounding them.

Qualitative research not only allowed us to understand the different opinions and ideas of the interviewees but also recognized the influences and factors that led to these perspectives. Through a proper methodology, these perspectives were analyzed to reveal any patterns, similarities or even discrepancies. A qualitative approach was used in this study, as qualitative data is suitable to identify people's assumptions, perceptions, ideas, opinions, and attitudes and to connect them with the neighboring social world. Also, qualitative research methods are used in behavioral and social studies, in order to

understand functions and behaviors, and are effective in studying individuals, organizations and groups (Kvale 1983; Mann 2000; Miles and Huberman1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

A semi-structured approach was used in order to explore the emerging conceptual framework, as it is very appropriate within the Arab community for people who prefer talking to an interviewer, instead of filling in or completing a survey or a questionnaire (Altorki and Elsolh, 1988). For this study, data is collected through one on one, in-depth, interviews.

3- Ethical Requirements:

Based on the ethical form, no ethical dilemmas were seen in approaching and asking the elected women to participate in the research project. Initial contact made by email and telephone to arrange meetings with them. As a Saudi female citizen, it is essential to be aware of the need to follow the ethical codes required during social interactions and communication in Saudi society. As there are plenty of cultural norms that must be followed and considered, this has led to several issues to be addressed.

Drawing upon my cultural knowledge, as a citizen and having grown up in the country, I am aware of the risks from collecting data on sensitive issues of a political nature, as talking about the royal family. Political issues do not form the focus of my research and is avoided. Nonetheless, as with elsewhere in the world, the issue of women's political equality may raise risks to the researcher and the participants, and it is, therefore, necessary to take the following precautions:

1. My husband accompanied me while meeting the elected women, though he did not attend the interview.
2. I agreed on the appropriate boundaries for discussion with the respondents prior to the meeting (by providing details of the interview schedule and again at the outset of the interview).
3. I obtained agreement from them to pause the audio recording if I notice or feel that their opinions have a direct or indirect relation with the Saudi political regime and inform them that this procedure is only for our mutual interest.
4. I used the elected women anonymously in my writings, by referring to them by number and use the thematic analysis, focusing on specific themes related to the data which I gathered from them.

5. Finally, it should be noted that since their election, the elected women have featured in a range of local and international media outlets. Examples of local media outlets include Skynewsarabia, Aljazeera, Alarabiya channels and the examples of international press include bbc, the Guardian, the Independent, CNN.

As such media engagement suggests, public discussion about the work and experiences of the elected women has become commonplace. The national and regional press has expressed its surprising and optimistic attitude towards the Saudi election. The Arab press has considered this event as a new step toward Saudi social and political change, with emphasis on the gradual change. In contrast, the Western press has described the event as an unusual step by the Saudi regime, and it has dealt with the event with an emphasis on the broad, non-democratic context of Saudi Arabia.

Therefore, I would argue that not only are the research participants public figures used to being interviewed for various purposes but that my research deals with an increasingly socially acceptable dimension of contemporary Saudi life. The issue of women has gained widespread media coverage within the Kingdom. As mentioned above many newspapers and other social media have referred to the Saudi election while focusing on the social and political change of Saudi Arabia. Regardless of their ideological differences, this approach reflects the importance of women in the Saudi regime and how the authority tries to tackle gender inequality.

I asked the elected women directly about their social and civic roles in Saudi society. Moreover, I did not use any data gathered from them without getting their permission to use it. It is essential to inform them about everything that I referred to although I used their identities anonymously. As a Saudi woman citizen, I am fully aware of the need to follow the ethical codes required to conduct social interaction and communication in Saudi society that gives rise to some issues that need to be addressed.

1. It is necessary for them to be interviewed by a woman researcher and I undertake all the interviews.
2. In order to build high trust relationships with my respondents, it is important to assure them that they are not exposed to any risk as a result of participating in my research.
3. I have four stages in my empirical research, and every one of them needs specific procedures as outlined later.

The field work of my research continues as a process between the elected women and myself, i.e., it is a prolonged process which requires specific regulations at each stage. What is important to emphasize here is that the relation between the elected women and me is a prolonged mutually adjusted relationship. Ethical practice is not only a matter of getting consent from the participants, but it is also a matter of being sure that after finishing my research no harm affected them. I ask the interviewees about their consent at the beginning of every stage while making sure to explain the specifics of the stage. By stages here, I mean the steps of fieldwork within my research.

4- Research Stages:

The study adopted a methodological approach using face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews with as many of the 20 Saudi elected women. A full interview schedule is used for consistency and comparison, but the value of semi-structured interviews is their flexibility for eliciting rich data about the perceptions and personal opinions of the respondents. As public representatives, their contact details are freely available, and I do not see any ethical problems in approaching them to ask for their participation in my research project as mentioned before. Initial contact was made by email and telephone to arrange meetings with them.

In the following, I set out the four stages and explain the relevant ethical requirements for each.

First Stage: Contact the Elected Women and Informing them about the Research

The first stage is an introductory one in which I introduced myself to the elected women, informed them about my research, and invited them to participate in it. So, the first consent was related to their acceptance of participating in the research in general. Stage one is a very important stage because in this stage I introduced myself clearly to the elected women. I emailed them a brief letter about my research project and provided the Information Sheet to make them aware of what I am going to study. After having their approval for participating in the research, I moved to the second stage which relates to the content of the interview.

In line with good ethical practice, I informed the elected women about the objectives of my research and how the interview data are treated (Statement of Ethical Practice of British Sociological Association). Building trust and integrity was an issue which begins with this initial contact and was further established through meeting with the elected

women. It is my responsibility to explain to them the main aims of the research, discuss any problems and questions, and the potential benefits of the research for the Saudi Society in the present and the future.

Second Stage: Interview Questions

In the second stage I introduced the interview questions via email before our interview meeting. This gave them enough time to read the questions, interpret them, and prepare for the interview. I asked them to think about any other issues they think might be relevant to my research that we could discuss. This does not mean they manage my research, but it means that we can mutually identify points that are important.

Following British Sociological Association guidance, the elected women were informed that they have the right to refuse participation in the research whenever they want and may withdraw from the study with or without reason. I discussed with them how I intend to use the data and if there are any limitations they specify.

I had their agreement to record the interviews while acknowledging and acting upon their right to decline. Interview transcripts were shared with the participants to ensure accuracy and give them the opportunity to both make corrections and identify any responses they wish deleted. Thus, I got their consent on the final version which I used in my dissertation. I informed the elected women that any data collected are shared and discussed with my supervisors and that any articles published are anonymised.

Because of sex segregation in Saudi Arabia, I should and must interview the elected women by myself. So, my husband helped me in traveling across Saudi Arabia to conduct the interviews, but I interviewed participants alone. As a woman meets a woman, there is no problem in Saudi social context. Also, as a Saudi citizen, I am familiar with Saudi culture; i.e., I have a native understanding of the culture and traditions, how to treat people, what makes them sensitive or upset. The meeting location was either at the interviewees' houses or offices. I think the suggested location was safe and comfortable for arranging in-depth interviews with them.

In general, the majority of interviewees answered any question that relates to social changes. These women are aware of the Saudi context, and they, to some extent, accepted talking about some critical topics related to their own country. However, at the start of the interview, I made it clear to them that they are not obliged to answer any questions which they might feel inappropriate or do not wish to discuss. Furthermore, when I felt the

interviewee's discomfort, I abandoned the question and moved on to the different set of questions. I asked them about their experiences in the election, and the main reasons behind being involved in such a historic event; furthermore, what they expect to accomplish for the Saudi society. More generally, talking about social media and its impact on Saudi women is a regular topic in our country, and I do not expect this line of questioning to be sensitive or contentious.

Examples of some questions that I asked:

- ✦ Do you think accepting Saudi women in the Municipal Council is a good step with regards to social and political change? Moreover, why?
- ✦ Do you have any specific programme related to Saudi society in general and women's mobilization in particular? What are the main items of this programme?
- ✦ Do you think social media has helped you in improving your social and political awareness? Moreover, why?

Third Stage: Data Revision

The third stage is related to the data which I gathered from participants. Once transcribed, I provided copies to interviewees for their comment and feedback. What I mean here is that I do not use the data that I elicit from the elected women without allowing them first to read, revise, and accept it. Sometimes the interviewee said something, and he/she may be not aware of the consequences, so it is my responsibility to provide transcripts after the interviews and potentially discuss specific comments with participants. After accepting the data, this represented another opportunity to ensure consent and involvement in the research from participants. In addition to face-to-face meeting with the participants, I asked them via email or a preferred method of communication to complete anything missed from their answers, and I informed them about any non-expected risks of using online means of communication.

Fourth Stage: Commenting on the Concise Report of my Research

In the fourth and final stage, I allowed them to read a concise report about the final version of my research while focusing on the findings. This means that I allowed them to give me their point of view in my findings which allowed me to modify my research and to build on their elaborations if deserved.

5- Research Population and Sample Selection:

Saudi Arabia is divided up into 13 different regions. Each region has its capital and is also divided up in smaller areas called governorates. There are 118 governorates in total. The governorates are also further divided up into sub-governorates called Markaz. The capital of the Kingdom and its largest city is called Riyadh which is located in Al Riyadh region.

The 2015 elections were held in 1296 Markaz (in Arabic means country subdivisions or centre of the city), and the total number of participants reached 702, 542 male and female voters. These Marakez, the plural of Markaz in Arabic, represented the following areas: Alqassim, Hail, Aljouf, Tabuk, Almadinah Almonawarah, Jeddah, Mecca, Jazan, Riyadh, and the Western region (See Map 1).

Saudi Arabia is a conservative society. Women in Saudi Arabia lack many rights that are traditional in Western countries owing to the rigorous adherence of laws of sex segregation. Identifying the study population is based on the aims and objectives, which is investigating Saudi women's attitudes toward civic engagement and social media.

The sample consists of 20 women, who were elected in the 2015 election. They are living in different areas in Saudi Arabia. I contacted all of them and asked them to participate in my research. I used email and mobile phone to contact them and invite them to arrange a meeting. The study depends on purposive sampling with the aim of recruiting all 20 recently Saudi elected women. Their emails are publicly available, so I depend on that in contacting, then asking them to give me their mobile phone numbers. So, I have two essential and quick tools of communication, email and mobile phone.

Map (1)

Riyadh: 5 Candidates.

Eastern Region: 3 Candidates.

Alqassim: 2 Candidates.

Assir Region: 1 Candidate.

Aljouf Region: 1 Candidate.

Jazan Region: 1 Candidate.

Hail Region: 3 Candidates.

Tabouk: 1 Candidate.

Mecca Region: 2 Candidates.

Almadinah Almonaourah Region: 1 Candidate.

I informed them via email about myself, my job, and my research. In addition, I informed them of the anonymity outlined above and how my data would be protected as weel as how it would be shared. The first time I contacted them through email, and I included my information sheet which contains details about me and my research. After their approval for an interview, I asked them whether they would permit audio recording during the interview, or if they would only consent to taking notes. After the meeting, I drafted the notes or transcribe the interview, and I emailed it to them to gain their approval on whether the content can be used and published in my research.

The sample of 20 Saudi elected women covered every area in the kingdom, so it was a long and laborious task for meeting all of these women. I emailed them, and they had enough information about my research and 17 of them agreed to be part of it. All of the Saudi elected women have a university degree and work in the governmental sector. Almost 17 of them are married and have children. One can say that they belong to the middle class in modern Saudi Arabia, which is a newly emerged class needed to be studied intensely.

6- Data Collection and analysis:

Data was collected from many different sources, including government reports and extensive interviews. Each interview took from 45 minutes to 60 minutes. Each respondent was asked to give any other thoughts or comments at the end of the interview, in order to give the opportunity to provide any probable extra valuable data.

One on One Interview

A tool of qualitative research is the interview, the purpose of which is to collect descriptions from the interviewee about the interpretation of the meaning of described phenomena (Kvale 1983). The primary objective of this process is to obtain personal reasons and experiences, which affect Saudi women's attitudes to political engagement and social media. Open-ended, investigating questions were used for the interviews to maximize the quality of the information, and guide the conversation with the interviewees (Johnson and Castillo et al., 2008).

The interview questions with the elected women were about their attitudes towards civic engagement and social media and if they are or are not involved in social and political activities and use social media. It took also a look at factors that can allow and encourage them to participate in policy through the use of social media and the influence that their

families have on their ability to use social media. The questions considered also their opinions on the benefits of participating in policy through the use of social media as well as the link between participating in policy, the use of social media, and their wellbeing.

Other topics included their views on Islam about women participation in policy and the use of social media. The interview looked also at whether they are concerned with policy or consider policy arena to be feminine; if they think that the state allows and encourage women access to policy in Saudi Arabia. Other questions were about what they think of the near future for women's political participation in Saudi Arabia.

I structured women's interviews according to three stages of their political participation: the first before the election, the second during the election, and the last one after being elected. By this division, I was able to describe and analyze their own social and political development within the Saudi society.

The main aim of the interview's inception is to talk directly about women's experience of the municipal election. In this section, I tried to motivate them to talk about their story of why they decided to participate in the Municipal Councils on 12 December 2015. I attempted to understand what are the main reasons behind this thinking and what is the primary motivation that led to their participation? I focused on who was the leading supporter of their decision to participate in the election, i.e., their husband, family, tribe, friends, and other Saudi organizations or themselves.

I also talked with the Saudi women about the key obstacles that have opposed or hindered them during their thinking of participating in the Municipal election of 2015. Also, I focused on the obstacles which faced them before, during and after the election as well as the barriers they faced after being elected. I asked them to give me examples of how they overcame such obstacles.

Also, I need to know how their jobs affected their way of thinking about participation in the election, and how their colleagues see such kind of participation. It is important here to see if the kind of job determines women's participation or not, i.e., if they are lawyers or physicians, or working in governmental offices. Also, I need to see if the elected women used their work in daily life to contact people either depending on face to face communication or social networks.

In addition, I asked them to talk about their daily life during the election. How they used to behave and contact other people around them, their neighbours, relatives, and friends.

Women should be asked about their awareness of their roles as females in Saudi society, the main differences between them and males and how their role has affected their own life and their desire in participating in the election.

In regards to the mutual work among the elected women, it was noteworthy here to ask women if they have communicated to support each other and to benefit from one another's experience. Other points to be discussed are how their new roles have affected their ability to commit to the roles society expects of them such as child care or being available for family time. It is important here to talk about education and how it has affected the elected women's life and their communication with others surrounding them.

Email Interviews

Like the one on one interviews, email interviews extended access to the participants, to eliminate noise and give the interviewee the time to make their responses thorough as well as offering the independence of place and time, and allowing them opportunity find the information to answer questions. The quality of responses of email interviews helped me to follow up what is missing from previous interviews. For example, if I found that the answers of the elected women to the interviewee are not enough, I emailed them to fill the information gap.

It can be said here that the use of email is an essential tool in the current research, given the presence of respondents throughout the Kingdom, and in the vast areas north and south, east and west of the Kingdom (Bampton and Cowton, 2002). By using the e-mail, I communicate with the elected women, to present the subject of the study, and to consult with them about their participation. Also, e-mail allowed me to contact them in order to schedule interviews and ensure that I did not travel too far without reason. In addition, the use of e-mail helped me in the post-face-to-face interviews phase. E-mail was used to follow-up the women in the event of any required data, and fill gaps in the information needed.

Procedure of Analyzing Gathered Data

Regardless of the perspective used, for accurate research direct quotations would be vital. It was important to follow specific preset procedures and methodologies to be coherent throughout this study. This procedure could be summed up into three main parts: point, evidence, and explanation (Crow 2013; Dey 1993; Have 2004; Kvale 1983; Mann 2000; Mavasti 2004).

Part one (Point)

This part is about noticing any concepts relevant to the study in the interviews. This allows for the development of sub-themes and later the creation of several central themes. By having created several themes and sub-themes, this allowed me to analyze the interview better and divide up the vital information into more manageable sections. Greater detail of the development of the themes is discussed later.

Part two (Evidence)

This part is about collecting the evidence needed to support the points or themes. It is mainly about collecting examples that can be used to support the concepts and themes that are developed during and after the interviews. I offer more details about this part and how it related to part one later.

Part three (Explanation)

The final part of the procedure was to analyze the concepts. This gave me the opportunity to find differences, patterns or similarities in the information. This section is a narration of the findings.

Applying the procedure to an Inductive approach

As mentioned in the procedure section, more discussion of the steps is necessary. The following is meant outline more of guidelines to be systematic, coherent and to maintain transparency throughout the study. This development should not only be done during the course of the study or between interview and interview, but also during the interview session itself. As plans tend to change or develop, this process should be continuously revisited to ensure its efficiency and application to the study.

Step one (Units)

Since an inductive approach is chosen, the first phase of analyzing the data is to make observations. The best way to do this is to divide up the data into units of analysis. This could be anything from individual words, sentences, to entire paragraphs. I deconstructed the interviews into different units which helped me to classify them according to predetermined ideas and issues of my research.

Step two (Code)

Step two is the development of a code that allows the classification of thoughts and ideas. This code was one or two words that summarize the main idea of the sentence.

Step three (sub-themes)

This step is to group up all the similar words used in the coding step into groups. This is the initial phase of grouping so it could be expected to have plenty of groups.

Step four (themes)

This step is to come up with a list of main themes. Since this list is meant to be exhaustive and reflects the main ideas, there should only be a handful of themes. There would be different types of themes, such as common themes, unexpected themes, and those that do not relate to the goals and purpose of this study.

Step five (Evidence)

This step is to collect the best supporting quotes and evidence from the transcripts. This step is one of the most crucial to the study as it is the bases of any claims, theories or hypotheses.

Step six (Development)

As mentioned before, the process of developing themes and sub-themes is a constant systematic process. Once the revision of the first interview is completed and the second transcript is available, the same process must be repeated. This time, both transcripts are compared allowing for the better development of central themes and ideas (Boyatzis 1998; Saldana 2009).

Chapter 5

Women and Democracy in Saudi Arabia

Introduction:

Through the previous descriptive and analytical chapters of Saudi society depending on secondary data, many important attributes associated with Saudi society have been identified, such as the great influence of oil, the socially and religiously conservative character of society, the enormous role of family and tribe on individuals, and the very small political space allowed for individuals. This approach was not made in order to identify the Saudi society itself, but it was made to identify the impact of these features on the reality of Saudi women, since many studies have confirmed various restrictions imposed on them. Women face discrimination against them because of the male guardianship system, which is reflected in many different activities of life such as the right to choose the type of education they want, the right to choose the type of work, in addition to many other rights such as travel abroad.

In chapters four, five and six, I examine these findings from the secondary data by identifying the nature of responses of the elected women. There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia is undergoing many changes, including the political movement that emerges from time to time by allowing citizens including women to participate in elections, including women, which is new to the Kingdom.

Secondary data may not be able to monitor the effects of such shifts, as is the case with the field studies that seek the views of citizens themselves, and their opinion on such shifts. In the following, I identify this by monitoring the views of the elected women on the nature of democratic transformation in Saudi Arabia, and the impact of this transformation on their lives and their various contributions to the realities of Saudi daily life.

Having presented in the previous chapters historical aspects about Saudi society, I begin the field part of the current study by identifying the reality of democracy in Saudi society and the impact on Saudi women in general and the elected women in

particular. I clarify the meaning of democracy and its constituent elements, and then address civil society as one of the most important aspects of democracy and its degree of achievement in different societies.

In addition, this chapter clarifies the Saudi democratic reality and its impact on women's lives and circumstances. It is not possible to identify women's political conditions without recognizing the nature of Saudi social and political transformations. Although it is important to address the Saudi societal context and to recognize the extent of its impact on the acceptance of Saudi women socially, it does not prevent from addressing the importance of the political authority and the size of its influence in reshaping the reality of women. Of course, this analytical chapter tries to some extent to combine the theoretical ideas that have dealt with the reality of Saudi women in the past years, and the results of the interviews with Saudi women, a methodology also related to chapters five and six.

1- The Meaning of Democracy and its Components:

Democracy is one of the most critical issues that has been dealt with in the Arab world since the 1960s (Al-Asaf 2013; Cammett and Diwan 2013; Edward 2018; Pratt 2006). Elbadawi and Makdisi clarified that "the Arab world has consistently lagged behind the rest of the world in polity score since 1960" (2011: 49; see also Al-Farsi 2013: 27; Noble et al., 1995: 36-37). This democratic lagging has made many thinkers try to find out why democracy is lacking in the Arab world, compared to many regions that have been able to begin the process of democratization such as Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe (Al-Asaf 2013; Al-Kawary 2002; Al-Kawary 2004; Sayyid 2007).

After the independence from colonialism and the establishing of a modern nation-state, many scholars have addressed the great expansion of the state's economic role, or the so-called state-led development in the Middle East which have severely restricted political practices through the state's hegemony and its political and ideological apparatuses. The state-led development, as in Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Labia, and Iraq, has created a new social class which consists of government employees and new businessmen who benefit from working through the

government. This situation led to a high level of corruption, under the hegemony of one political party such as the Socialist Party in Egypt and the Baath Party in Syria and Iraq (Ayubi 1995; Cammett and Diwan 2013; Choueiri 2000; Mohammedpour and Kamal 2019).

Since the 1960's and independence from colonialism, the nation-state has begun to emerge, and its roles have subsequently been greatly inflated to control all aspects of economic life. This has greatly restricted the political participation of citizens because of their dependence on the state and its economic projects. The state's hegemony over all economic, social and cultural affairs has created a debate among the intellectuals about the importance of development and its related aspects and the importance of achieving a kind of political participation that lead to a true democratic transition in Arab societies away from the hegemony and iron grip of the state.

Hence, the majority of Arab countries witnessed a great intellectual debate between those who support the independence of the state in the Arab world and its development project, and those who see the importance of political participation and granting citizens' freedom of opinion and the establishment of civil institutions and political parties. Gamal Abdel Nasser's project in Egypt may seem a clear example of this controversy of political postponement in favor of social and economic goals (Ottaway 2003: 35-37). In general, the Arab countries suffered greatly from the grip of the state and the dominance of the army in all aspects of life, which led to the lack of real development, with levels of unprecedented oppression and despotism (Sayigh 1978).

The dedication of Elbadawi and Makdisi's book to Arab intellectuals may reflect the long intellectual conflict between the emphasis on material aspects and the emphasis on freedoms and uphold the value of the individual. Elbadawi and Makdisi (2011: no number) said that:

> *This book is dedicated to all Arab intellectuals who have striven towards a restoration of national dignity and revival of the Arab World that goes*

beyond material achievements, in the hope that their aspirations for democracy, freedom and justice will eventually be accomplished.

Since the establishment of nation-state in the Arab world so far, the writings did not stop on the study of its developmental role and the impact on the democratic transition in the region. Many writers have focused on the complexity of the economic roles of the state in the Arab world, which has greatly weakened the political participation of citizens and therefore has increased their dependence on the state patronage (Cammett and Diwan 2013; Edward 2018; Jones 2017; Pratt 2006).

The nation-state in the Arab world has not been able to achieve real and effective development in order to provide good and acceptable economic standards for citizens, nor could it accept the alternation of power and various political freedoms. It has ended with no real and effective change since the time of independence until now (Al-Barghouti 2008; Choueiri 2000). Despite the significant progress achieved by most Arab countries in many aspects of human development, and the reduction of poverty and inequality, they did not develop as quickly as other regions, mainly due to lack of transparency and accountability of government institutions. Women's participation in work and in political and professional life is also lower than in other countries of the world (Al-Alkim 2011).

Based on the latest report on human development in the Arab world in 2016, *Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, the decline in development levels in the Arab world compared to other regions around the world can be emphasized. The deteriorating reality of youth in most countries of the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, is reflected in many indicators such as: scarcity of decent jobs, poor political participation, low quality of public services in the fields of health and education, abuse of diversity in Arab societies, and the spread of inherited concepts and practices, hindered gender equality, and finally conflicts of religion, and identity. In general, these obstacles do not concern young people as an important social segment, but they concern all other social segments, which reveal the extent of the deterioration of development in the Arab world, and the

enormous risks that await future generations economically, politically and socially (Arab Human Development Report 2016).

In the following, I define democracy and the various characteristics associated with it. It is important to consider that any attempt to define democracy is very selective in one way or another, depending on the societal context to which it is linked and expressed. This does not mean that there is no relative agreement on the common characteristics of different democracies around the world, regardless of the societal context and the time frame. In connection with democracy, the study attempts to address the definition of civil society as the main area of public sphere of individuals and the various aspects associated with it.

In general, there is not an exclusive agreement among political science researchers on the meaning of the term democracy (Gutmann and Thompson 1998; Kellner 1999; Mady 2005). It is clear that democracy and its methods of implementation differ from one society to another according to the nature of its historical structure and the nature of its social and economic fabric. The American experience in democracy has its own characteristics which differ from the British experience, and is certainly different from French or German.

Perhaps no concept has been associated with such divergence since it appeared in the Greco-Roman world. In general, we can talk about two types of democracy; direct and indirect. While direct democracy reflects the kind of democracy in which governments see all individuals as capable of governance as an example of ancient Athens, indirect democracy is based on the idea of representatives because of the size of nations and the increase in population (Crick 2003; Gutmann and Thompson 1998; Kaplan 2014).

The first type in which all citizens govern is called city state democracy, while the second type of representatives is called the nation state democracy. Mulgan states that addressing the relationships between representatives and those who were represented has been the object of much criticism, which has played a large role towards further attempts to find more accurate and precise definitions of democracy later (Mulgan 2017).

As a result, there are many definitions associated with this concept. Lijphart focuses on the performance of democratic institutions and the resulting consequences in Dutch and plural societies. He asserts that societies with a degree of consensual culture can create a true democracy based on consensus among all segments of society (Lijphart 1999). Altman and Pérez-Liñán focus on some important elements of the democratic process, such as civil rights, political participation and equal competition among individuals in Latin America (Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002).

According to the previous definition, dealing with democracy differs from one thinker to another. While Lijphart tries to monitor the features of democracy in Dutch and Western societies, and tries to monitor the role of consensus in support of this democracy, Altman and Pérez-Liñán, given the recent reality of democracy in Latin America, take care of elements of democracy that has become axiomatic in many Western societies such as civil society, political participation and fair competition among individuals.

Beetham et al., (2008) emphasizes four areas related to democracy: citizenship, laws and rights; representative and accountable government; civil society and popular participation; and international dimension. Morlino (2011) expands on the concept of democracy to see it as a system that satisfies all citizens to ensure civil liberties and equality among them, and allows people to review and evaluate these freedoms and forms of equality provided to them under the rule of law.

In addition, some emphasize the importance, participation and responsiveness of the electoral process as essential elements to the success of any democratic transition (Levine and Molina 2011; Roberts 2010). Morlino asserted that "the minimal definition of democracy suggests that such a regime has at least: universal, adult suffrage; recurring, free, competitive and fair elections; more than one political party; and more than one source of information" (2009: 3).

In general, freedom and equality can be said to be essential for ensuring democracy and for the success of any democratic transition in human societies (Bühlmann et al., 2012; Dunn 2006; Munck 2016). Freedom guarantees

individuals the right to express their opinions, to form political, social and cultural organizations and to criticize the ruling authorities without fear or concern. Equality also ensures that a specific group does not predominate over other groups in society. This helps to strengthen civil society and make it independent of the state's hegemony and its governing institutions.

While the above definitions are important, they focus on specific aspects of democracy, while ignoring other aspects, depending on the perspective and analysis. It is also predominantly monolithic, which neglects the nature of democracy as a continuous and accumulated process of formation and construction. In light of this, Dahl does not care about defining democracy as much as he cares about the political system that embraces and expresses this democracy, which he sees as a harmonious and consistent model of relations that includes power, governance and authority in a satisfactory and reasonable manner (Dahl 1970). This model is related to what is known as "influence terms", which means those relationships that occur between human beings whether they are individuals, groups, communities, institutions or countries.

Despite the conflict situation in which Dahl's model appears, it emphasizes that democracy needs to be legitimate and accepted by the majority. Long-term democracy must not be imposed against the will of the people. Dahl builds this perception by asserting that human beings are essentially social beings, and therefore they develop political systems by entering influence relationships. In order for these relationships to become stable and frequent, they shape a form of political system that preserves them and determines the limits of political practices. The importance of Dahl's analysis emphasizes the social character of political practices in human societies.

As an extension of the Dahl's social influences of the political process, Huckfelt and Sprague see democracy as a process not only achieved through the electoral process, but also through the exercise of citizenship by individuals, which helps them to interact among themselves, exercise their right to access and use information. Their participation in the electoral process becomes a real and successful democracy (Huckfelt and Sprague 1995). Through Huckfelt and

Sprague's study of the city of South Bend, Indiana, during the 1984 presidential election, they discovered that voting was a political and social process at the same time, not just political. Political decisions are based on a broad base of interaction and social belonging among individuals. Social base here is the objective and actual carrier of political practices. In this context, the study also clarifies that the process of communication between individuals during the electoral process was socially constructed.

Gutmann and Thompson (1995) argue that democracy raises many controversial issues, from abortion and affirmative action to health care and welfare. It also addresses many groups and topics related to class, race, gender and religion. They use the term deliberative democracy to express democracy in which both citizens and their representatives interact on the democratic process. They see that the democratic process is characterized by a set of common features including reciprocity, publicity and accountability. It also includes a set of basic principles such as basic liberty, basic opportunity and fair opportunity.

Regardless of the characteristics they attribute to the democratic process, which are similar in many aspects to the above definitions, the important aspect of their approach to democracy is what they called the middle politics that deals with the issues of daily life and citizens' daily affairs. The importance of this issue appears to be that it moves democracy from the broad level that is largely associated with the electoral process to everyday affairs and practices; in other words, it is strongly linked to what is socially structured which based on interpersonal interaction.

According to this approach, democracy is a state of agreement between the masses of people belonging to one state on the nature of social and political practice and the distribution of power and wealth. Hence, any attempt to define democracy in the Gulf States in general and Saudi Arabia in particular must be linked to the surrounding social context, and not merely the application of theoretical concepts linked to other social contexts, mainly Western societies.

Even in Western countries, there is no complete agreement on the meaning of democracy. It is noted that in developed countries, democracy includes many

elements in addition to elections and freedom of expression (Quaranta 2018). Elections and freedom of expression seem to be the most important aspects of the democratic process. However, there are many other important elements such as the space given to civil society to participate in all aspects of society socially, economically, politically and culturally. In addition, democracy is linked to the magnitude of equality among citizens, the level of social differences among them, as well as the level of equality between males and females (Kaplan 2014; Rice 2017).

In light of the above, it can be said that democracy includes many elements, such as freedom, equality, guaranteeing the rights of minorities against majority, the power of law, reciprocity, free elections and the separation of powers. Despite these dimensions, which are most closely related to the political system that expresses this democracy, it can be said that democracy requires a broad civil society that helps individuals communicate among themselves and build their networks and institutions to help them define their demands and counter state hegemony. Hence, it is so important to define civil society and its rule in supporting democratic transition.

2- The Meaning of Civil Society:

Civil society has recently become at the heart of any democratic interpretation, especially after the great hegemony of the state in recent decades. It is a domain of voluntary relations and activities that mediate between the individuals and the state (Amenta 2005; Edward 2014). It is the society in which individuals have at least an opportunity to form themselves within a collective action among themselves. This means that the membership of social groups in civil society must be voluntary, interrelated and reciprocity (Ehrenberg 2017; Jenkins and Form 2005). According to Arato and Cohen "The current "discourse of civil society,"…focuses precisely on new, generally non-class-based forms of collective action oriented and linked to the legal, associational, and public institutions of society" (1994:2). This means that civil society is tied to "we", and tries to move beyond acute class divisions, racial and gender classifications, to build a new sphere that transcends individuals and the state.

The definition of civil society is linked to a set of common features that include independence from the state, the ability to organize, which involves the ability to mobilize citizens, and to work collectively. In light of this, one of the most important features of civil society is that it works for and defends the interests of the community and develops a set of important objectives, such as improving human rights, empowering women, achieving social justice, overcoming state hegemony, and supporting and stabilizing democracy (Arato and Cohen 1994: vii-xxi; Kandil 1995; Talani 2017).

Ehrenberg (2017) defines civil society as a group of free voluntary organizations that fill the public sphere between the family and the state, i.e. between the family as informal institution and the official state institutions that have no choice as to their membership. He identifies four basic elements related to civil society: willing and voluntary act; the presence of the organizations; accept diversity and difference between self and others; and not to seek power.

This means that civil society is a public sphere that helps individuals to form their own communities, which operate either in the face of, or in cooperation with, official state organizations. This reveals that the existence of civil society does not necessarily mean a conflict with state institutions and the objectives to achieve them. In addition, civil society is associated with an important set of communication channels between individuals beyond political parties and electoral campaigns.

When civil society is effective, it takes on some of what the state carries and strengthens the legitimacy of the system in its entirety and mediates that civil democratic space between individuals and the state and its formal structures. In this case, civil society becomes the communicative carrier through which personal beliefs and values can be transformed into the larger economic and political institutions of the state. In this sense, civil society instills democratic values in the minds of individuals and thus develops positive values towards others and thus towards society as a whole (Diamond 2009; Jenlink 2007).

Civil society is intertwined with what Gutmann and Thompson (1995) calls the middle politics on the daily practices of individuals. Edward shows that individuals of the civil society have a power through which they can form their own communities depending on day to day participation in voluntary associations and communities. The greater the daily participation of individuals, the more powerful and coherent a civil society is formed (Edward 2014).

Civil society is gaining strength through the vast network of organizations that people establish and work through, a network that embraces all aspects of life and various community activities. These include professional unions, trade unions, social unions, cooperative unions, civil unions, faculty clubs, social sports clubs, youth centers and student associations, chambers of commerce and industry, business groups, and defense and development NGOs as centers for human rights, women, development and environment, free press, media and publishing, research centers, studies and cultural associations (Ehrenberg 2017; Kandil 1995). This means that civil society organizations cover all activities of everyday life, which involves all forms of interactions between individuals in relation to their interests and their daily lives.

Civil society represents the social and political spheres through which individuals carry out many activities, which in turn, supports democracy directly and indirectly. The relationship between civil society and democracy is a positive one. When the civil society is more diverse and inclusive this leads to a more democratic society.

Given the wide absence of many of the requirements of democracy in the Arab world in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular, the presence of civil society and the ability of individuals to create their own social spheres is a matter of great importance that can achieve some degree of actual political participation later. The talks of many elected Saudi women about their charitable work through direct contact with the needy groups in the communities in which they live represent a preliminary stage of political action later, despite the obvious social and religious features of these acts. These acts and charitable practices represent the natural

mulch to train individuals to communicate with the rest of society first, and to raise this type of work to the collective institutional level second.

3- Democratic Transition between Nation State and Civil Society:

The achievement of democracy in the Arab world is still based on the space that the state allows its citizens in political arena. This applies to Arab republics as well as to royal family systems. So far, since the middle of the twentieth century, the practices of individuals have not succeeded in imposing a bottom-up political approach, except for what happened in the Arab Spring countries for very short time (Al-Falah 1987; Azimova 2016; Cammett and Diwan 2013; Edward 2018).

The Arab Spring began with hope for change in the Arab world through the millions that came out in some Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya and Tunisia to realize the dream of social and political change. But the results associated with these Arab revolutions were very disappointing. With the exception of Tunisia, which continues to suffer for the success of its revolution, we find that Egypt has returned to a coup regime and Syria and Libya are still suffering from the scourge of civil war and millions of migrants.

The Arab Spring was a surprising new turn in the Arab world, which for more than half a century has suffered a massive political stagnation, where military power has dominated most of the reins of power. Despite the overwhelming defeat of the Arab revolutions as a whole, the mere eruption of these revolutions in a world full of stagnation and underdevelopment may offer a glimmer of hope for future revolutions in many Arab countries (El-Hasan 2019; Fisk and Cockburn 2017; Mark and Lesch 2016).

Although many countries of the world have managed to achieve a reasonable degree of democracy for their citizens, democracy has not been achieved in one way or another in the Arab world in general and in the Gulf countries in particular (Crick 2003; Diamond and Plattner 2014; Pratt 2006). This is due to several factors, including poor development in many Arab countries, political dominance of specific social forces, and many external interventions in the region.

In the light of the large expansion of the economic and political roles of the state, civil society is severely restricted. The State and its institutions see civil society as a major threat to it. The organized work of individuals becomes the focus of surveillance by the state and its institutions, with the related issue of the issuance of many laws restricting freedom and suspension of establishing any real civil organizations, which ultimately leads to weakening the political participation of citizens to a great extent (Cammett and Diwan 2013; Edward 2018).

Nevertheless, the nation-state plays a major role in preserving some form of national security, in addition to its role in the global system, and its attempt to benefit from it economically and politically. It is very difficult for the nation-state in the Arab world to separate itself, despite its weakness, from the global context governing its economic, political and even cultural contexts (Al-Kawary 2002 and 2004; Dresch and Piscatori 2013; Guazzone and Pioppi 2012; Jones 2017).

Guazzone and Pioppi (2012) argue that despite neo-liberal global transformations, the state in the Arab world has created new social groups which supported it as businessmen. The study reveals that the neo-liberal transformation on the economic side has not changed anything in Egypt and Morocco, where the private sector in these countries has become a supporter of it. Despite the existence of global economic changes linked to the neoliberal policies and their political openness, the Arab governments have not changed their political isolation, despite adopting these new economic policies, especially the privatization and structural adjustment programs.

In light of the emphasis on freedom and equality as important and common elements of most definitions of democracy, the emphasis is placed on the various dangers facing any democratic transition, the foremost of which are the negative effects of populism and majoritarianism (Crick 2003; Miller 2003). In this context, the idea of citizenship, despite its importance, seems an idea that takes place through the state away from the participation of citizens and in the light of tribal balances. This leads to a simple application of the idea of citizenship, and the creation of certain groups benefiting from the state gifts at the expense of others.

In his study of the UAE, Jones (2017) sees that the integration of the Bedouin into the state and the promotion of citizenship are top-bottom authoritarian approach rather than democratic which aim to achieve the goals of the state rather than the citizens. It is not a real strategy aimed at raising the value of all citizens, and reintegrating them socially and politically, rather than through narrow economic frameworks linked to market reform and the neo-liberalism of the rulers of the Gulf, which is done within the framework of the non-democratic approach. Al-Asaf (2013) concluded that democracy in the Arab World in the sense of participation and freedom of expression and the ability to expand the basis of civil society and institutions associated with it still do not exist, and they are only ideas are traded and did not happen in reality.

Nevertheless, Mirshak (2019) explains that, despite the domination of authoritarian regimes in the civil society sphere in the Arab world, and in particular the Egyptian case after the arrival of President El Sisi in power, it is possible to rely on the Gramscian analysis to confirm the existence of some different civil society organizations that can find sphere of movement and resistance to tyranny to some degree. Civil society cannot be completely eradicated in the daily practices of individuals. In this sense, it is these practices that motivate collective action, and thus the establishment of various organizations that maneuver away from state authority and domination in order to resist tyranny and defend human rights.

Nevertheless, the talk about democracy in the Arab world has been dimmed in the light of the state's dominance and its ability to impose its will on the public social sphere. This does not mean a complete withdrawal of the political discourse. On the contrary, the discussion controls all media platforms and dominates most of the activities of civil society organizations in the Arab world, as well as the wide outreach of Arab academic and elites (Al-Kawary et al., 2002; Al-Kawary 2004; Al-Asaf 2013; Diamond and Plattner 2014).

The Gulf region is no exception to the current Arab situation, despite the clarity of its governance systems, which are based on kingdoms ruled by certain families led by a king, a sheikh, or a prince. In addition, the Gulf States rely on oil and its revenues in the conduct of state affairs and the distribution of wealth, creating a

form of the rentier state which relies on huge rents, such as oil in the Gulf States, where these revenues are used to buy loyalties to the ruling families (Herb 1999; Schliep 2017; Shams 1984).

In light of this, the state has all the proceeds from oil and refining, and distributes it to citizens in varying degrees from one country to another. Hence, the Western concept that there is no taxation without representation as a social contract between people and the rulers can be applied to the Gulf States. There is a form of social acceptance between the rulers and the citizens as long as the first provides all the needs of the second (Ayubi 1995; Dahl 2010: 20; Heradstveit and Hveem 2004). However, this does not mean that there are no voices calling for democracy and political freedoms in the Arab Gulf states, particularly in Kuwait, the Gulf States that are the most achievable of the political transition (Elbadawi and Kubursi 2017).

The silent agreement between authority and people is that citizens should not think about political freedoms, political parties, political pluralism, or other forms of political activities. The majority of the citizens of the Gulf countries accept this formula, especially in light of the Islamic orientations of the region, which believes that democracy is not related to Islamic customs and traditions and that it is mainly Western (Esposito and Voll 1996; Niblock 2006).

One of the difficulties facing democratic transition in the Arab world is the sharp division between civil and religious culture (Haddad and Al-Hindy 2019). This is evident in Saudi Arabia largely because of the dominance of religious thought, despite the enormous attempts by the ruling family to create a balance between religious and civil thoughts (Diamond and Plattner 2014; Haykal et al., 2015).

Islamic culture supports the concept of *Shura* - Arabic word for "consultation". The Quran and the Prophet Muhammad encourage Muslims to decide their affairs in consultation with those who will be affected by that decision.   However the "consultation" depends on a group of the finest people and the wisest who are familiar with public affairs, more than support the idea of election and the social divisions which resulted from it. Nevertheless, there are some studies that have

revealed the possibility of a real consensus between political Islam and its associated tendencies, and the democratic transition based on Western foundations, including the elections (Al-Shamsi 2014; Haykal et al., 2009; Mady 2005). The decisive factor here does not appear through the foundations on which political Islam is based, as it is appeared through the scope allowed by the state to bring about real and effective democratic transition in Arab society (Al-Shamsi 2014; Mady 2005; Mirahamdi 1994).

In this context, Thompson (2014) extensively discusses the dialogue between the state and the Saudi society which leads to the establishing of the <u>King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue</u> in the Kingdom in 2003. Thompson's study clarifies that the existence of channels of dialogue between the state and society in the Kingdom can lead to a shift from a patrimonial state to one of the hegemonic ideologies in Saudi society, whether civil or religious. What Thompson is offering is yet to be shaped by the recent political transition in the kingdom.

While it is possible to talk about a type of political mobility in some Gulf countries, led by Kuwait and Bahrain, this type of mobility is still in its early stages in Saudi Arabia, and is dependent on the directions initiated by the late King Abdullah and expanded by King Salman and his Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (Alshamsi 2014; Haykel, et. al., 2015; Tetreault et al., 2011).

The political situation in the Gulf states is not only due to the role played by the rentier state to citizens, but also due to newness of the concept of the state for the citizens themselves, who are accustomed to the Bedouin culture and the existence of the sheikh of the tribe who manages their affairs. The tribe is considered an important, effective and influential element in the Gulf States. Despite the constant attempts by Gulf governments to raise the importance of citizenship at the expense of tribalism, there is no doubt that the tribe continues to advance as an important factor in the social classifications and political stability of the Gulf (Abdul-Aziz 1994; Choueiri 2000; Mohammadpour and Soleimani 2019).

In conclusion, the democratic transition still faces many difficulties in the Arab countries in general, and the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia in particular. This

is due to a number of reasons, including the dominance of the state over the public space of citizens, and its unwillingness to provide citizens with the opportunity to form their own institutions that fill the space of civil society and thus provide them with opportunities for effective political practice.

In light of presenting the previous studies, it can be said that there are two important forces that play a major role in the issue of democratic transition not only in Arab societies but also in all human societies, namely the state and society. In light of this, questions can be raised about the role of the state in the Kingdom represented in the ruling family in accepting the political participation of citizens, especially women, and the extent of the state's acceptance of the expansion of practices related to civil society and its institutions.

At the societal level, previous studies raise a range of questions regarding the society's perception of the reality of women and the various social and political rights associated with them. In this context, it is important to focus on traditional societal units and their impact on the democratic transition of women such as the family and the tribe. Here, a set of questions can be asked to determine the nature of the democratic level achieved by society, such as:

✦ Does the state accept the establishment of civil society organizations that allow citizens to practice their various activities away from its authority?
✦ Does the state accept equal participation of men and women in the elections?
✦ Does the state accept the presence of other forces or ideologies competing with it?
✦ Does society accept full equality between males and females?
✦ Does society accept the existence of women in all the various community activities?

If the state and society is able to answer these questions positively, so it is close to democracy and vice versa. And if society in general and the state in particular fulfill the requirements of these questions, it also means a great deal of realization of citizenship is within its limits, no matter how many ethnic and racial groups,

and whatever social classes, and regardless of the gender division between males and females.

Accepting the idea of citizenship will be the ultimate manifestation of democratic transition and a strong presence of civil society organizations. Certainly, a broad achievement of citizenship will benefit women in particular. The role that the state will play in supporting democratization and the role of different civil society organizations in forming broad social and political networks to defend social and political human rights will undoubtedly support the status of women and will contribute significantly to the acceptance of the rights of women.

I will identify the following determinants, according to interviews with elected Saudi women that can at least constitute the nucleus of democratic transitions in Saudi Arabia. These include:

1. Women and Civil Society between Social and Political Spheres.
2. Women's Awareness and the Issue of Representation.
3. Women in the Context of Social and Political Changes.
4. Democracy and the Political Dialogue with the Saudi Authority.
5. The Obstacles against Democracy in Saudi Society.

These are the determinants that the current study verified in the Saudi reality, depending on the interviews with Saudi elected women of the Municipal Council.

3-1 Women and Civil Society between Social and Political Spheres:

Civil society is of great importance in all human societies, where it represents the broadest sphere through which individuals can play many social roles that ultimately contribute to the advancement of their societies and improve their standards of living. It can be said that the greater the activities of individuals in their broad civilian space, the more it indicates the enlargement of freedoms available to them and the official acceptance by their governments. In the light of this, good governments do not see the development of civil society as a danger to their own space. On the contrary, they see the growing role of civil society and enlargement of this role, and its inclusion of many community activities, evolving

in the right direction and developing the capabilities of individuals (Edwards 2014; Ehrenberg 2017; Montagu 2010; Montagu 2015; Talani 2017).

As I mentioned earlier, the present study views civil society as the public sphere between individuals and the state, and its ability to fill it with the required social organizations. Through the various activities associated with these institutions, individuals form new networking capabilities, creating long-term political transition. This definition takes into account the emphasis on the social dimension of everyday human practices, especially within the charitable framework, which is acceptable to individuals and represents the beginning of a collective behavior that may lead to long-term political changes.

Despite the importance of civil society and the wide range of roles associated with it, Arab governments restrict it and may prevent it from working, especially in the political sphere. These governments may leave the door open to civil society and related organizations in the social sphere and the associated social charity, but close it in front of organizations concerned with political action, human rights and political mobility (Cavatorta and Durac 2014: 8-19; Kandil 1995; Montagu 2015).

Here I do not mean by civil society just focusing on the efforts of civil organizations as much as I mean the sporadic efforts of individuals themselves here and there even if they are not institutionalized. Saudi society has relied heavily on individual efforts in charitable work, although there are some organizations that do charity work in the first place (Thompson 2014).

Through the interviews, I ended with the predominance of the social activities of women in Saudi society over other kinds of activities. This is not due to the restrictions imposed on women as much as it is due to the nature of the Saudi society which is related to charitable activities with religious orientation (Mirahamadi 2005: 1-5). The practices of civil society, whether scattered individual efforts or organized efforts through the work of organizations, represent the first stage necessary for political participation. Participant (14) asserted this idea by saying:

I think women cannot achieve any political change in the Kingdom without achieving social and cultural change. And to achieve the later, women should be involved in social activities with other different social groups in society and this will help them to start their political activities after that.

Civil work represents the first contact with citizens, the ability to communicate with them, identify the nature of the various problems they face, and suggest different solutions to them. It is indirect political engagement with Saudi reality. Civil participation represents the travail of the political participation (Montagu 2010). In the word of participant (7)

The conditions of women in the Kingdom will gradually change and improve, and with support from the government, this change will only be accelerated. It is very important that society is accepting of such change, therefore, it is critical that the public acknowledges the hardship and discrimination faced by Saudi women.

The previous quotation reveals the importance of combining the role of the state with the vision of society, which was revealed by the study of Dresch and Piscatori (2013) where it discusses the importance of the role of the state in the Gulf societies, as well as the emphasis on new elements coming to these countries such as the huge role of expatriates, the emergence of private schools, and the wide production of the Television episodes. The study confirmed the role of these variables in the restructuring of national identity in recent years, which is important in terms of reshaping the visions of citizens towards the world, and then towards women. Despite the optimistic view of Dresch and Piscatori's study, the question of creating a new identity with new social and cultural features seems to be difficult and hard issue, and requires strenuous efforts and long periods of time.

In his study of *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*, Pratt (2006) declares that authoritarian regime in the Arab world in the light of the dominance of the modern state plays a big role in confronting civil society and thus democratic transition and weakening the attitudes and activities associated with them. This long historical context of despotism creates political, social and cultural

contexts that work against democratic transition and associated practices. This means that the Arab state created deep authoritarian contexts that produced other cultural structures against any real democratic transitions.

Elected women asserted that they have many ambitious projects for their community such as focusing on working with women of special needs, such as single mothers, divorced women, and the disabled. Most of Saudi women focused on social services, such as charity and civil activities, more than the political ones. Saudi women have very low experience in the political arena in comparison to social services. I think this is not related to the Saudi women themselves, as it is related to the nature of the Saudi society which focuses on the social issues more than the political ones (AlMunajjed 1997; El-Ghannam 2003).

Doğruel (2015) reveals that there are many difficulties facing Saudi women and limits to their political participation such as gender gap, inequality and gender segregation. He believes that changing the situation of women in Saudi Arabia and improving their conditions will only be achieved through the adoption by the Kingdom of some forms of participatory democracy where both men and women can present themselves clearly and openly and become active in the offered and hoped policies.

It can be argued that most cases of study have emphasized the social meaning of the activities they are undertaking or intend to undertake in the future. However, some of them did not refer to political activity from near or far, while others were clearer in asserting that Saudi women in general and elected women in particular have no political activity in the kingdom. All their activities are confined to social work. Participant (3) said it directly "*It is hard to discuss political issues in Saudi Arabia.*" Participant (10) added:

> *We mostly avoided talking about politics. We focused on how to improve the facilities and services the municipality offers to the citizens including hospitals, schools, roads and other things as such. We mostly avoided politics because we are still a conservative society and this topic is still a taboo.*

It seems that the scope of civil activities seen by the elected women relates to the social aspects associated with the religious orientation, which is confirmed by many different studies dealing with political and social developments in Saudi society (Abukhalil 1993; Alfalah 1987; Alhumaidi 2016; Al-Mohsen 2006; Makki 2011).

Many elected women asserted that talking about politics is still considered a taboo for Saudis. For a long time, women used to care about many things related to their community such as, street cleaning, paved roads and trimming of the gardens. They used to call the Municipal administration about any maintenance issues or problems related to their community (Akeel 2003; Al-Alamy 2015; Al-Yousef 2009). Participant (18) said that:

> *Social conversations and any associated talks are about the Saudi family, local community and improving the infrastructure and services provided.*

Participant (13) concluded that "*I think of myself as a social worker and not a political activist.*"

It should be noted here that elected Saudi women see their social activism confined only to the social aspect without the political side. Azimova's study of the political participation of women in the Kingdom in 2015, through interviews with a number of women about their view of allowing Saudi women to participate in the elections, showed great caution on their part, as well as their opposition to the political participation of women. This led the study to conclude that political repression creates a climate that is unfavorable to women's political participation even if the authorities permit them to do so. Merely allowing them to participate does not mean creating a new political sphere and allowing real and genuine political participation. Therefore, the real process of political change requires a wide range of practices, as well as many experiences for substantive governance and the associated outcomes (Azimova 2016; See also: Al-Haydar 2012; Al-Othman 2013; Rawas 2016;).

In light of this, it can be said that even if the state in the Arab world opens the way for the political participation of citizens, it opens it in certain accounts and in

different ways so that it remains the dominant in the political sphere, and control of the various political forces. This makes many political and social forces behave according to the state's proposal, often in accordance with its unspoken instructions.

In general, all elected women do not see themselves except through the social role and away from political activities. It can be said that engaging in politics remains a risky and unacceptable matter. Perhaps this is what makes the elected women emphasize the social dimension of their activities away from politics (Doğruel 2015; Jamjoom 2013). Participant (7) said that:

> *We do not discuss any political issues with regards to the Kingdom, but only focus on social issues which need to be tackled in order to improve our local community.*

There are many factors that make citizens in general and women in particular refuse to confirm their involvement in political action, and emphasize their involving in social one. Among these reasons is Ayubi's view of the role of the central state in the Middle East. He declares that despite the strength of these states they are characterized by the failure shown through the weakness of the associated institutions and the resulting consequences, especially in the economic field. Ayubi clarifies that the danger of the central state in the Arab world is shown by not changing its repressive policies since its emergence in the 1960s until now. By monopolizing all the means of power and its hegemony over the general societal and public sphere, it has prevented the emergence of a strong, real and effective civil society (Ayubi 1995; See also Hanafi and Arvanitis 2015: 50; Ismail 1995: 100).

Apart from the dominance of the state, which is the main reason for citizens' lack of interest in political work, there are many other reasons that hinder political participation in Saudi Arabia, such as the weakness of modernization in the Kingdom and the positive aspects associated with it (Kattan 1991; Al-Falah 1987); the absence of mass protests as happening in other countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Iraq (Shishkina 2017); and finally the predominance of traditional

perceptions of the role of women, and the support of conservative Islam for these perceptions (Abukhalil 1993; Kattan 1991; Mirahamdi 1994).

The work of women plays a large role in their communication with the members of the community. In some cases, the nature of profession as in teaching has helped women to communicate with a large number of community members and to identify their social and economic needs (Abdulmohsen 2018; Akeel 2003; Al-Rashidi 2000; Hallawani 1982). Participant (7) said that:

> *My profession as a teacher has allowed me to communicate with countless number of women and thoroughly understand their social and economic needs.*

In addition to such social activities, many elected women clarified that they have many social activities related to support elder women. They arranged many visits to elder women in order to discuss their problems and support them. They also visited some divorced women and women who supported their children, and through these visits they understood the problems facing these women and worked with them to find solutions (Nasseef 2004).

Yet women's work is not limited only to social service for the neediest group, but to the work of their own, which interacts with the public face-to-face. Abdelmohsen's study of women in Jeddah reveals that the change in the field of work for women since 2012, in which the Saudi authorities allowed women to work in exposed areas, shows that the change in the field of work since 2012 and the communication of women in external worlds can lead to further social changes in Saudi society in the long term (2018).

The lack of women's participation in the political sphere is due not only to the restrictions imposed on political activities, but also to the conservative nature of Saudi society. Through the general cultural character and conservative understanding of religion, the society imposes numerous restrictions on women's mingling with men and their contribution to political action (Azimova 2016; Reda 2014; Shishkina 2017).

Many elected women explained that they think this is not related to the Saudi women themselves, as it is related to the nature of the Saudi society which focuses on the social issues more than the political ones. People avoid any political discussion. Keep in mind the conservative nature of the Saudi society (Al-Abd Al-Hay 1983; Al-Mufarreh 2017; Rawas 2016). Participant (6) asserted this religious trend by saying:

We do not have any political trends but in general we do have social and national trends which allow us to help the poor in our society. For example, during holy month of Ramadan, we used social media to form many campaigns for helping poor people.

In addition, philanthropic and volunteer work appears during periods of natural disasters such as floods that occur in some Saudi cities as what happened in Jeddah in 2011 (Montagu 2010; Nasseef 2004; Shalaby 2008). Participant (8) said:

I have many experiences in social work and helping others. I was very active during the floods. Even though I am a social activist and I have volunteered with several places.

In addition to linking charity work to religion and culture, it is also related to the general family character. Many elected women confirmed that charitable work is historically related to their families and to what ancestors and fathers have done (AlMunajjed 1997; Hamdan 1990; Mies 1986). Participant (3) asserted that:

When I was young, I used to participate in many activities related to Saudi women and problems of my society. I am proud to be part of a good family involved in charity works long time ago in Saudi Arabia. My family used to support charity project, hospitals, and so on. I have inherited such charity attitude from my family and follow their good deeds.

Many elected women clarified that they are still living in a conservative society that does not interfere in political matters and because of that they prefer social action linked with religious orientation. The matter here for elected women is not only related to differentiate between social work and political work, in terms of

focusing on the first and rejecting the latter, but also to emphasize nationalism and attachment to the Kingdom, and to engage in political activity based solely on defending the Kingdom and the ruling family against who attacks them (Al-Othman 2013; Guazzone and Pioppi 2012; Jones 2017). Participant (17) said that:

It is rare for Saudis to address political issues unless to defend the Kingdom or correct a misconception." Participant (14) added "For political issues, I do not like to be involved with them especially on social media. The only times I do get involved is to defend my country and clarify anything which others try badly about it."

Most interview cases asserted that most Saudi women do not have any political inclinations. Even if they talk about politics, they talk in a limited domain within their own private *Majles*, which the Saudi have two of them; one for males and the other for females (Thompson 2014). Although all participants emphasized the avoidance of political activities and the focus on social activities, it can be said that the general Saudi context itself, drives individuals to make such a decision.

In the absence of any political activity and the criminalization of those who advocate for change, one can only integrate into the community service activities that are accepted by the ruling authorities. Restricting political activity is not only a matter for the ruling authorities, but in many respects the conservative community structure rejects political talk, accepts the mandate of the ruling family, and conservative religious perceptions that obey the guardian and avoid any strife or discord. Hence, this rigid political situation is the result of social reality and conservative religious perceptions, as well as the absolute political hegemony of the ruling authorities over long periods of time. Participant (10) added

These talks mostly took place at one of our houses or Majles. These are places where the males and females will be separated. It is a traditional spot in each house for meetings and discussions.

The Majles still represents a great place for Saudi men and women to discuss issues and meet separately. The Majles represents the safest space for both sexes to discuss all special and public issues. For the Saudis, the Majles is the cafe's

objective equivalent and its talk (Alothman 2013; Safranak 2012; Shirky 2011; Strandberg 2015).

Politics is not a public sphere of discussion in the Kingdom. For elected women essential inclinations, as for other Saudi women, are humane more than being political or economic. They try as much as they can to avoid talking about politics in the Kingdom and focus on social activities.   However, social work still needs more efforts in Saudi Arabia. It is important to give people more space to participate in social and political activities. Social work, as we have already pointed out, is the first field of training for political action; without it, Saudi women will not be able to obtain a reasonable understanding and awareness of society and its requirements.

3-2 Women in the Context of Social and Political Changes:

The view of elected women on the nature of social and political changes in Saudi Arabia reveals their current and future perception of these changes. It can be said that there is a very optimistic perception of the nature of the political and social changes in the Kingdom, in particular allowing women to participate in the election. Participant (1) said that:

> *I think it is a good opportunity for women to participate in any social and political event, especially after the political leadership allowed them to be part of our societal changes. I think women will witness many good things in the near future of the Kingdom.*

Saudi women are aiming for more freedoms when it comes to politics and social mobility. There is a large amount of improvement in the society due to its awareness of its importance and that there are a few female pioneers in this field. Unfortunately, there is a large portion of the Saudi society that is characterized with its conservatism for various reasons and this will not change women's situations quickly. (Alshamsi 2014; As'ad 1981; Conway et al.,2004; Hamdan 1990; Haykel et al., 2015; Kattan 1991).

The majority of elected women see that the election will empower women and will provide them with a chance to be more involved in civil activities, and to have more platforms to express themselves and defend other women. For them, elections are a good step on the road to change in the Saudi society, and must be dealt with in this context, without amplifying the event.

Considering this is the first time that there are females as elected officials, many elected women predict that this will improve the status of females in the society and increase the respect toward them. Through the increase in the number of elected women, we could see the creation of more organizations that improve women's conditions and increase their involvement in the society. Participant (4) said that:

In my opinion, under our wise leadership our future will be prosperous and success in all political, social and economic conditions.

According to many participants this election has positively affected society to some extent. It is the first time in the history of Saudi Arabia that women are allowed to participate in any election. It will empower women and will provide them with a chance to be more involved in civil activities, and to have more platforms to express themselves and defend other women. It will allow the Saudi people to accept the fact that women are able to run as candidates in elections, and this will lead to less gender stereotyping, and will create a new culture where women are viewed as participating partners within the social sphere of society.

However, some elected women think that Saudi society needs some time to see the impacts of the election on it. Case (10) said that:

I think municipal elections will not affect the Saudi society, at least for now. It was a good and new experience for us, but talking about its impact needs time especially if I were to evaluate it.

This reflects the awareness of elected Saudi women that these elections are only a step on the road in the area of political and social change in the Kingdom, and that it is difficult to judge these changes and their effects. It is so hard to evaluate Saudi

social and political changes now. We need to understand the scene and be able to evaluate it objectively. Also, social and political changes cannot be judged based on being positive or negative. Any societal changes include both positive and negative aspects, but the most important element here is how we maximize the positive things at the expense on the negative ones (Shaw and David 1982; So 1990; Sun et al., 2007).

Elected women themselves know that the election is just a beginning and women need to put in their consideration many important issues. First, Women should understand that they start their own public work from the beginning and if they want to change the reality, they should be patient with many things such as culture, traditions and religious interpretation of Islam from specific groups of people. Secondly, women should work with other groups in the society including the liberal and religious ones.

Attempting to change the society, excluding certain groups from the process will only result in future problems. In addition, women should know that in times of deep social changes, they need strong pioneers such as liberal people and sheiks that supported women in daily life. Finally, through the increase in the number of elected women, they could see the creation of more organizations that support women in the society and their involvement in the society.

3-3 Women's Awareness and the Issue of Representation:

The level of awareness reached by Saudi women cannot be denied. This awareness is related to the level of education they have received. Education is one of the most important contemporary variables in the life of Saudi women. Through education the Saudi girl came out of her home for the first time, going to the school or university, realized the existence of many worlds surrounding her, and got a job that guarantees her future and protects her from the calamities of life (Abu-Nasr and Nereim 2016; Doğruel 2015; Smith and Abouammoh 2013).

Elected women have high rate of awareness in many issues of Saudi society, mainly the election and its impacts on them, and what kind of Saudi women they

represent, and the role of education in their own lives (Al-Mouhandis 1986; Alshamsi 2014; Alsuhaibani 2017; Alyamani 1985; Azimova 2016).

The importance of education stems from its role in urging citizens to accept modernization in the Kingdom. Al-Mohsen's study showed that Saudi female students support the changes associated with modernization which improved their social roles. However, it is noted that they accept the frameworks of modernization in their lives that are consistent with the traditional roles associated with the status of women in the Saudi family. They accept the work of women outside the home, give them greater rights in choosing the life partner, and demand more participation in the household. The study also found that there is a positive relationship between the high level of education and income and acceptance of new changes related to the roles of women (Al-Mohsen 2006; See also Al-Fraih 2018; Al-Munajjed 1997).

Many elected women clarified that allowing women to participate in the election is considered a radical step within the Saudi culture. They have known that this event is very important in their own lives and they have known also that this event represents a very important opportunity of which they should take advantage of it to a great extent. Participant (1) said that

I thought about the role of the female members of the consultative council (Shura Council), and I realized that their efforts were not that effective in improving the condition of women. Women in the consultative council should in theory be the driving force behind the improvement of the rights of women in Saudi Arabia. Due to this, I realized that I can support women so that they can discuss their social issues, and publicize them, and also to raise awareness amongst them. Hence, I decided to run as for the municipal council.

While we have referred to education and employment as important factors in expanding women's awareness in Saudi society, the Saudi state plays a major role in strengthening this awareness on the one hand and improving social and political conditions on the other. It can be said that Saudi women are aware that the level of

interest in the status of Saudi women should be expanded and that attention should be shifted from the narrow to the broad level. The development of awareness stems from the high level of education and women's access to multiple and good employment opportunities (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Abu-Nasr and Nereim 2016; Akeel 2003; Al-Alamy 2015). Participant (2) said that:

> *In the reign of the king Abdullah may Allah have mercy on him, and in the current reign of King Salman may Allah save him, women have been supported and encouraged to participate in many social, political, educational, and health fields. From my own point of view, all of these social and political changes improve the social and political awareness of Saudi women, and will lead to deep changes in every aspect in our Saudi society.*

In this context, Saudi women are aware of the importance of allowing women to participate in the elections, which is of great importance in expanding the capacity of women to participate in the community and change the Saudi reality significantly and effectively. What is promising here is that elected women feel that entering the electoral process requires many things that will facilitate their success on the one hand and help women getting their rights on the other (Eum 2014).

Participant (12) said that:

> *We still must convince females that they have rights and duties towards the society they live in and this will not happen unless we spread awareness, hold conventions, organize workshops, and improve education without breaking any of the laws in the country.*

This means that elected Saudi women are not only aware of the importance of bringing about change in Saudi society, but also aware that this will only be done through many practices such as workshops, conferences, social media etc., which will help them gain political and social work experience. Allowing women in general, and Saudi women in particular, to exercise social and political action is a good step on the road to change, but this plan will be successful only through good

preparation by training women and developing their level of knowledge and community experience (Aldakheel 2012; Al-Mufarreh 2017; Janbi 2018).

Many elected women asserted that there were no campaigns to educate women about the election. Since this is the first election ever where Saudi women are allowed to vote, there should have been workshops in order to raise awareness and guide them through the process. In this matter, almost all elected women affirmed the importance of education as a tool in improving women's awareness of their own lives and their own community (Smith 2013).

It is very hard to ignore the role of education in improving Saudi women's conditions. In addition, education is critical when it comes to women changing their own reality. An educated woman is one who is aware of her position in society, and is able to raise awareness to those around her with regards to important social issues. In addition to increasing the level of awareness, education helps women to have their own job and their own income. Participant (17) said that "*In addition, education helps women gain employment and income, which helps them become independent*."

The importance of education lies not only in the limits of obtaining a university degree and raising the level of awareness of various social aspects, but also securing the life of women by finding suitable employment opportunities and thus ensuring their self-reliance away from the authority of the family or husband (Abdulmohsen 2018; Al-Rashidi 2000). At a later stage of awareness women can express themselves, represent other feminist groups and express their rights and aspirations.

Representation is a very important process which helps women in recognizing the nature of the social groups that elected women want to defend and claim their rights. Although the immediate question of what nature of the social groups women are defending seems easy, it actually can be very difficult. It is hard to determine in a clear way what kind of people women will defend and why. And because of that almost all of elected women gave very broad answers by saying that they will defend Saudi women in general or defending women who live in

their own area in particular (Afolabi 2017; Al-Ubied 2012; Giroux 2009; Samin 2013).

Whether elected women represent women as whole or specific groups of them, the act of representation itself reflects a kind of power relationship in which elected women see a privileged advantage that reflects the interests of the groups they represent. Although elcted women assert that what they do for other women is purely social work, they may not be aware of initial political practices they have made. Participant (1) said:

> *I represent Saudi women in general. I cannot specify particular kind of women I represent. It is a good opportunity to present myself to all women in my city.*

Despite the consensus of the elected women that they represent Saudi women in general, many of them also see that they represent women living in their residential area in particular. Participant (11) outlined:

> *I cannot say that I represent every Saudi woman as I can say I represent women in my area who elected me. It is hard for me to say in this stage that I represent every Saudi woman. I can say I represent the younger generations and women of my age.*

It is important here to refer to the statement that elected women declared that they don't represent women politically as much as they do culturally and socially to improve the living conditions in which they live. Most of them stated that they do not represent specific social class in Saudi Arabia, as they represent all Saudi women, and represent their own dreams and their own ambitious desires of changing their Saudi society. They also represent the women who live in cities in addition to the women who live in Bedouin areas. They represent the younger generations as they represent the old ones.

Although what they said shows a very general representation of all Saudi women, they did not ignore the fact that there are specific groups of women who deserve more care and focus than other groups, such as the illiterate, the old, and the poor

(Giroux 2009; Pitkin 1972). Sometime elected women referred to their desire to use such kind of representation as an act which helps in changing women's conditions and allows them to get their own rights (Al-Haydar 2012). This is in line with what Pitkin said about representation by explaining that it can take descriptive and symbolic sides by standing on certain issues or social groups and then moving them to actual practice by achieving these issues or by helping social groups which are represented (Pitkin 1967). Regardless of the kinds of social groups elected women represented, participant (4) stated that:

> *It was a good opportunity to be the women's voice in the council and talk about what Saudi women want in my area. I think representation of Saudi women is a very hard task; for me I will do my best to improve my conditions and other Saudi women. But I think I can say that I represent Saudi women in the Municipal Council and defend their rights and requirements.*

Saudi women have faced many obstacles against their social and political representations in many arenas. The most important obstacle here is their conservative culture which supports males at the expense of females. There are a number of social, tribal and religious restrictions in Saudi Arabia. Women in the Kingdom abide by these restrictions as a form of respect towards customs and traditions. They also respect all such customs and traditions. Many studies assert that if women in Saudi Arabia wish to live more freely, they should do so within the boundaries of traditions (Al-Fraih 2018; Kattan 1991).

Elected women want to contribute in changing life style in their area and benefit from women's potentials in developing Saudi society. Saudi women stood in this election in order to find a formal platform which can help them in improving and defending the rights of Saudi women. They do not represent a specific type of Saudi women; however, they represent women in general. There are specific women which need extra assistance, such as single and divorced women. Saudi elected women feel that they represent every Saudi woman who nominated and voted for them in their area. In addition, they don't deny the roles of the men who also nominated them. They feel that they represent their own area without discrimination between men and women (Al-Oraimi 2004; Al-Subhi 2016).

Elected women are aware that their representation of other women is a matter of paramount importance which helps them gain their rights in Saudi society. Here, representation does not only mean adopting women's demands by announcing them or demanding them, but also means that these women have become a role model for the rest of the Saudi women. Participant (9) said that:

The most important role models for women are the women themselves. I see myself as a new role model for the new generation. Of course, I represented Saudi women in the Municipal election. Women's representation here means that I carry on my shoulders their dreams in changing their reality in a better and radical way.

Many Saudi elected women emphasized the representation of women in the community to which they belong. This is normal as municipal elections are regional elections linked to the place where women live, so they emphasize their representation of the women around them in their community. Participant (12) said that:

Honestly, I do not believe I represent a certain group of females in the country as much as I represent the city I live in. I made a Facebook page related to the municipal council where we share in it all that happens in our area and all that regards it. It is viewed by people of all demographics who live in the city.

The discussion of women's awareness is not only related to their participation in the electoral process, although it is important, but it is linked to many different social, political and economic transitions that can help to develop women's awareness. Thus, it is possible to say that women's choices about their social focus in the areas in which they live reflect a narrow perception of the role of women in one degree or another, but also an initial understanding of public work, which may later evolve into more relevant and influential dimensions of the Saudi society (Al-Abd Al-Hay 1993; Abramovitz 1988; Abukhalil 1993; Akeel 2003; Verba 1987).

As mentioned above, the elected women have a high level of awareness which allows them to understand the benefit of the election which supports them in

demanding the rights of other women in Saudi society. The elected women are not only aware of the nature of the groups that help them, but beyond that, to identify the groups that benefit from them by getting their support. In this context, elected women emphasize the importance of assistance from other women and the importance of their role in the electoral process. There is continuous communications between female members of the Municipal Councils with regards to societal issues suffered by women across all regions of Saudi Arabia, and possible solutions to alleviate them.

Garnering the support of women was very important during the women's campaign. Women help each other and encourage each other to vote for their fellow candidate women. Although it is important to depend on every voice in the election, male and female, but in the early stages, women need to depend on each other in their own campaign. On this matter, women play a very important role in encouraging other women to imitate them and follow their steps in changing women's conditions. It is necessarily to notice that women themselves, more than any other efforts in society, particularly, males' efforts, can pave the road for women in their seeking to change their conditions. The most important role models for women are the women themselves.

3-4 The Role of the King in Political Transition:

As the elected women have insisted on their social activities more than political ones, they also have asserted the importance of the royal family and the King in any social and political change in the Kingdom. The elected women believe in top-bottom approach and consider it as a golden gate for any change in Saudi Arabia. All elected women claimed that women have received many rights, especially under the reign of King Abdullah. His reign is considered to be one of the best eras for Saudi women in terms of receiving rights (Tetreault 2011; Thompson 2014).

According to the elected women, in the reign of the King Abdullah, and in the current reign of King Salman, women have been supported and encouraged to participate in many social, political, educational, and health fields. In addition, women appreciate King Abdullah's decision to allow them to participate in the

Municipal election, which they consider as one of the most important steps in the development of Saudi Arabia. After King Abdullah's declaration of allowing women to be part of the Municipal Election of 2015, it was a good opportunity for Saudi women to be part of such historical event. Participant (14) clarified that:

During the reign of King Abdullah, Princess Noura Bint Abdulrahman University was established in Riyadh. It is the world's largest female only university with full facilities and dozens of majors. He also appointed women in leadership positions as deputy ministers. Employment for females has been opened in all fields for both the private and public sector.

Travel abroad and girls' access to university degrees and post-university degrees from all regions of the world, especially Europe and North America, have played a major role in women's knowledge of other external worlds and their understanding of the nature of traditional Saudi social structure. This also allows women to change the social structure through communication with the ruling authorities, led by the ruling family. The elected women put their trust in the King and the royal family. Participant (14) said that "*the first line of support for women is the state.*"

According to the elected women, the state is now the biggest supporter of women compared to the support of the society. The state has played many roles in improving and upgrading women's status. With the means of social communication and awareness of society, there is a clear amount of support from both sides. It should be noted here that King Salman and his Crown Prince have started profound social and political transitions in the Saudi society, where it comes at the forefront of the issuance of new laws that allow women to get their own official papers by themselves, travel abroad on their own, and register their children in the civil records.

The conditions of women in the Kingdom will gradually change and improve, and with support from the government, this change will only be accelerated. However, women know that they have many obstacles in front of them which include tribes as a traditional unit and clerics with their conservative thoughts about the women.

3-5 Obstacles Facing Democracy in Saudi Society:

Any social and political changes face many obstacles and Saudi Arabia is not an exception. I think women in Saudi society have faced many obstacles against their social and political representations in many arenas. For women, the inequality between them and their counter males is one of the most diffecult issues in Saudi society (Hurst 2001; Lorbor 1998; Meijer 2019; Rai 2000). Participant (2) said that:

I strive to reach high positions within my society in order to better the life of every woman within Saudi Arabia.

It is important here to convince people to accept women's participation in every field in the Saudi society and this will take sometime to be achieved (Shishkina 2017; Van Wyngarden 2012). In addition, democratic transformation in Saudi society has faced many obstacles related to culture and traditions. For example, participant (9) said that:

In the previous election, we witnessed many candidates who succeeded because of their tribal support, not because of their high education, wide experience, or their adequate qualifications. In my opinion, I found that the biggest element of my successful campaign was the support I received from my tribe and relatives. Many people in my tribe gave me their own votes helping me in my election.

Tribes, customs, and traditions in society were the reasons for the delay of the current support seen from the state. The state finally realized that it must begin the integration of females in the society in accordance with Islamic and cultural values. The trend existed from the era of King Abdullah; the Kingdom had to catch up with other countries when it came to women rights. Its delay was seen as illogical and was quickly remedied and included into the 2030 vision for the Kingdom. Participant (11) said that:

In general, most of my discussions were with my female friends about the social aspects of the country rather than the political aspects. We are still a

society dominated by simple tribal relations that care more about our daily life more than we care about politics. The tribe and family still play a big role in the daily life of Saudi Arabia. This translates into a big role for the elections. Each tribe would support those who come from it.

This means that the tribe supports its members against other tribesmen, even if they are more efficient and worthy. Of course, the transition from tribalism to the structure of modern societies based on the idea of citizenship takes some time to be achieved in the Kingdom (Alfalah 1987; Cole 2003).

Although, most of women do not accept the idea of female participating in the election, few of them supported this idea and encouraged women to participate in the election. There are many reasons of their refusal of women's participation in the election: the first and more important reason is related to religious considerations. Participant (9) stated that:

The Fatwas of Sheikhs (advisory opinions of religious men) discouraged many people from supporting me. The female participants needed to assure the populace that the Kings and rulers of Saudi Arabia have taken Islamic laws into considerations when they decided to allow females to participate in the elections.

However, the state has supported women's education and work in health, education, and the social and political circles, but unfortunately some members of society reject the progress of women in any field. The state has decided to involve women in various fields, but some individuals in society go against the current.

These negative effects on the reality of Saudi women are the same that affect the rest of the members of Saudi society, from the strong effects of the family and the tribe, the general weakness of civil society and slow political changes. The difference here is that women suffer from all these influences like the rest of society in addition to suffering as a female in a highly conservative society. Here, at least, it can be emphasized that males enjoy some freedoms in the social sphere, which women still try to have many of their life activities such as education, health and work. The most important step here is to change the culture of the Saudi

society toward women and believe in their abilities and potentials in changing and advancing the community.

Conclusion:

In light of the above, we can say that dealing with democracy in the Arab societies in general, and in Saudi Arabia in particular, differs from dealing with it according to common Western ideas. Western societies have gone through long periods of development in which they have been able to identify the quasi-stable pillars of democracy, despite the differences between them in actual practice. On the contrary, it can be said that Arab societies since independence have not been able to achieve this since the post-colonial phase of the mid-20th century.

In this context, democracy in Saudi Arabia has not been achieved in the Western form recognized through political pluralism, the alternation of power, the establishment of political parties, political and trade union elections, but they have been achieved through various initial forms. According to this situation, I present some of the conclusions of this chapter related to women and democracy in Saudi Arabia.

The large presence of women is in social work more than political work, and this is shown in a large extent in charity work based on the culture of charitable work inspired by the teachings of Islam. It is noticeable also that Saudi women are more aware of the fact that they have a great deal of university and post-university education, in light of their travel abroad, and their use of social media. In general, it is possible to say that new generations of women have gained a great deal of awareness compared to the former generations of mothers and grandmothers. In addition, most women emphasized that they represent all women in the Kingdom, especially women from their residential areas.

Most women see the current social and political change in the Kingdom as an important road plan that needs some time to be assessed. However, they see the need to benefit from them, and to maximize their benefits and guide them to serve women and improve their daily life. They emphasized that change in the Kingdom derives its strength and momentum from the important role played by the state in

general and the ruling family in particular. The change will inevitably clash with conservative forces, led by clerics, and the only societal force that can impose its opinion and support women in the face of these conservative currents is the power of the ruling family, headed by the King.

Most strikingly, most elected women have stressed that Saudi Arabia's traditional cultural reality represents the most serious obstacle facing Saudi women to change. There are still many men and women who disagree about women's participation in the elections and their participation in social and political life. Certainly, this conservative societal view greatly affects women's level of access to their various societal rights. This conservative view leads to false religious interpretations that deprive women of their religiously imposed rights. In addition, this view also hinders societal acceptance of successive state-imposed laws to promote women's rights in the Kingdom. The next chapter deals with the situation of women's rights in the Kingdom and the various aspects related to it.

Chapter 6

Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia

Introduction:

In chapter four, I tried to assess the status of democracy in Saudi Arabia in general, and the impact of this situation on the conditions of women and their daily lives and social and political activities in particular. In light of this, I dealt with the reality of civil society in Saudi Arabia and the space granted to citizens in its formation and use in defending the freedoms and interests of citizens, and defending the rights and interests of women.

The widespread absence of democracy and associated practices has been found among Saudi citizens, and also among Saudi women. This is normal for a newly established society, but also for a society that is beginning its early steps of social and political change. Therefore, the former chapter concluded that the absence of democracy depends on the socially and religiously conservative nature of society and the slow political transformation of the state officials, despite the importance of the steps they have begun. Therefore, any talk about the absence of democracy should not only focus on the nature of the political structure in Saudi society and the role of the ruling family, but also take into account the elements of the conservative social structure that hinder the speed of social and political changes.

Individuals, especially in emerging societies, may not care more about democracy in its broader sense of power, the creation of political parties, and freedoms of expression and opinion, as they focus on their direct social rights such as the right to education, work, health and acceptable life. This is what the fourth chapter concluded in terms of Saudi citizens' great interest in the social aspects of their lives rather than the political aspects. This trend has also emerged significantly among elected women.

In general, this situation can be seen as the first stage in the pursuit of social rights, which is natural for a society predominantly religious and associated with the desire to help vulnerable and needy groups. What is important here, however, is

the strengthening of civil society and related organizations in the future. Hence it was necessary to devote the current chapter in order to identify the nature of the rights that women deem necessary to defend for the benefit of Saudi women, and whether these rights are related to the social or political dimension, or both of them.

Women's rights are an important issue that different societies seek to support and defend. In light of the narrow scope of democracy allowed to citizens in the Arab world, this inevitably reflects on the human rights situation in general, and women's rights in particular. As I depend, in the former chapter, on the responses of the elected women to the realities of democracy in the Kingdom, I also rely on these responses to identify the reality of their rights.

The difference between the reality of democracy and the reality of rights may seem to be a difference between abstract perceptions of the state of democracy and the actual and tangible practices in order to obtain different rights. Access to rights may have been the actual manifestations of democracy. Thus, this chapter may bring us to tangible levels of the Saudi reality of the level of social and political rights obtained by Saudi women. Of course, as in the former chapter, the present chapter also represents a field test of many theoretical assumptions associated with studies that rely on secondary data for analysis.

In this chapter, I examine the definition of human rights and the various aspects associated with it, taking into account the various difficulties associated with trying to achieve a comprehensive definition of human rights, as well as the different effects of social contexts on defining what is meant by human rights and the different areas associated with it.

In addition, this chapter addresses several issues related to the rights of Saudi women such as education, employment and finally their right to political participation. There is no doubt that I do not impose a particular perception of the meaning of human rights on Saudi women, so it is important to identify their personal perceptions of those meanings associated with human rights, and whether

they are primarily interested in defending their rights and willing to improve their social and political conditions.

Human Rights and Citizenship: Definition and Criteria

Many intellectuals clarified that human rights are natural and instinctive rights that are born with the birth of man (Boersema 2011; Boucher 2009; Boylan 2014; Frost 2002; Oakley 2005; Tuck 1982). Goodhart clarifies that, as a formal entity, human rights is a recent issue that emerged after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948; it represents a political invention; and finally, human rights are inherently revolutionary (1984: 2 and see also, Clapham 2016:5). In modern times, human rights directly affect the essence of man and his dignity. It is a critical issue affecting individuals and their interests, as well as states and their associated organizations (Ishay 2008: 145-154; and see also Biju 2005; Clapham 2016; Eid 2015; Frost 2002).

The idea of human rights means that, regardless of nationality, sex, religion, ethnic and national origin, social or economic status, the human being has close rights even before he or she is a member of a particular society. These rights are abstract and philosophical, but must be viewed within the framework of the culture of the society in which people live (Beitz 2009; Nickel 2007; Padmakumar 2011). The concept of "human rights" has become one of the most commonly used concepts in modern political literature, in contemporary political discourse and in public discourse, regardless of their supporters or opponents, depending on their cultural or political backgrounds or their religious origins (Morsink 2009: 2).

Wilson's study (1999) adopts an anthropological approach that reveals the different human rights conditions and values from one society to another. In the light of national conflicts, civil strife and political violence around the world, Wilson tries to reveal a range of important relationships that embody the state's relationship with different human rights institutions by studying a variety of countries including Guatemala, Mauritius, Iran, the United States and Mexico. The importance of this study is that it reveals the interdependence between the internal activities of human rights and their relationship with the state on the one hand and

its relation to the international dimension on the other hand. This is not done in isolation from the general cultural context of the development of the countries of study, which creates a specific context for human rights.

According to Wilson, it can be said that the issue of human rights has evolved through the efforts of many individuals around the world, either through engaging in long-term confrontations with the state, or through much controversy and dialogue with the state and associated organizations. Also, we should consider that the issue of rights is linked to many aspects of life, such as education, health, politics, and economy. In addition, it is characterized by its multidisciplinary nature which means that it is studied by many different disciplines such as politics, sociology, psychology, economics and history.

Amnesty International defines human rights as the basic norms people cannot live without. Human rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. The more human societies respect these rights, the more fully and comprehensively they will develop the potential of the individual and society. According to Amnesty International:

> Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that belong to every single one of us, anywhere in the world. Human rights apply no matter where you are from, what you believe in, or how you choose to live your life. Human rights can never be taken away, but they can sometimes be restricted – for example if a person breaks the law, or in the interests of national security. These rights and freedoms are based on values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence. But human rights are not just abstract concepts – they are defined and protected by law (Amnesty International 24 July 2018).

The importance of Amnesty's definition is that it not only stands for human rights as an abstract and ultimate idea, but also links it to the social context surrounding it, and thus emphasizes the importance of the legal institutions that protect these rights. According to the Amnesty International, "human rights have some key qualities, agreed by the international community. They must be recognized as:

- **Universal**: they belong to every single person.

- **Inalienable**: they cannot be taken away from us.

- **Indivisible and interdependent**: governments should not be able to pick and choose which rights are respected" (Amnesty International 24 July 2018; also Jayakumar 2011).

In addition to the former common qualities of Human rights, they are identified by a set of characteristics that stem from being linked to the human nature on the one hand and the fact that they represent specific rights on the other.

These include that human rights are not a gift from anyone, but belong to human beings as human beings. This means that, despite the role played by the state and its other institutions in the protection and defense of human rights, this should be done in the light of the recognition that this is an inborn human right and not a gift from the state or any of its institutions, even those affiliated with civil society (Goodman and Pegram 2012).

It is important that different institutions take this issue into account when dealing with citizens, including the police and other security institutions. Padmakumar said that "human rights are not the gift of any political sovereign but are rights inherent in human existence. A truly professional and democratic system for the police can evolve only from this realization." (2011: 328)

They are inherent in every human being and attached to him as a human being first and foremost (Morsink 2009). This perception has led to a paradigm shift in the consideration of human rights from the seventeenth century until now, by passing the perception of the individual as a unit within a specific group or social class to be recognized as an important unit in itself that requires appreciation and respect. This transformation has resulted in many of the following elements that have been linked to the issue of human rights and have become a condition associated with the modern state and one of the most important elements associated with globalization (Brysk 2002; Brysk and Shafir 2004; Coicaud et al., 2003; Goodhart 2016; Ishay 2008).

Human rights are the same for all human beings regardless of color, race, religion, sex, political opinion or social origin. People are all born free and equal in dignity and rights. In this reality, human rights are universal in terms of its content. Human rights move here from the local to the global level to become a universal value that must be protected and maintained. Perhaps there is no more important and vital issue relevant to globalization, than human rights. Beitz states that (2009: 2):

> The doctrine of human rights is the articulation in the public morality of world politics of the idea that each person is a subject of global concern. It does not matter what a person's spatial location might be or which political subdivision or social group the person might belong to. Everyone has human rights, and responsibilities to respect and protect these rights may, in principle, extend across political and social boundaries.

No one has the right to deprive another person of his human rights whatever the reasons, and even if the laws in a country do not recognize this or that a country is violating them, it does not lose its value and does not deny its origin in humans. The violation of rights does not mean that they do not exist. They are inalienable rights (Nickel (2007: 35-52).

Human rights are a single and inseparable unit. Human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural, are a single unit involving freedom, security and an adequate standard of living. This issue points to the total nature of human rights in human societies, and one side cannot be taken care of at the expense of another. Human rights are integrated among themselves, combining social, political and economic to form a comprehensive life system and a continuous way of life (Lewis and Skutsch 2001).

Human rights are in a state of continuous development, and as they are connected to man as a human being, the need for man and his material and spiritual height are constantly evolving, necessitating the development of rights and duties and thus the classification of other rights. Mutua stated that "The construction and definition of human rights norms are dynamic and continuous processes" (2002:

74). Human rights are strongly linked to the historically dominant pattern of production. This means that it is a historical given that takes many different forms based on the nature of the social conflicts prevailing in a specific historical period (Bussemaker 1999:1-12; see also Ishay 2008; Mutua 2002).

The concept of human rights is linked to a complex structure of important concepts including the state, democracy, citizenship and civil society. In this context, it is important to mention the significance of the idea of citizenship and its association with the modern state in deepening the importance of human rights and taking care of the various aspects associated with it. The concept of citizenship is closely related to the emergence of a nation-state based on its integration with the state and its relationship to the national legitimacy of the political system (Coicaud et al., 2003; Chen 2018; Ledstrup 2019).

There is a relationship between citizenship, nationalism and democracy, that is, democracy and the equitable distribution of national wealth drives citizens to defend national interests. On the contrary, the rule of tyranny and the acquisition of national wealth mean the collapse of citizenship as well as the requirements for the defense of the homeland although difficult to generalize (Barker 2009).

The concept of citizenship is one of the basic concepts associated with liberal thought as a pattern of ideas and values specific to the individuals' status in society and the nature of their various relations, especially their relations with the state and its associated institutions. While liberalism at its inception focused on individual freedom and rationality and the strengthening of the status of the individual in a political society linked to the social foundations associated with the Renaissance era, the concept of citizenship has evolved and changed through the course of liberalism to focus on the absolute choices and desires of the individual as a reference to life choices and daily politics in the work circles, civil society, public domain, and leisure time (Barker 2009: 8).

This concept has also witnessed many changes in its content, use and significance. It no longer only describes the relationship between the individual and the state in its legal political structure, as it was before (Bussemaker 1999). Recent literature

and political studies reveal a return of interest in the concept of "citizenship" in the field of political theory after the dominant interest in studying the concept of "state" by the end of the 1980s (Bosanquet 2011).

This is due to several factors, most notably the crises that have beset the idea of the nation-state, which has been the cornerstone of liberal thought for a long time. It is also due to the many transformations of the end of the twentieth century, such as the increasing racial and religious problems in many countries of the world, and the emergence of the idea of "globalization", which was founded on transnational capital expansion and the communications and technological revolution (Coicaud et al., 2003; Ishay 2008; Jones 2017; Shirky 2011).

Nevertheless, the state as a sovereign unit still represents the most important element in the equation of relations with its citizens, support for human rights, and various civil society institutions. In this context, Butenschon (2000: 2-5) believes that citizenship is based on a contractual basis that links the state and citizens. The characteristics of this relationship are highlighted through economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. In other words, it includes all the roles played by the state and its progress to its citizens, and the nature of the response of citizens to these roles, whether rejected, affirmative or amendment. This is directly related to the power relations between the rulers and the ruled, and is directly related to the nature of the relationship. This means that the discussion of citizenship and the state is essentially a matter of relations of power and the extent to which citizens enjoy freedoms, and the extent to which the state itself accepts to relinquish the power it possesses in favour of its citizens.

Butenschon (2000: 17-27) sets three kinds of citizenship by studying a range of different political systems. First comes "singularism" citizenship, in which one group or tribal group dominates the state community as in Saudi Arabia and Israel. "Pluralism" is the second where multicultural community is governed by the division and sharing of power and acceptance of participation expressed by the elites of every political faction as in Lebanon. Finally represents the "universalism" citizenship, through which individual identity and not collective identity determines the equal status of every citizen. If the first model was found in

Saudi Arabia and Israel, and the second in Lebanon, Butenschon could not find a single political regime that reflected the third model in the Middle East.

What can be said here is that citizenship can only be achieved in a democratic system that embraces sort of political pluralism, respects human rights, protects people's dignity and provides them with the necessities of decent living. Any definition of citizenship must therefore be directly linked to equality and the various aspects associated with it. Kostakopoulou (2008: 1) defines it as "equal membership of a political community from which enforceable rights and obligations, benefits and resources, participatory practices and a sense of identity flow, affects everyone." Even if we try to define citizenship in a universal sense that transcends the boundaries of each individual state, it must also be linked to a sense of equality. Kostakopoulou (2008: 153) defines universal citizenship as "the right to be treated as a full, equal and respected participant in a political community can only be understood with reference to the (differential) context within which it operates and the (differential) context it helps perpetuate."

There is a profound and fundamental relationship between the concept of citizenship and the prevailing political, economic and cultural conditions which will determine how the political system, regardless of its type, will deal with its citizens.

Citizenship does not eliminate competition among people in social space, but encourages competition within a framework of national unity based on respect for diversity rather than exile. The concept of citizenship is not completed in real terms except by the emergence of a civil state that exercises positive neutrality towards the beliefs and ideologies of its citizens. This state does not exercise any form of exclusion, marginalization and discrimination against its citizens because of their racial, ethnic or religious affiliations. It is an incubator for all citizens and, in the final analysis, represents the total of the citizens' wills (Goodin and Reeve 1988; Wall and Klosko 2003). It should be pointed out here that this is the ideal situation for state intervention among its citizens, the closest to the ideal model, but the actual reality reveals that the state often intervenes in favour of social

groups over other groups, and literally cannot represent the role of a just judge among the adversaries.

The concept of citizenship was associated from the outset with the emergence of the nation-state, which sought to eliminate forms of loyalty to sub-entities such as clan and tribe, which melted into the state entity. If this condition has been achieved in the emergence of a modern state in Western societies, it has not been achieved to one degree or another in Arab societies. The nature of the social formations in the Arab world did not allow the melting of all the different entities under the banner of the state, and in the framework of its sponsorship and protection. Therefore, these entities often compete with the state to attract the loyalty of individuals, and perhaps the electoral behavior in the local councils is an example, as the family component is a key variable in the electoral processes of the nomination and vote (About the role of tribe in India see Mitra 2013: part 3; and about the role of tribe in Saudi Arabia, see Samin 2013). Samin concludes that despite the attempt by the ruling family in the Kingdom to convert the nomads to citizens belonging to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, tribal links and genealogy remain central facets of modern Saudi identity.

Despite the negative attitude toward the state in the Arab world by many thinkers (Al-Falah 1987; Ayubi 1995; Cammett and Diwan 2013; Edward 2018; Jones 2017; Pratt 2006) especially when addressing the rentier state in the Gulf region, Herb (1999) tries to emphasize the importance of the rentier state and its role in achieving stability in society, especially among tribes. Herb believes that the state is buying the opposition and seducing it in order to preserve the stability of society. Here, Herb puts forward the importance of bypassing the idea of a rentier state to focus on what he called the monarchist state. For him, the focus on the rentier state means focusing only on the economic aspects of this type of government.

The transformation towards the monarchist state means focusing on the economic and political aspects at the same time, which helps to develop the society by supporting the institutions created by the ruling families and improving the situation of the citizens and their different human rights. Herb's view of working

to develop the idea of citizenship and human rights in the Gulf States seems to be largely pragmatic. It emphasizes that a change of society must be made in harmony with existing monarchical institutions of the state, not through conflict with them or replacing them with other institutions.

The crystallization of the concept of citizenship is conditional on the appearance of the individual as having many rights before the state. Citizenship includes a strong sense of the individual towards the state, and a desire to obtain different rights from it. This is related to two issues of great importance, the first of which relates to the availability of legal institutions that guarantee citizens their rights and the possibility of defending them. The second is related to the extent to which the citizens themselves are convinced of the importance of the law and its role in settling disputes between them fairly.

This means that despite the importance of legal institutions, they are not sufficient in themselves to achieve and support citizenship without the spread of the culture of law among citizens. Real citizenship helps to support the various rights of citizens and ensure access to them at the same time. When a social context is traditional and hostile to justice and equality between individuals in general and men and women in particular, it is difficult to apply a situation of citizenship based on the exercise of individual rights and equality among them, even if there are many legal institutions related to the rights of individuals (Al-Rashidi 2000; Al-Ubied 2012; Diamond and Plattner 2014; Hallawani 1982; Mirahamadi 1994). These rights include three groups: civil rights, political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. In the following, I analyze the reality of Saudi women's rights depending on the interviews with the elected women.

1- Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia:

The previous section explains the definition of human rights in political and social literature and its relation to the concept of citizenship. In the following, I discuss the main criteria of human rights in Saudi Arabia, applying to the elected Saudi women.

Talking about Saudi women's rights and their equality with men should build on the following criteria:

1. These rights should be understood within the Arab culture in general and Saudi culture in particular (see the Chase's Introduction in Chase and Hamzawy 2008: 1-17; and see also, Afolabi 2017; Packer 2002: 1-4).

2. Religion has played very effective role in women's life. So, it is hard to determine what is right and what is wrong in Saudi society without putting religion's standards in the forefront of consideration (AbuKhalil 1993; Al-haydar 2012; Commins 2006; Diamond and Plattner 2014; Edward 2018; Hirahamadi 1994; Kattan 1991).

3. Although religion is very important in women's life, it is colored by culture in all Arab countries. Sometime people follow many things in Saudi society as they belong to Islam but at the end, they discover that they are related to the tribal traditions more than religion's standards (Al-Humaidi 2016; Al-Shamsi 2014; Al-Subhi 2016; Mohammedpour and Kamal 2019).

4. Saudi Arabia is a conservative society although radical changes which happened since the beginning of the reign of King Salman. So, it is very hard to talk about women's rights in Saudi Arabia accordingg to Western societies. Cordesman says that "Saudi Arabia is an intensely conservative society whose values are religious rather than secular, and it is still shaped by the norms of a tribal society. The Saudi clergy and large parts of the Saudi population are Islamic puritans and have to be persuaded to be change" (Cordesman 2009: 14; also Al-Sudairy 2017: 42).

5. That does not mean I will not benefit from Western feminist approaches which I can apply to the Saudi case, such as liberal feminist.

Also, I need to determine the operational aspects of what we mean by women's rights. Do we mean by rights their own right to drive cars, or wearing what they like, or travelling abroad without any custodians? It is hard to determine specific rights and say here we talk about Saudi women's rights as these rights itself have been changed from time to time and from one place to another. Rights are specific needs with temporal, spatial and specific circumstances.

In general, Saudi women's rights have two complementary aspects. The first is the informal aspect which relates to the society itself and the degree of acceptance of women and their movement outside the home freely, as long as this is within the framework of societal values, in addition to the freedom to choose her partner, educational specialization, and the type of work that she sees fit for her, and practice her various hobbies. The informal aspect also includes many other aspects that are difficult to define precisely because of their association with all behaviors of women's daily, family and kinship life.

The second aspect is the formal side, which is related to government legislation and decisions, and women's right to education, work, health, travel and other aspects without any male guardianship, and in light of the protection of official laws issued by the State. Generally speaking, without integration between the formal and informal sides, it is difficult to change the reality of Saudi women and support their rights.

The perception of Saudi women's rights is based on civil and social rights in particular, taking into consideration the nature of the Saudi conservative context and the undergoing gradual changes. The acquisition of such rights would subsequently lead to the expansion of the political rights associated with individual freedoms and the possible formation of civil society institutions working in both social and political field.

Given the division of women's rights between informal and formal rights, it is possible to discuss the following points related to Saudi women's rights.

1. Saudi elected women and human rights.
2. The right to end male guardianship.
3. The right to education.
4. The right to work.
5. The right to political participation.

2-1 Saudi Elected Women and Human Rights:

There is no difference between the opinion of the elected women regarding the rights of Saudi women and the different living conditions they faced. Elected

women represent an integral part of Saudi society and they suffer from the same problems as other Saudi women. In light of this, elected women's views on women's rights are very much in line with their needs and reflect the actual reality of their daily lives (Al-Haydar 2012; Shirazi 2010).

Sometimes Saudi society provides women with legal rights that they may not benefit from, and do not even know that they exist as the domestic violence law issued in August 2013 (Al-Sudairy 2017: 85; Al-Yousef 2009: 162-166; Azzahrani 2016: 180). In this context, the poor conditions of women such as violence directed by the husband and the occurrence of marital disputes, and then end up to divorce, prompt women to identify these rights and try to take advantage of them (Joseph 2018: 280-288; see also, Al-Khateeb 2007).

Participant (13) explains her suffering with her husband until she got a divorce; a problem that many other Saudi women face.

> *I am divorced. My ex-husband used to hit me. The problem at the time was that I didn't understand my rights. I didn't realize I could file a complaint with the police, file a case at court, and hire a lawyer. After my divorce, I finally learned about all the options that were available to me. After this experience I took it upon myself to make sure that all women in the country are aware of their rights, and understand that they are guaranteed by law. Unfortunately, most women do not know this.*

Although Shishkina's study (2019) related to the Egyptian situation, it reveals the importance of the political participation of the Egyptian women during the Arab Spring periods compared to previous periods. By analyzing some of the letters of a young Egyptian revolutionary Samiha Razek, the study clarifies that during the Arab Spring in Egypt, the struggle for real and genuine political practice went beyond traditional cultural patterns of gender via using the Internet as a new medium of protest. This means that the changes associated with the Arab Spring have helped to accept practices from participants that were not accepted under normal circumstances (see also, Sadiqi 2016; Shalaby and Moghadam 2016).

Although the Kingdom did not witness a real Arab Spring smilar to what happened in Egypt, Tunisia and Syria, many of the changes that took place in the Kingdom after 2011 were consequences of the Arab Spring and its impacts on the entire Arab world. The approval of Saudi women's participation in the electoral process is in itself a major act resulted from the impacts of the Arab Spring and against the traditional perceptions of Saudi society about the status of women and the nature of their political practices (Karolak 2014: 134-145). This may explain the ability of the previous participant to raise awareness of her rights and the rights of represented women. Rice (2017) emphasizes that political and social frameworks themselves play an important role in changing citizens' awareness, and thus changing their vision and assessment of their daily lives.

Women's response declares that their very special problems have led them to understand the reality of Saudi women and to improve their situation. This is true of many cases of study; it is clear that different experiences on women's rights are either relevant to their lives, or come from their knowledge of other women who have certain social problems. Participant (12) said that:

> *We still must convince females that they have rights and duties towards the society they live in and this will not happen unless we spread awareness, hold conventions, organize workshops, and improve education without breaking any of the laws in the country. Taking care of the moral aspect of our society is of great value and importance to us so it is important to be cautious when implementing change.*

Participant (12) has shown the importance of expanding awareness among women. Without this awareness, Saudi women will not be able to feel the injustice on the one hand and to determine the nature of their rights on the other (Azzahrani 2016) In addition; it revealed the importance of organized work through workshops and conventions, and the development of their own levels of education. These are aspects that I concentrate on in detail when addressing the rights of education and employment.

Saudi women see the existence of rights and duties within the social and legal context of Saudi society. Saudi women want their rights without a struggle against the current Saudi reality and authority and without violating local customs and traditions (Herb 1999; Thombson 2014). In addition, it highlights the importance of a comprehensive view through women to achieve change in the Kingdom and access to their rights.

Although most elected women confirm that their understanding of women's rights support the common social and religious values in Saudi society, they emphasize the importance of their awareness of their different rights and the importance of not imposing the views of others on them. Participant (13) added that:

> *My personality now is much stronger than it was before. My failed marriage as well as other personal events that have happened to me had stopped me from allowing others to impose their opinions, especially negative ones, upon me. At the same time, I adhere to our community standards when it comes to personal freedoms and rights.*

The interplay between personal and public spheres plays a major role in reshaping women's lives and their vision of the world around them. Personal spheres have a direct presence in the lives of women and have many direct and negative consequences. However, in order to recognize and understand the causes of their occurrence, they need to be linked to the public spheres and to identify the roles through which these spheres, directly or indirectly, help to shape the personal spheres for Saudi women (Wray and Rae 2013: viii-xi; and see also, Habermas 1989; Kellner 1999; Ruth 2008).

Elected women in Saudi Arabia are framing the rights of Saudi women by emphasizing their empowerment in the context of male society, which usually does not accept such empowerment and emphasizes the need for women to be subject to men (Al-Yousef 2009; Bystydzienski 1992). Male dominated societies have been against the political empowerment of women, but with the existence of regulations and the enactment of laws in societies, females are now more empowered than ever before (On the legal measures for Saudi women that empower them in many

areas of life see, Al-Yousef 2009: 30-36). This has emphasized the importance of women in the society. With the current and future development, there will be more empowerment for women.

There will also be a new, more socially aware society that will further improve women rights and work towards gender equality. Many elected women have emphasized the importance of community support for their rights; without such support from all social categories of society, it is difficult to achieve a great deal of these rights in a short period of time. Societal acceptance and support of women's rights also plays a major role in facilitating the work of laws and regulations; without such support they become useless and ineffective (Al-Rashidi 2000; Hallawani 1982; Kattan 1991).

The government has supported the elections and the empowerment of women. Even during the reign of the late King Abdullah, there were many attempts to empower women. We saw that women had a tangible presence in the political and social world. We also saw support for court cases related to women and their pursuit of rights. These cases were a taboo. This has now changed. The country has seen significant changes and improvements to the judiciary district which has helped convey the society women rights (Aloulou 2018: 120-151; Maestri and Profanter 2017: 120; and see also, Al-Yousef 2009; Hakem 2015).

Despite the importance of the state and its associated institutions in supporting women and working to empower them, some thinkers believe that they create a kind of authoritarian system through their absolute dominance in the public community sphere, and the legislations and laws it promulgates. The top-bottom approach deprives society from accepting changes affecting women, and of civil society institutions from playing a constructive and effective role in establishing broad-based societal norms that support and defend women (Al-Asaf 2013; Dresch and Piscatori 2013; Guazz and Pioppi 2012; Jones 2017).

In addition, elected women do not only stand for personal rights such as marriage and divorce, but they also talk about public rights such as participation in elections. For them, allowing women to participate in the election is considered a

radical step within the Saudi culture. No one can ignore that this step paved the road to deep social and political changes in the near future in Saudi Arabia.

Women are considered as sacred in a religious culture as the Saudi one, so, when the authority allows them to participate in the election, this reflects political change toward them. The authority has started to deal with women as normal individuals who have their own rights and duties. This new image of women reflects a new attitude toward them, not based on older sacred image (Hamdan 2004). Al-Sudairy said that "In this election Saudi women broke a glass ceiling and were nominated and elected" (2017: 127). Despite the optimistic picture of the participation of Saudi women offered by Al-Sudairy, it reveals the role played by conservative forces towards women's access to their rights. She added:

> *However, during the experience they faced many challenges, which they complained about in the press and social media. Again, conservative religious scholars interfered and issued a Fatwa stating that elections are against Islamic teaching and women are not to take part in them. Some responded to this Fatwa and refused to participate; others were skeptical about it while many went forward (2009: 127).*

Despite the importance of the participation of women in the elections as an inherent right, many elected women stressed the need for time in judging and evaluating this experience, and its impact on the life of Saudi women. Women's participation is a new experience in Saudi Arabia, so they need time to see if women's participation is effective or is it just a matter of formal and prestigious participation. They do not want to encourage them without understanding everything about the council and be able to evaluate their participation. Despite this opinion, they wish more women will participate in any election in the Saudi Society because this will help in changing women's conditions and improve their own situation. Participant (2) said that:

> *I have to say that social and political changes will take some time in Saudi society. We need to do more efforts to convince men about women's rights. In addition, we appreciate King Abdullah's decision to allow women to*

participate in the Municipal election, which I consider is one of the most important steps in the development of Saudi Arabia.

Many participants asserted that Saudi society discriminates against women, and benefits men. However, they believe that this election is a positive step towards improving the conditions of women. Women's rights in Saudi Arabia have improved considerably comparing to parent's generation. Participant (3) said that:

I encourage women to a great extent to participate in any election. Participation in any election will allow women to defend their own rights and shape a front to help more women in Saudi society.

Women have received many rights, especially under the reign of King Abdullah. His reign is considered to be one of the best eras for Saudi women in terms of receiving rights. They still remember what King Abdullah said to them when the members of King Abdulaziz for National Dialogue in Saudi Arabia met him in 2007 "be patient and good things will come to you in the near future" (Hamdan 2004; Jamjom 2013; Thompson 2014). The Kingdom follows the footprints of King Abdullah in empowering women who witness many good things in the near future of the Kingdom. They are very optimistic about their future. Participant (10) said that:

Yes. I think there is social and political mobility to increase women rights and participation in the society from the ruling entity. This is a good step in the right direction. The important thing is that we should continue this path.

In general, the perception of women's rights by elected women does not mean their desire for a radical change of Saudi society as much as working within it and improving its value and legislative structure (Al-Shamsi 2014; Bano 2018). Karakoç (2015: 120-121) describes social and political change in Saudi Arabia as moderate change which interpreted by some as just symbolic; for some it means that traditional values are being eroded. However, many believe that gradual change is necessary to be consistent with Islam. It is quite remarkable how these demands about women's rights issues have created controversies among Saudi women as it did in other Muslim societies.

Participant (9) clarified that:

> *In general, we talked about the necessity of changing women's conditions in our society. We do not want to change the system itself; on the contrary we need to work from within the system itself to improve women's conditions. We know that we live in the male-dominated society, so we try to change our society gradually. I used to discuss many topics as such with my female friends. In general, we discuss social issues such as the relations between husbands and wives, divorced women and her burdens with her children, acquiring more rights for women, and community service.*

Cordesman (2003: 156-160) reveals that social change in Saudi Arabia must be from within the Saudi regime and not in conflict with it. It is easy to imitate Western democracies, and the various human rights associated with them, but then we will discover that this imitation would counter the cultural and religious foundations of society, which could lead to many conflicts and social disintegration in Saudi society.

This does not mean, in my view, that Western democracy and its associated human rights in general, and women's rights in particular, are unfit for implementation in Saudi Arabia, but it means that the Saudi context itself is not prepared to convey these experiences in its entirety and in a quick way. The issue here needs more time and the preparing of the Saudi reality to be able to accept these concepts and gain the ability to live with them (Al-Asaf 2013). Among the rights that we will deal with which we do not find disagreement between the West and East is to ensure that women exercise their rights without male guardianship, and their right to education and work in accordance with their desires and degrees. These rights are what we address in the following points.

2-2 The Right to End Male Guardianship:

Talking about women's rights should move us from the theoretical to the procedural level. It is no longer enough to talk about women's rights day and night without creating effective mechanisms to empower women to obtain their rights. One of the most important demands to improve the reality of Saudi women is to

enable them to obtain their rights effectively. The time has come for Saudi women to find their own theoretical rights that are applied on the ground without being discriminated against by others.

Many of the elected women revealed that one of the most important reasons why Saudi women do not obtain their rights stems from the male- dominated society, which gives the male the right to monitor and control women in many important and trivial matters (Human Rights Watch 2008: 8-12). Male guardianship plays a major role in limiting women's freedom of movement on the one hand and the possibility of taking their own different decisions on the other. This means that the abolition of male guardianship will open the door wide to achieving equality between males and females, and thus women have access to many of their wasted rights. Participant (17) explained:

> *The issue for me is greater than having access to some rights here or there, in that area or sector; it is essentially about the need to get rid of male guardianship. It is known that all women in the Kingdom cannot move or take any decision without the consent of the "wali" "an official guardian" who may be the father, husband, elder brother or any brother, even if the younger brother, in addition to any relative of the family such as uncle or cousin ... etc.*

Alwedinani define male guardianship as "a form of patriarchal system in the Saudi Arabian context" (2016: 12). Under this system, she clarifies that she "was not able to study at university without a consent letter from her father or male guardian" (2016: 12). She "would also have to rely on him to either drive her to the university or provide her with a personal driver" (2016:12). According to Human Rights Watch (2018: 240) women need to obtain permission to travel abroad, obtain passport, marry, or be discharged from the prison. They may be asked also to provide guardian consent to work or access healthcare. This means that women cannot move or take a decision about their life and future without the consent of the male guardian (see also Chamlou 2004: 115-116; Freedman 2015: 113; Holly Words June 2017: 6-7; Tønnessen 2016: 5 and 9).

Alwedinani addresses the issue of male guardianship through a struggle between different participants of traditionalists and modernists in the Kingdom. Depending on a sample of 100 female students and lecturers from two Saudi universities, Alwedinani finds that there is a difference in the issue of male guardianship between traditionalists and modernists. Traditionalists accept male guardianship and its associated restrictions. Some participants assert that the system of guardianship does not represent any oppression for them, and they believe that by obtaining permission from the male guardian they obey Allah and conform to the teachings of Islam. In contrast, modernists believe that Islam equates men and women with rights and duties based on prophetic sayings, and therefore must do what males do in education and employment without permission (2016:119; see also Al-Fraih 2018; Al-Haydar 2012; Diamond and Platter 2014; Human Rights Watch 2008; Kattan 1991).

Many elected women see the need to abolish the guardianship system for women because of the bad and unfair impacts on Saudi women. This system restricts the movement of women and their ability to travel from one place to another, and restricts their ability to take different decisions in relation to their various life affairs. Participant (14) said that:

> *The male guardianship system for females in Saudi Arabia must be eliminated; how can one imagine the necessity of the husband's consent to his wife's entry to the hospital for surgery. And how can one imagine that I need to get the consent of my elder brother to open a bank account and transfer my salary.*

The male guardianship system weakens women's abilities and limits their energies. This system puts women at a low level imposed on them to think only through the guardian. Instead of empowering women, as is often said through the various media, the male guardianship system undoubtedly leads to marginalization of women at all levels because it weakens their various capacities to make decisions about their life and how to cope with them. In the light of the guardian system, it becomes unacceptable to find a young woman who cannot move or go to the bank or sell her property without the consent of a relative. Participant (6) said that:

The male guardianship system makes the normal daily life practices, such as going to a hospital, bank, school, or university, to be important and dangerous practices that require parental consent which makes women's life very hard and difficult.

This means that restricting the movement of women from one place to another affects their dignity and their relations with others around them. Let us take an example here in terms of restricting the movement of women in Saudi Arabia, which is about preventing her from driving the car by herself, relying on her driver, or on a relative like her brother or father. Preventing Saudi women from driving, whether for religious or cultural reasons or a combination of both, certainly affects Saudi women's lives considerably, particularly in their daily life practices. For example, women's lack of driving limits their participation in the 2015 municipal elections and moving to election headquarters.

It also limits the possibility of their participation in the economic aspects of Saudi society and participation in public community life. In addition, preventing them from driving greatly restrict women's public movement and inhibit them from dealing with various places and institutions, or even visit relatives or buys her own things, or even go out for walks and sit in public cafes (Holly Words, June 2017: 8). Participant (1) added:

For example, women dependence on others in their transportation prevents them from doing their own requirements. I support the right of Saudi women to drive their own car, however according to specific regulations and mechanisms issued by official authority. This allowance will help women to do their own business without depending on brothers, relatives and drivers, which is not allowed.

The Guardianship system, in essence, stems from fear and preservation of women at the same time. Guardianship system seems intrinsically well-intentioned but at the end females submit their own will and choice to the dominance of male's world. It has transcended the issue of rights and duties and has become a major

influence on the dignity of women and their regional and global image. Participant (1) said that:

For me, I feel that this system greatly detracts from my dignity. It is hard to imagine that in the 21th century I need my husband's consent in every aspect of my life including travel, obtaining a passport, making surgery, getting married or divorced, buying and selling anything and signing contracts.

The irony is that we may find for example an elderly woman who needs the consent of her husband or brother to approve a treatment trip abroad. The really strange thing is that she needs her husband's consent in order to raise a case against him. How can the offender give the victim his consent to be sued? It is a system against women's dignity.

The main problem concerning women's rights lies in the conflict between what is cultural and what is legal. For example, with regard to the male guardianship law, the government affirms that there is no effective law on the need for women to have parental consent to conduct their own affairs. However, when a woman tries to act independently of the consent of her husband or her family, she finds full opposition from all governmental institutions in the hospitals, at airports and in banks, where they request parental consent. According to Human Rights Watch Report:

The government's role in establishing and enforcing male guardianship and sex segregation is often ambiguous. In most manifestations of these practices, there appear to be no written legal provisions or official decrees explicitly mandating male guardianship and sex segregation, yet both practices are essentially universal inside Saudi Arabia (2008:4; see also Rajkhan, 2014:1-4).

It is the responsibility of the government to issue laws abolishing the status of male guardianship in addition to issuing instructions to all state institutions to implement this law and not to request the consent of the guardian of women. Participant (6) said that:

For me, I believe that issuing new laws for the benefit of women will not change the status of Saudi women in anything. It is important that our male brothers be convinced of the importance of granting women their various rights stipulated in Islamic law.

It seems paradoxical that what happens through the male guardianship law is more related to the cultural aspect than the religious aspects, despite the attempts of many to link it to Islamic values. The status of women in Islam is much better than in Saudi society. What is happening here is that the power of customs and traditions greatly affect the structure of daily life, the perceptions of individuals to each other, and the male perceptions of females, especially if we take into account the tribal structure governing Saudi society so far. In many cases, what is cultural and what is religious is overlapped by its transformation from its ordinary cultural structure to its sacred religious structure (Stenslie 2012: 52; see also, Abdul-Aziz 1994; Alhumaidi 2016; Makki 2011; Oshan 2007)

The size of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the diversity of cultures, customs and traditions, and the influence of the tribe vary from one category to the next, but we always return to the point of awareness and education as well as the establishment of laws and decisions by the state which will reduce these effects. Women's problem is in the category of conservatives and I expect with the next generation and the heightened awareness of the community, this problem will dissolve.

The problem of the male guardianship system is that it establishes a socially acceptable status of discrimination between males and females in Saudi society. This is done by giving men the power to decide the fate of women in Saudi society, determining what is good for them, and what is harmful. According to this system, the destinies of women are determined by the will of men. This system is mainly based on the lack of confidence of men in women. From here, the issue is much deeper than changing this system. It is about building deep and rational trust between both males and females in Saudi society. Participant (3) ended with:

Now all Saudi women's rights organizations are lobbying for the abolition of the male guardianship system. One of the most important measures of this pressure is the use of social media hashtag "#IAmMyOwnGuardian".

In general, these campaigns have succeeded in influencing the Saudi authorities, especially with the wide-ranging changes initiated by Sheikh Sulaiman, and followed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. It led to Saudi women being allowed to drive, as King Salman issued a statement on September 26, 2017 allowing Saudi women to drive in accordance with Shariah rules, with the entry into force of the decision on June 24, 2018. On August 2, 2019, Saudi Arabia allowed women, for the first time, to travel without the consent of a guardian, and granted women more rights with respect to the family.

These decisions significantly limit male guardianship over women. The decrees stipulate that a Saudi passport is granted to "anyone applying for it with Saudi Arabian citizenship" and that anyone over the age of 21 does not need permission to travel. The new amendments allow women for the first time to report births the same as men. The amendments mandated that any of the "parents of the child" be notified of the birth, having previously been confined to the "father of the child". It also allowed women to report marriage or divorce and to obtain family records (Fahim 2019; Hubbord 2019; Rodriguez 2019). These decisions will help Saudi women to move easily, improve their own lives and then increase their education and access to the labor market which I address in the following.

2-3 The Right to Education:

It is impossible to talk about women's rights without asserting their rights to education; it is the basic guarantee for them in expanding their awareness of what is going on around them, and the rights they must obtain. Education is one of the most important rights of women in general and Saudi women in particular. The education of Saudi women has faced many objections associated with the traditional structure of Saudi society. Many have refused to educate their daughters because of the Saudi context, which is often based on narrow and conservative interpretations of Islam.

Jawad clarifies that "Saudi Arabia presents a clear example where Islam has been used to first deny and then discourage women's education" (1998: 26). Religion has been used largely by traditionalists to question the importance of education for females and the need not to leave the house. Traditional clerics have always been based on a narrow understanding of religion, on issues of women's honor and chastity, and the need to carry out the traditional functions associated with marriage and childbearing (Alwedinani 2016: 136-148; see also, Akeel 2010; Al-Mouhandis 1986; Al-Subhi 2016; Al-Yamani 1985; Jawad 1998: 27-28).

Despite this conflict between the traditional and modern visionaries in view of the education of Saudi women, the ruling family, from King Faisal to the present, has played a major role in many of the decisions on building schools for girls and expanding university education (AlMunajjed 1997: 62-63; Alwedinani 2016: 30-32; Vassiliev 2012).

Improving women's awareness is very important issue here especially with the educational level of Saudi women. Education plays a significant role in the life of the Saudi society, especially for women. Education raises the level of awareness of women and increases the different abilities they require for change (Smith and Abouammoh 2013). Al-Sudairy declares that:

> It is true that the introduction of women's official education is one of the aspects of modernization which has affected all society's members. Therefore, major developments, whether social, political, or economic, have influenced the conservative role of Saudi women. That is not to say their progress has been fast and dramatic, but it has been steady and constant (2017:114).

It should be noted that the education of women and their admission now to all universities and to enter all disciplines (Al-Sudairy 2017: 114-118), did not come radical, but has been on the steps since 1960s until now. It is necessary to emphasize the gradual nature of social and political change in Saudi Arabia, which also applies to women and their right to education and employment. Through education, women can learn their own social and political rights.

The very important issue here is that Saudi families themselves, because of the important roles played by the royal family since the mid-twentieth century, are now accepting the education of their daughters in both pre-university and university education. In addition, females have the right to study in universities and to choose the major they like to study. According to Smith and Abouammoh "From 1990 to 2004, female enrollments in Saudi Arabian universities saw an astonishing 512% growth rate- one of the highest worldwide- compared to a male enrollment growth rate of 339.2%" (2013: 121).

Nevertheless, there are a number of structural constraints that still do not give women their full freedom to choose the university they want and to choose the specialization they prefer. On top of these constraints is the difficulty of women's mobility, which makes them enroll in a university close to their area, and their choice of socially acceptable majors for women such as teaching. The issue of sex mingling plays a big role in Saudi Women's life.

Le Renard clarifies that "The representation of women as vulnerable, as well as family restrictions linked to a concern for reputation and gender segregation (visits carefully planned to avoid contact with male household members) complicate meetings between female friends in domestic spaces" (Le Renard 2014: 86). Sex segregation plays also very effective role in determining the specialization that the women will choose. Society rejects majors unfit for women, such as engineering and medical disciplines (Alwedinani 2016:79-115). Although because of such constraints, women have started to understand that choosing their specialization is one of the most important rights from them now. Participant (14) said that:

The right to education does not lie in society accepting female education, but also in society accepting the right of women to choose the university they want to study in and accepting their right to choose the specialization they want to study regardless of the society's prior vision as to whether this specialization is suitable for her or not.

The royal family has played very effective role in encouraging girls' education. Since the reign of King Saud, we have seen a larger interest in the education of

girls where many universities and schools for females were opened. During the reign of King Abdullah, Princess Noura Bint Abdulrahman University was established in Riyadh. It is the world's largest female only university with full facilities and dozens of majors (Held 2015: 469; Smith and Abouammoh 2013: 3). He also appointed women in leadership positions as deputy ministers. Employment for females has been opened in all fields for both the private and public sector.

Through education Saudi women can understand the nature of the society in which they live. Through their daily interactions, they can gain new experiences that help them identify the mechanisms of change they can use. Education is a very important tool for changing the reality of women on the one hand, and the transformation of society as a whole on the other. Participant (4) said that:

> *It is very hard to ignore the role of education in improving Saudi women's conditions. In addition, Education has played very important role in increasing women's awareness of their reality.*

Participant (15) added:

> *Through my experience in literacy programs, I believe that education plays a big role in empowering women and improving their characteristics. The advantage of educated women stems from their easier access to work which not only helps them rely on themselves, but also cope with the burdens of life in a more dependent fashion.*

In regards to the above quotations, it can be said that education is very important in women's life. It helps them in improving their way of thinking and self dependency. This stems from the girl leaving her home for the first time in her life both to go to school and then to university. The girl's exit from her home transforms her from the private sphere, which is directly linked to the closed and self-contained family and kinship traditions, to the public sphere associated with new people and multi-cultures. This leads to the production of new experiences for the girl, which reshapes her mental abilities in the face of the surrounding world. This is not directly about capacity to act and change, but about reshaping mental

structures, and the ability to formulate new and unconventional perceptions of the living world.

Khannous (2011) highlights the changing and fluid nature of women's consciousness according to the temporal change and the nature of the changes they are going through. She says that:

> In order to highlight women's consciousness and agency, we need to recognize that women's identities are fluid rather than fixed, since women have been shown to be able to negotiate the boundaries of identity politics in some social contexts through their contribution in the economic and social spheres of their societies (Khannous 2011: 250).

Women's literacy is not just about reading and participating in everyday life, but also about expanding women's understanding of the world and increasing women's consciousness about their rights (Al-Ali 2000: 153). Also, elected women found education as a very important aspect in women's life. They clarify that education has changed their own life to a good situation. It increases their own awareness and gives them the ability to change their conditions to some extent. Education plays a big role in not only how women see themselves in a society, but also how the society sees women. The higher the education of females, the more likely they will be ambitious, take care of themselves better, run for elections and apply for jobs. The more educated a society is, the more likely it will allow and accept females' ideas and jobs.

In addition, education is very important element in the Saudi renaissance. Without education, it is hard to achieve an effective development in Saudi society. Here, women go beyond their own personal education, focusing on the national importance of education and its ability to develop society as a whole. It is a vision that reflects an extension from limited individual consciousness to a broader, collective, and more influential consciousness of the various capacities of society. Participant (7) said that:

> *I believe that education is critical when it comes to women changing their own reality. In any society, education correlates with improved living*

standards and rights for women. An educated woman is one which is aware of her position in society, and is able to raise awareness to those around her with regards to important social issues. All these aspects inevitably create a general context that cares about society as a whole, thus achieving development for all segments of society, for both men and women.

Remarkably, this vision of the importance of education also coincides with the vision of the political leadership in Saudi Arabia of the development (Al-Mallakh 2014; Bano 2018; Smith and Abouammoh 2013; Wiseman et al., 2014). There is great interest in university education and its role in development. This is particularly evident in sending students abroad for studying. Bano states that:

King Abdullah, who ruled from 2005 to 2015, was a keen reformer. He made major investments in the education sector. One of his most important contributions was to institutionalize a foreign education- scholarship programme for both men and women. This generous scholarship programme has opened up unprecedented opportunities for Saudi women (Bano 2018: 58).

Saudi women are highly aware of the value of education in their participation in the electoral process. Without education, they will not be able to meet the requirements of the electoral process, nor will they be able to understand the requirements of the voters and the community to which they belong. Education pushes the aspirations of women to the horizons they could not imagine for themselves. These prospects are the product of the intellectual and realistic spaces created by education. Hence, the idea of participating in elections could not have come to the mind of women without the formulation created by education and the various aspects associated with it. Participant (1) said that:

In addition, without education, women will not be able to participate in any coming election in the Saudi society. My job and educational experiences qualify me to have membership in the consultative council, however I decided that it's best for me to start by running for the municipal council, and later on I can move to the consultative council.

Through education, women are also aware of the acquisition of the various skills they convey from understanding societal aspects to the state of acting and helping women to obtain their rights; education, over time, moves women from the level of action to practice. The importance of educating women is not only one of the fundamental rights of the universal charters, but also that education is the first step in the departure of girls from home and dealing with new worlds far from their families (Thompson 2014; Wiseman et al., 2014). Participant (14) said that:

I participated in the election to support my goal of helping others. Working in the Municipal Council allows me to understand the real needs of my community and articulate more plans to improve people's conditions.

An important aspect in which education helps women is to maximize their ability to communicate with others through social media. It also opens up new spheres that were previously unavailable, helping women out of their own spheres to other public spheres (Al-Mohsen 2006; Beitler and Martinez 2010: 67-70; Chang et al., 2011: 92-93). If education has allowed women to leave the home to school or university, and create new spatial spheres of social interactions that have gone beyond family and kinship, the Internet has allowed women to connect with the outside world, and to create new relationships, friendships and contexts without leaving their home. Participant (3) explained in detail the importance of education in communication with others through internet and social media. She said that:

Education helps women to use the internet and social media. Without education, women will not be able to establish her account on Facebook or Twitter and will not be able to communicate with other women. So, education is not a matter of having university degree as it is an issue which helps women to be involved in a good way in the world around them.

Most elected women showed that there was a positive relationship between parents' education and their acceptance of their daughters' education. The more the father is educated, the more he accepts the idea of educating his daughters, and even insists on sending them to schools and universities. Participant (11) said that:

My father had a bachelor degree in Arabic language, and he was a teacher in very famous school called "Generation School." Also, my mother supported me, and she also had a high school degree. Of course, my parents' educational level made them accept the idea of my nomination for the municipal council.

Women are very lucky now in our society compare to the older generation. We can see that there is continuous improving of women conditions from time to time. If we compare between our generation and parents' and grandparents' generation, we will find big differences between them in regards to level of education, knowledge and participation in labor market (Altorki and Cole 1998: 48-50).

One cannot ignore the importance of improving the Saudi education. The development of education, curriculum, and the teachers will help create a society where both males and females understand their rights and duties. The previous generation was, to a large extent, uneducated when it comes to women rights. The reason for this could be attributed to the generation before them, and the one before that, and so on. It is important that we end this cycle and create cultural change.

Families should not interfere in determining the type of university study for their daughters, noting that there are specific specialties of their own such as the study that qualifies them to be a teacher later. It is time for us to go beyond defining specific disciplines for both males and females; women may be work as engineers, doctors, pharmacists, computer scientists, etc. The reality proves that women can work in any field, and that these educational divisions are mainly societal and cultural ones.

The right to choose the type of education and specialization gives women special abilities that are primarily related to their right to choose and self-determination. They also give them the ability to discover themselves and learn their own abilities; mainly to study what they love and what they desire. Education is linked to opening new horizons for women's work and providing them with employment opportunities, which we address in the next point.

2-4 The Right to Work:

The right of women to education is also linked to their equal access to employment. Education and work are interrelated and cannot be separated. Without the possibility of creating jobs for women, their education becomes irrelevant.

The same problems that women face in education apply to different fields of work. The beginnings of women when leaving their houses for education and work were not socially acceptable, as they were met with much opposition associated with the conservative societal context. Hallawani's study shows the difficulties faced by working women at the family and community level, such as family problems, relations with husband, child care and also related to the difficulties of moving and transportation from home to the workplace. In addition, the study deals with work-related problems, gender segregation problems, and communication constraints in the work structure. The study finds that Saudi society is still opposed to women going out to work because of the resulting problems (Hallawani 1982; see also Alyamani 1985).

Despite the difficult beginnings associated with women's employment and education, social changes, particularly the expansion of education and various development programs, have played a significant role in societal acceptance of women's work. Despite many misinterpretations of Islam, which some clerics in Saudi Arabia contend prohibit women's work and prohibit then from leaving their home, the state has encouraged women through its various development plans to work in all activities. Al-Sudairy states that although there is misinterpretation of the Quran:

> This did not stop the government from taking further steps to empower women, nor has it stopped women from advancing on their paths to employment. Women for the first time worked in journalism, banks, and customs among many other choices. Lately women have started to work as salespeople and cashiers, too (Al-Sudairy: 48).

Despite what Al-Sudairy says about the diversity of areas in which Saudi women can work, this does not hide the existence of specific areas where women work, such as education, health services and the public sector. The interesting issue here is that many Saudis see public sector employment linked to the government as less shameful than working in private sector employment (Tlaiss and Elamin 2016: 147). Despite the significant expansion of university education for Saudi women and their entry into the labor market, women's employment rates are still small compared to their numbers. Tlaiss and Elamin state that "more than 33 per cent of Saudi females were unemployed in 2003. Saudi women represent a mere 20 per cent of the Saudi workforce and are mostly employed by the public sector" (2016: 147).

In her study of women in Saudi Arabia, Al-Munajjed deals with issues related to the status of women in Saudi society and identifies their roles in the development process. She chooses education and work as topics for women outside their home and the affect education and work have on the traditional roles of Saudi women as wife, mother and housewife. Al-Munajjed selects a sample of 100 Saudi women in Jeddah from different social, economic and educational levels. She has in-depth interviews on the importance of education and work as well as the role of the hijab and Islam in their lives. The study concludes that there is a strong relationship between education and work; the higher the level of education, the more women seek paid work commensurate with their educational qualifications (AL-Munajjed 1997). Participant (17) asserts that:

> *Certainly, the higher the level of education of women, the more it helps them to understand their rights, including their right to obtain employment commensurate with their level of education. There is a big difference between those who have a bachelor's degree and those who have a master's or doctoral degree, not to mention years of work experience, and the level of attendance at various workshops that raise the level of expertise.*

Abdulmohsen's study reveals that there are tremendous shifts in women's employment in Saudi Arabia, specifically in Jeddah. It finds that the Saudi authorities allowed women to work in very visible positions in sales and the Shura

Council without the consent of the male guardian. The study reveals that the changes in the field of work for women create enormous social changes throughout the Saudi society in terms of societal and family acceptance of their work, and change the structure of values, norms and standards associated with the status of women. These social changes then lead inevitably to political changes in Saudi society, including the greater participation of women and the promotion of the related human rights demands (Abdulmohsen 2018).

In this context, it is necessary to affirm the right of women to work and to obtain all the financial and moral benefits guaranteed by the law from fair wages and holidays, especially during periods of pregnancy and lactation, in addition to good working conditions. Education is important not only in broadening women's perceptions but also in helping women to find a job that suits their qualifications. Also, education allows woman to be able to obtain a decent job, which can increase her economic standards, and make her independent. Female education and employment have played a major part in improving their situation. It has removed them from the traditional roles of women in the society. Participant (11) said that:

> *I think education is very important element in women's life. It plays very essential roles in improving their awareness about their own lives and their own society. The most important element of education is that it helps women ensure their future by finding good and decent jobs. For me, I found both education and working are very important, but the later is more important because it allows women to have the ability to improve their own lives outside the world of male's dominance and mistreatment.*

Work gives women the ability to become independent from the family and gives them the ability to face men. This situation creates a new circumstances that women have never been used to before. Despite the prevailing customs and traditions governing the status of women in Saudi Arabia and the difficulties associated with the possibility of independence, the work and the financial return associated with it gives them new capabilities to ensure that they express themselves and overcome the injustices they face (Wilcke 2012).

Education helps women gain employment and income, which helps them become independent. The formation of women's blocs in the elected councils will help women claim their rights and improve their social conditions. It is not possible to talk about ideological pluralism among candidates for the municipal council. The Saudi society is still a conservative society linked to conservative religious perceptions that cannot be isolated. In this context, the importance of women's work here is underscored by its preservation of conservative social and religious aspects (Ramady 2016:99).

The right of women to work is also an important right enshrined in the universal legislation and guaranteed by constitutions and laws. Hence, the state should also provide women with various educational opportunities to provide them with suitable employment opportunities that are compatible with their university degree.

Despite the large and varied roles of the Government in creating employment opportunities for women, the opportunities available to them are less than that available to men. Job-related programs are also more valid for men than for women, giving them more opportunities than women (Al-Munajjed 1997:100). Despite the significant improvement in the status of working Saudi women, whether through opportunities available to them or their higher level of equality with males or improving the work environment, it still remains subject to the expansion of their ability to participate politically in Saudi society, thus supporting their ability to claim more rights that improve the status of women.

2-5 The Right to Political Participation:

Political rights are one of the most important rights of individuals in human societies. The list of these rights includes the right to participate in public and political decision-making, to participate in public referendums, to stand for election in the bodies formed by voting, to obtain a position in public office, to assume government functions at all levels, and to contribute to non-governmental organizations. In general, it can be said that political rights ultimately mean the right to participate in all aspects of different fields, consciously and freely (Amnesty 2018; Beitz 2009; Biju 2005).

Societies differ among themselves in relation to their human rights record, some societies have made significant achievements in the field of human rights and their work, and others still have some limited achievements. Despite the concern of many countries in the world for human rights, the situation in the Arab world is still relatively weak compared to other regions, and Saudi Arabia is not an exception in this regard from other Arab countries (Al-Jabri 2009; Haddad and Al-Hindy 2019; Mayer 2013). The issue of human rights and the politics surrounding human rights is a new arena for Saudi people in general and for women in particular (Propst 2017).

In his study of modernization and social mobility and their impact on the restructuring of social and political structures in the Arab world, Al-Falah (1987) argues that political systems in the Arab world do not allow other groups to acquire part of the political space, allowing them to participate politically. The ruling authorities use many elements that allow them to dominate the political space, ranging from material incentives, job offers and cooptation through corruption to political repression, exile and even execution. However, Al-Falah insists that some Arab regimes are more socially and politically active and mobile than others (see also, Carothers 2010: 239; Herdstveit and Hveem 2004; Solo 2014). Participant (18) said that:

> *Politics is a topic of ignorance to us. When entering the election, I was supported from my family after they learned females could run for the municipal council.*

The main areas in which women find room to work are, to some extent, social and charitable work in the Kingdom. This trend is supported by the conservative nature of society and the prevalence of religious orientations (Shalaby 2008). Participant (1) added:

> *It was necessary to expand the space of social and political work for women by expanding their various rights. Social work still needs more efforts in Saudi Arabia. We need to give people more space to participate in social and political activities.*

The political space surrounding women is very limited in view of its association with relatives and friends, and does not infringe upon the larger societal environment, including the male community. The world of women is very limited and small, and it is linked to the nature of their limited relationships of family members, relatives and possibly the tribe. Again, conservative aspects of society determine the nature of the contexts in which women deal (Thompson 2017). Participant (10) clarified that:

Discussion of the topic to run for this position started off with close friends and relatives. I then expanded the circle and talked to other friends and people I trusted at work. This discussion process was mostly done between other females and I. The nature of the Saudi society would have made it difficult and audacious to talk to other males, especially on this topic.

With regard to political rights, Saudi women believe that their service to the community to which they belong is part of their political rights and an important role for them in the development of the society. Many elected women asserted that when they were running for the elections, they were mostly thinking about serving the community. They weren't too worried or too concerned about representing the Saudi women. They were mostly delighted to be part of this process.

For them, the perception of women about the elections did not mean to them a kind of political change or contribute to the development of Saudi society, as it was a feeling of participation in a national event linked to the State. Even so, the formation of these national sentiments and the feelings of the elected women that they are part of a major event is itself a qualitative change in the political awareness of these women and it will inevitably lead to more political participation by women (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Aldakheel 2012; Azzahrani 2016; Eum 2014).

Although the Municipal Election is very important event in Saudi Arabia, it is still early to see how this election will affect the Saudi society. Considering this is the first time that there are females as elected officials, we can predict that this will help improve that status of females in the society and increase the respect toward them. Through the increase in the number of elected women, we could see the

creation of more organizations that seek to the betterment of females in the society and increase their involvement in the society. Participant (15) clarified:

Elections are a good step on the road to change in the Saudi society, and must be dealt with within this context, without amplifying the event. It also requires community acceptance of women running in the election. The refusal of my brothers to enter this election confirms this face. Plenty is linked back to gender which impairs women progress in society.

This means that despite King Abdullah's decision to allow women to nominate and vote in municipal councils, there is social dissent that goes back to society's perception of women that restrict them based on conservative traditions and misinterpretations of Islam (AlMahraj 2019:102-104; Diamond and Plattner 2014; Samin 2013; Shalaby 2008; Shaw et al.,1987; Walker 2018:271).

Given the evidence from the interview data, and examination of the relevant literature on Saudi contemporary politics and history, it is unlikely that these elections will affect Saudi society significantly. Women still have many years to change the Saudi reality to be in their favour. However, the elections undoubtedly allow the Saudi state to present a more acceptable image to Western societies in which women's rights are more recognized.

These elections are in favor of social changes rather than political changes. In general, the Saudi citizens don't care about politics as much as they care about improving their living conditions. Most Saudi women do not have any political inclinations. Even if they talk about politics, they talk in a limited domain within their own private Majles. Politics is not a public issue of discussion in the Kingdom. Their essential inclinations, as those of other Saudi women, are humane more than being political or economic. They try as much as they can to avoid talking about politics in the Kingdom and focus on social activities (about the role of Majles see, Matejka 1983).

Most female candidates have previous experience with civil service work through charities or similar organizations. This type of activity is consistent with the nature of the Saudi society, which is very interested in charity work on purely religious

grounds. Therefore, the inherent reason for the involvement of women candidates is mainly to help the community by aiding those in need, and, to an extent, help in the developing of the community's infrastructure through maintenance and garbage removal. Al-Sudairy says that "the Saudi women was socially active for a long time, and still is today, especially as part of a society that has charity as one of its Islamic principles" (2017: 52; see also Fadaak and Roberts 2018: 175-176).

However, despite the fact that most of the elected women confirmed that they played a social role and keep away from the political role, they saw the municipal elections as very important for the benefit of Saudi women. Elected women encourage more women to participate in any coming election. They think it is a good opportunity for women to participate in any social and political event, especially after the political leadership allowed them to be part of the societal changes.

According to them, if the political sphere allows women participation in every aspect of Saudi society, they hope that there will be gender diversity within all social and political positions within Saudi Arabia, and not only in several regions. They see the need for special Ministry for Women, which will be led by a woman as exists in other countries. In addition to their suggestion of establishing a Ministry for Women, they believe that if women are properly empowered, they can produce great results. All of the above reflects an evolution in political awareness, perhaps in its infancy, and perhaps imperceptible, for Saudi women combining faith in women's abilities with the need to establish the various organizations needed to support and defend them (about the improving of Saudi women's awareness see, Al-Abied 2012; Al-Fraih 2018; Al-Haydar 2012; Janbi 2018).

The elected women see the space of political work as a way to develop the community in which they live and to meet the demands of citizens. Many of them said that they see their areas need a lot of work to be done in order for it to be improved. They believe that more and more women should be partners with men in increasing the development of their own community. They asserted the women's rights in making decision and improving their own area and their own situation. According to them, it is not only men's right but also women's right.

Women's rights should include their participation in social activities, especially in the volunteer jobs. Participant (14) explains how she benefited from her volunteer jobs with many NGOs. She said that:

I dedicated most of my time to participate on the "Ensan (Human) Association for Orphans Care" forum and read what is posted on their site. I participated on the site by giving them my suggestions to improve their site in general and their forum. After a period of time, some people from this association called me and asked me to work with them to manage the forum. I accepted this offer. I was promoted to their social media administrator. During my job, I used to receive many enquiries from university students to work as volunteers in the association or any other field in the association which helps in serving women and society at the same time. These inquires increased job potentials in the association, so we hired more women to work with us and we created new jobs for specific tasks. We called our group "A Smile of Hope", and we registered it officially in the ministry of Labor and Social Work. We have done many things during this time. Every group has a specific task. One visits women associations; another visits people in need. Some of these groups visit cancer and kidney patients. In addition, some groups care about visiting elder people. Some groups also collect foods and clothes from businessmen and some banks and from people who like to participate in charity and support the poor.

Women engage in social work through many activities and fields. Social work allows women to connect with large segments of the community and helps women build their own good electoral base through direct contact with the public. The elected women organized donation events in specific ways and distribute what they collect to the poor families and people in need. In addition, they visited prisoners' families either during religious occasions or during the year. They announced the visit date on social media to encourage individuals and community in general to participate in such charity campaigns. This helps in devoting volunteer work (Afif 2010; Thompson and Quillian 2017; 299-317). Elected women think election was very important issue for Saudi women. Also, they think

women cannot achieve any political change in the Kingdom without achieving social and cultural change. And to achieve the later, women should be involved in social activities with other different social groups in society and this will help them to start their political activities after that.

 The election is a very good step of improving women's conditions in Saudi Arabia. It is a good experience to be part of an important event. For many people around the world, this event may look normal for them, but for us here in Saudi Arabia, it is very important and reflects the leadership will of changing the Kingdom, especially women's conditions.

Municipal elections will not affect the Saudi society, at least for now. It was a good and new experience for women, but talking about its impact needs time especially if I were to evaluate it. The election has given the elected women a lot of experience. It was very difficult to think about it before, and to compete with men in these places. Female members of the Shura council were appointed to represent the women and to discuss women's rights issues, study them, and then raise them to the presidency of the council to vote before being submitted to the King for final approval.

Women's rights need deep social and political change in Saudi Arabia to be able to find wide political sphere in the country. Participant (9) explains the story of her grandfather and shows that how he was very important factor in changing people's mind which led them to send their daughters to schools.

> *I remember when I was studying in the King Saud University, I wrote my graduation research about "Girls' Education during King Faisal". During my research, I read one fatwa about prohibiting females from working as nurses. This rhetoric is extremely similar to what we are seeing now from the new Sheik regards the elections. In the past, my grandfather went to the Riyadh to convince people about the importance of female education in my Area. He was encountered by many sheiks who denounced his ideals. What surprised me the most in my grandfather's story is that after he convinced many people about the importance of education, he was surprised by the*

Sheiks criticism of his new concepts and ended up discouraging other people from sending their daughters to schools. Some even went beyond that and started tarnishing his family's reputation.

Unfortunately, the opposition came not only from the Saudi religious men but also from beneficiaries themselves. Political and social changes do not only need new liberal Fatwas, but also needs strong support from ordinary people. Although ordinary people started off by criticizing her grandfather, they ended up imitating him by sending their daughters to schools. In times of deep political and social changes, we need strong pioneers such as the grandfather of the elected woman who supported his daughters and insisted on sending them to school ignoring the dominant role of traditional people in the area (Hoodfar and Ghoreishian 2012: 244; Shaw et al., 2018;).

What draws attention to the issue of women's rights is that women, in getting their rights, play a significant role in convincing other members of society that they will not do anything that is detrimental to the culture of society and its Islamic regulations. This tendency of justification is always found in all cases of study. It reveals to a great extent that Saudi women's quest for their rights is still very much related to the general framework surrounding them. They sought to get their own rights within this framework and not outside it. This may be in line with the Western women's pursuit of the beginnings of the feminist movement, which was done through the legal frameworks of Western capitalist societies and not outside them (Eisenstein 2010; Ferree et al., 2001; Ford 2017; Kiraly and Tyler 2015; Marilley 1996).

All elected women belong to the middle class. Most of them have a university degree and work in the government. They have a bachelor degree from different Saudi universities mainly in social sciences and business administration.

Many participants asserted that what they learned from being a member in the Municipal Council is that social and political changes should be achieved step by step in the society. It is important to change women's conditions and achieve equality between men and women, but they affirmed that they cannot achieve such

things without understanding the culture and traditions. Many of them confirm that they live with Islamic traditions, which they should not ignore and should accept and respect.

Being elected in this election will encourage many women to participate in the coming elections and empower them in the Saudi society. This will be seen not only in elections and voting processes but also in other fields such educational and cultural fields. In addition to this, women will be able to have more jobs with equal pay with men. Many elected women have stressed that participation in the current elections, despite the limited impact will open the door significantly for future generations to participate in any upcoming elections. In addition, they believe that such participation will greatly improve women's gains in education, employment and other rights.

Municipal elections have played a significant role in women's interaction with each other on the one hand and with the rest of the community in which they live on the other hand. This election may have created a new political space for women through which they could express themselves and think for themselves and for the society they want to develop.

Women used to meet each other in one of their houses. In Saudi Arabia, we have two places of meeting, one for males and the other for females, which we call Majles. We do not allow different gender mingling. Sometimes, if we work at the same governmental institution, we would meet in the office during the break and discuss anything we want to talk about. We benefit from the Majles because of the discussions amongst each other. Some male and female relatives can help each other. The Majles itself represents one of the most important meetings in the Gulf countries in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular, which allows us to share and discuss new information about the Kingdom and about our own community (Majles, a Cultural and Social Space 2015; Al-Hameli 2016).

Saudi society is still a tribal society. Therefore, the decision to participate in the elections is not purely an individual decision, as it derives its approval, and the required support from the family and then the tribe. This is not only about women,

but also about men. This family issue exists not only in the Gulf States, but also in all Arab countries, where family power still plays a huge and enormous role in the lives of its members, from education to marriage. It is a societal cultural issue that has its advantages and disadvantages.

In the previous election, many candidates succeeded because of their tribal support, not because of their high education, wide experience, or their adequate qualifications. Although the Kingdom has tried to melt these tribal identities into focusing on the citizenship, it has relatively failed to achieve such an important task (Al-Subhi 2016; Abdul-Aziz 1994; Jones 2017; Kéchichian 2012; Samin 2013; Stenslie 2012:54-55).

It can be said that women played a major role in the election of female candidates, although it is not possible to deny the role of some men in the election of women, and even promote them. Through their social media account, the elected women were able to figure out the main differences between males and females in their support for them. Women have supported them, and they have many reasons for that. They found in their candidacy a new step of change, and a new way of being equal with men.

Women can understand what the elected women need to succeed more than men can. This does not mean that men did not help the elected women; on the contrary, some of them helped to a great extent. Although, most of them do not accept the idea of female participating in the election, a few of them supported this idea and encouraged women to participate in the election. There are many reasons of their refusal of women's participation in the election; the first and more important reason is related to religious considerations. Many see the election is a non-Islamic idea. It is a Western idea and it has no relationship with Islam and the Saudi culture. The second element here is that many find elections against Saudi traditions, specifically for women. In addition to these factors, many people do not believe from the beginning in the election since they do not think it will change anything in the Saudi society.

There are many impacts of the election on the Saudi society although one cannot feel it or see it until now, but it will take some time until it significantly affects the Saudi society. Allowing women to publicize their names, programs, ideas, and their own information is a notable event in Saudi Arabia. With such deep social change among tribes and families, the Saudi authorities will be able to accelerate the national political change. There will be no real social and political changes in the Kingdom without changing women's conditions (Al-Rasheed 2017: 64-65; Karolak 2014; Kéchichian 2013: 129-130).

In this context, Saudi women have acquired a high degree of awareness, at least in theory, of the importance of their effective participation in the elections and the importance they have in taking decisions regarding the political and social decisions necessary to change the reality surrounding them. Participant (10) said that:

> *I decided to run for elections based on my belief in my merit and ability to offer plenty to the improvement of my city. I learned plenty about the municipality council duties and responsibilities through my friends, family and other contacts. They informed me about the importance of the council and why it would be great to have people who really cared about the city elected into it. I was concerned about running against some of the men in the circuit for two main reasons. The first was that the idea of a female running wouldn't have sat well with plenty. The other was that many of the men who were running had good platforms and campaigns, they were tough competition.*

Despite the participation of Saudi women in the elections and the success of some of them, Saudi women still feel the weakness of the roles they play, and the rights obtained as a result, especially after their participation in the sessions of the Municipal Council. Elected women asserted that they did not have deep experience after being member in the Municipal Council. Till now they participated in gender-separate meetings with other members. They discussed many needs of their community such as street cleaning, but this does not satisfy them till now. They have many other ambitious projects for their community such as focusing on

working with women of special needs, such as single mothers, divorced women, and the disabled.

It is important for Saudi women to be part of any activities in her society. Participant (3) said that:

There was a campaign online ten years ago was called "my country". I was a member of this campaign and I signed on the petition which support this campaign. The main content of this petition was to allow Saudi women to participate in the Shura council. We asked to meet the King and he agreed about meeting him and agreed about the petition and issued royal decree of allowing women to participate in the Shura Council in the coming elections." She added that *"I am a member in Literature Club and cultural meeting at my home. Also, I have direct contact with many people in my area and participate in any dialogue and discussion, especially what are related to the women.*

Women asserted their participation in social activities and in helping women in need. Many of the elected women have been social activists for years. They have plenty of social projects for females and youth. They are also a member in multiple charity organizations. These social activities have made them ponder the idea of institutionalizing this charity to work through the municipal council and hence, run for the election. Participant (12) explained:

Because I am a social activist, I have a large presence in many of the activities and projects that relate to the improvement of my country. Since I am a social activist, I have a presence in the community, and I love to participate in any shape or form. For it is our duty to participate in all matters concerning our country and our government.

When anything happens to the homeland or the citizens, the elected women started campaigns to help, for example, what they did with the 2009 floods in Jeddah. A group of activists and many candidates campaigned on Facebook to participate in helping citizens who were harmed and to stand with them and their loses and help them. They succeeded in forming a ground team and traveled from many Saudi

areas to the city of Jeddah. They received a thank you note from the community in Jeddah and from their provinces (Danforth 2016: 182; Tammar 2017: 156-157).

An important aspect related to political rights is the presence of various seminars and workshops that prepare women for political work helping them to run in different elections, and develop electoral plans that help them to win. Participant (12) said that:

> *The election process was professional in the sense of the word. A while ago, I attended a workshop in one Arab country about the elections and observed the elections, and I benefited a lot from them. The knowledge I gained there helped me to win. I used to put aside an hour a day to read the administrative regulations for the elections and the candidate and so on.*

Moreover, women's political rights have the potential to participate in any elections in the Saudi society, with ways and means to help them organize their electoral campaign and to take all the measures and means they deem appropriate to help them win. Participant (12) said that about her experience in the election,

> *My team was formed and the time for nomination came. Certain procedures were required and completed in a smooth manner due to the time I put forward into studying the process beforehand. Through my experiences in the institutions and associations in which I worked and still work, I chose a practical and organized team. We prepared the media and material plan and facilitated many difficulties we faced. Creating a team with skills and merit makes winning the voter over easier than not.*

Despite using these mechanisms, women are aware that, historically, political space is reserved for men. They therefore begin social work as a privileged space for them, in order to enter into political space and compete with men in its activities. The political space that tries to empower women is characterized by the conflict between the government's desire to do so and the desire of some conservative groups not to permit this to happen. Like any other society, Saudi society has many different ideologies such as liberalism and conservatism. But Saudi Arabia's conservatism may have been more dominant than other ideologies,

despite some change in recent years backed by political leadership. Participant (12) said that:

> *The state has decided to involve women in various fields, but some individuals in society go against the current. The state considers some groups in society and the state cannot be singled out by a decision that reflects the wishes of society. The state has taken positive decisions, but fear of the reaction of some individuals.*

While the state is playing an important role in improving the social and political conditions of women, as recently demonstrated in King Salman's decisions which allow women to travel without male consent, social media is another variable upon which Saudi women have relied to improve their living conditions and create new spaces as we will address in the next chapter.

Conclusion:

This chapter ended with an important set of findings related to changes in Saudi society in general, and the impact on Saudi women in particular. Saudi women continue to focus their various rights on the social aspects of public work, philanthropy and helping the poor and needy. This can be linked to the majority of members of Saudi society, men and women, poor and rich.

Saudi society is a society closely linked to the ruling family - firstly, a society linked to the tribal structure, and secondly, a conservative society closely associated with religious concepts that emphasize obedience to the guardian and finally, a society that avoids sedition. Therefore, it is emphasized by the majority of elected women that the municipal elections are in fact aimed at improving the social status of women exclusively. Nevertheless, elected women are very aware of the importance of elections and that they represent a major event that should be utilized and invested in order to gain more rights in the future.

The importance of this development in women's awareness is that it is inseparable from their understanding of their status as an educated and working woman at the same time. All Saudi elected women emphasized the importance of education and

its significant role in raising the level of awareness of women on the one hand, and its role in providing decent jobs for them on the other. This chapter has clarified that women are always keen to emphasize that any social or political practice on their part takes place within the framework of preserving Saudi customs, traditions and values and not against or opposing them.

Although the views of the elected women are clear about the nature of the rights they wish to obtain, some of which relate to society and others to the state and their trends, the responses of these women demonstrate a great deal of volatility and ideological uncertainty in determining opinions and decision-making. This is the same conclusion we reach in the previous chapter on the democratic situation in the Kingdom. Women elected are highly aware of the anti-women's rights conditions in Saudi Arabia. They recognize that they cannot act without male guardianship, perceive the extent of injustice against them in the context of educational and employment opportunities, and also recognize the societal outlook that restricts their freedoms, but despite all this awareness, they are consciously or unconsciously constrained by their general societal framework.

Hence, the elected women often interpret their positions and understanding of Saudi reality as being within a social rather than a political context. They seem to be in a state of ambivalence, part of them with change and the other against it. In general, the liberal changes taking place in the Kingdom may help women in the coming years to clearly define their ideological positions for change at the expense of inertia. Until this happens, women will suffer more intellectual and ideological tension, especially given the high frequency of use of the Internet and social media, which gives them more intellectual and cognitive abilities, which I address in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

The Role of Social Media in

the Elected Women's Life

Introduction:

The previous two chapters ended with the limited democratic practices in the Kingdom, and hence the limited human rights available to the Saudi citizen in general, and to women in particular. It turned out that this limitation is linked to the conservative nature of Saudi society on the one hand, and the rigidity of the political mobility on the other. In other words, the absence of political participation and other related political rights is not only linked to the political structure of the Kingdom, but also to customs, traditions and male domination. This stresses the need for a comprehensive vision of Saudi society when studying the nature of the political structure and the weakness of the associated transformations.

This situation creates limited social and political spheres available to citizens. Traditional spheres such as family, relatives, and tribe, as well as a group of friends, are commonly found. This means that the world to which the individual belongs is closer to the primary groups from which his/her derives socialization, values and behaviors. In this context, the space of civil society and the capacity it provides through the possibility of communicating with others and the formation of socially and politically active community-based organizations are narrowing.

Of course, the limited democratic practices permitted by the Kingdom have changed to some extent, even if this is at the level of citizen awareness of the surrounding environment locally, regionally and globally. Modernization has created new spheres of consumption, travel abroad and dealing with expatriates, in addition to following newspapers, magazines, television, radio and satellite channels. All these means helped the citizen to connect with new worlds that were not used before.

It is therefore difficult to say that the Saudi citizen has not changed compared to older generations. But what is important here is how these enormous material changes have influenced his/her own structure of thought and how he/she has created new spheres in which he/she can look forward to social and political participation in the Kingdom. Like any human society, a change in intellectual mental structures takes a long time to have force. This will be revealed in the coming years, especially in light of the wide spread of the Internet and social media, which we try to identify the magnitude of its impact in Saudi society, especially on the elected women in the present chapter.

The current chapter examines the role of social media in helping the elected Saudi women to communicate with their community. It clarifies how social media has greatly facilitated the engagement of elected women with other women in their community, and this has saved time and expense. But before that, it is important to explain how social media is used, how it affects the lives of Saudi people in general, and Saudi women and the elected women in particular.

1- The Impacts of Social Media:

Social Media can be defined as the modern means by which users can establish their virtual relationships with other individuals or with other groups. There are dozens of definitions associated with the means of communication, which calls for the adoption of a broad definition of social media, including the description of their function and types. Takran and Ylmaz, allow us to have such definition. They define social media as:

> the social platforms which the users share their knowledge, manners, fields of interests through internet or mobile phones. These social platforms include, generally, chat rooms, discussion forums, location based services, social network services, social directories, social labeling, weblogs, podcasts, video cast, wiki, Facebook, and twitter (2015: 201; see also about many other definitions of social media, Asencio 2015:xxviii-xxix; Kim 2016:9; Langmia 2013:3-4)

Social Media relies on the Internet and the enormous capabilities it offers for direct and instant communication (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Diga & Kelleher, 2009; Kietzmann et al., 2011). It "includes social networks like Facebook, Micro-

blogging, services like Twitter, video services like YouTube, platforms for social collaboration, and other social services or software" (Bühler et al., 2016: 106). In our modern world, individuals may not be interested in focusing on social media as a process and the magnitude of its effects as a whole on them, as much as they focus on its related means such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp and other means that help them communicate with others.

In all human societies, large proportions of individuals use social media. This may be due to many life activities that use the Internet, in schools, universities and the most of government and private institutions. In addition, the proliferation of personal computers and Smartphones has helped to use social media easily. Individuals have also found the use of these tools a great deal easier to get information, discussions and get to know the world around them. This is very different from traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television.

Social media can spread information with a great deal of speed compared to traditional means (Haddow and Haddow 2014: 122-123; Magnani et al., 2013: 411; Steiner 2012: ix-xii). In addition, it is characterized by quick communication among different people. It greatly facilitates interpersonal communication, as only the Internet and a device are needed. With the availability of laptops and Smartphones, it becomes easier to communicate between people, both within a country and around the world.

It is important to emphasize that the Internet has helped individuals to have information everywhere locally and globally. One of the most important drivers of globalization is the wide spread of the Internet across the world and the associated cross-border social media, which has created a new front for globalization, where people of different cultures, social and political views, can freely engage in debate (Lule 2017; Schroeder 2018; Sorrells 2015).

The Internet allows people to follow news in many areas around the world related to social and political issues, from reliable news outlets. One can find many discussions and debates with regards to social and political topics online as in Twitter. Checking the reliability and truthfulness of the claims and statements

provided within a debate, is also very important issue related to modern social media. Despite the importance of media for political and social discussions, particularly Twitter and Facebook, and despite the very large number of studies conducted on these two tools in particular, it is difficult to make a specific assessment on the role of these means in developing the political awareness of individuals, and whether these methods raise individuals have a particular political orientation, or change their way of thinking or attitudes. These individuals enter these sites to prove their point of view, and try to influence others to accept it. (Bruns et al., 2015: 75-77).

Perhaps this, too, makes many studies underscore the intensity of the debate on social media, and its association with conflict and hostility. In general, no specific assessment can be made of the impact of social media use on individuals, particularly with regard to political and ideological trends. But the current study asserts that what happens on social media is a mirror, to some extent, of what is happening in reality (Schaur 2018: 11-19; and see also, Farrar-Myers and Vaughn 2015).

Because of its ability to rally people online, social media is very useful to address and manage various topics. The Internet goes beyond its role in mobilizing individuals online to invite them to the crowd in reality, which was common during the Arab Spring revolutions, where citizens were calling for actual online demonstrations.

Arab societies in general and Saudi society in particular, do not differ from the rest of the world in using the Internet and various social media especially after the Arab Spring of 2011 (Eum 2014). Social media has played a major role in mobilizing citizens in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and Libya, as well as supporting civil society activities (Karolak 2014; Obeid 2016; Sadiqi 2016; Shalaby and Moghadam 2016).

It also allows the average citizen, male or female, to engage with these discussions and provide opinions. Social media influences general consensus with regards to many social and political topics. It has become one of the most important means of

contemporary mass mobilization, particularly on critical issues affecting large segments of the population such as natural disasters, famine, wars and political conflicts (Hardina 2013: 303-404; Kamau 2016: 122-123).

Using smart phones and tablets facilitates communication among people in a very swift way, and undercuts the more traditional means such as television, radio, and newspapers. However, traditional media have also become heavily integrated with modern media. Many newspapers have websites and many international news sites such as CNN and BBC encourage their followers to share news with videos and messages in what has become known as citizen journalism (Ravi 2019: 65; See also, Allan and Thorsen 2009; Wall 2019).

2- Social Media, Civil Society and Democratization Process:

In societies where the movement of individuals is restricted and hence civil society, social media create new forms of spheres that provide new levels of communication among them, rather than in reality. Some argue that these spheres represent a kind of virtual civil society through various social media.

According to Howard and Hussain (2016), social media played a big role in establishing what they called online civil society in parallel with real civil society. They pointed out that digital media has played a big role in strengthening civil society and expanding its activities and capabilities to collect local, regional and global information. In addition, social media and digital technology have helped to integrate women and other groups into online related engagements and activities.

Safranek (2012) clarifies those individuals who are oppressed are the most interested and use of social media. These sites are important means and new spheres for them to communicate with others, expand awareness, and discuss issues that are forbidden to discuss or approach them on the ground.

The time factor plays an important role in assessing the role of social media in the lives of individuals. In his important study of the political power of social media, Shirky (2011) argues that the importance of social media lies in their support of civil society and the public sphere, which can produce real social change over the years, not through short periods of time, which may be weeks or months. This

means that in the light of Shirky's study, social media have an important and influential role in changing societies, but it will take a long time to determine the nature of the role and the magnitude of influence to have its impact on social and political transition in human societies.

Despite this impact on the use of digital media to support civil society activities, it is not known and scientifically determined whether digital media plays an important and influential role in the process of democratization. Sternberg (2014) studies four countries - Egypt, Iran, Nepal and South Africa - to identify the effects of social media on democratic transition. He clarifies that although his study could not prove a decisive and significant role for the Internet in the process of democratization, it nevertheless indicates that it will play this role in the democratic process in the future because of its many transformative roles.

However, in light of Sternberg's study, it can be said that social media is only a modern technological medium, combining the negatives and the positives. Therefore, the perception that these means alone can undertake the process of democratization is wrong. Mechanisms of communication, whether modern or old, ultimately depend on the social and political nature in which they exist. Otherwise, it would have been possible to imagine a rapid democratization process in China, the Arab world, or other countries that have not yet undergone democratic transformation, despite the widespread use of social media.

In the long run, social media can play a significant and influential role in creating a new collective consciousness firstly, and assisting in democratization procedures secondly. As a new communication medium, social media will take time to affect users, as was the case with newspapers, radio and television. Thus, the widespread use of social media should increase the level of awareness of individuals; at least theoretical awareness based on cognitive follow-up and engages in discussions and the ability to form opinions.

This does not mean that social media create a true consciousness. It is an extension of living reality that carries its abilities, pros and cons, but it provides at least some degree of virtual freedom not available in society. This in itself gives individuals

freedom from the constraints of reality and the dominance of their actual and ideological powers.

This virtual awareness will try to move at some point from the Internet world to living reality and take certain regulatory actions. Calls made online, for example, to improve the status of women or workers will find their way into reality by gathering, demonstrating or creating their own organizations.

3- Social Media in Saudi Arabia:

Overall, the most striking example of this transition from virtual to actual is what happened during the Arab Spring, regardless of what these revolutions ended. After the Arab Spring, and the massive use of social media to organize demonstrations, Egypt's ruling authorities, for example, have taken a keen interest in what is happening on these sites, and passed a lot of laws enabling them to crack down on their users. The status of the Internet in Saudi Arabia is no different from other Arab countries. Tamimi (2010) says that:

> It has been perceived that the Internet will eventually lead to democratizing the Saudi public sphere by breaking the social, geographical, gender and time barriers. But the Saudi government and the men who happen to be the guardians of all Saudi women perceived the Internet as a moral, religious and political threat (2010:1).

According to Tamimi, Saudi Arabia's ruling authorities have seen the Internet and social media as threatening agents to authority on the one hand and community ethics on the other. Thus, even before the Arab Spring revolutions, the Saudi authorities began to work on censoring the Internet and putting social media sites under their full control. Deibert clarifies that:

> Like many countries in the Middle East, the Saudi authorities monitor Internet activities. In March 2009, Internet cafe´s were ordered by the Ministry of Interior to install hidden cameras and provide a record of names and identities of their customers. The Saudi religious police have also expressed an interest in practicing online surveillance (2010: 565)

Despite the blockade by many political systems around the world for social networking sites, they create for themselves new areas of use every day, and include many users who want to know and discuss topics important to them, or even users who want to entertain and waste free time. Grioux (2009) asserts that

modern media will create a new state of representation for users that will emerge by expanding knowledge and education, increasing critical thinking and other elements that deepen the engagement of users with civil society. He stresses that all these developments associated with the use of modern media create a new context and appropriate for democratic transition, and establish new social relations.

In addition, rising incomes help to some extent the use of modern technology, including tablet and Smartphones. The higher incomes of the Saudi citizen compared to other Arab nationalities help Saudi citizens to buy modern forms of technology associated with the use of the Internet. With the high levels of consumption in the Gulf countries in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, the use of modern means of communication, especially Smartphone, is a regular issue, which greatly expands the use of social media.

According to the Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Saudi society has seen great interest in social media and its increasing influence in their daily lives. The number of active media applications and programs has increased in the Kingdom, where the number of active users has increased since 2015 from 21.54 million to 28.5 million in 2018 equivalent to almost 80% of the population of Saudi Arabia. Smartphones are the largest platform for access to social networks, and the average per-person access to networks using Smartphones is 260 minutes per day. Facebook and Twitter accounted for the largest number of media users in the Kingdom, where Facebook users reached 14.8 million users, while Twitter users reached 9.9 million users in 2019. (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology 2019; Statista Online, Globalmediainsight Online).

There are common characteristics between the elected women regarding the use of the Internet and the impact of social media sites on them. Most of the elected women have dealt with the Internet since the late 20th century, and employment has expanded with the third millennium. It should be noted that the Internet entered Saudi Arabia for the first time in 1994 when educational, medical and research institutions were granted access to the Internet. The Internet officially

entered the Kingdom in 1997 by ministerial decree, and the public was allowed access to the Internet in 1999 (Communication and Information Technology Commission 2010).

There is a clear expansion among Saudis in the use of social media, assisted by the availability of modern technology from laptops, tablets and Smartphones. People will use social media more and more in the future in Saudi Arabia, mainly for new generations. Most Saudis use Twitter to examine the social aspects of the society more than how they examine the political aspects of the country.

The interest of Saudis in social media is predominantly concerned with the social aspects related to the different activities of life and the affairs of daily life among citizens. It is the same interest that is made in the daily lives of Saudis through real-world practices. Although the media offer a new space for discussion among citizens, it is remarkable that it reflects the predominant nature of society, which still sees politics and related aspects, far from its concerns, despite the beginnings of some relative and weak transformation.

There is no doubt that the expansion in the use of social media in its various forms has many implications for Saudi citizens. Al-Othman (2013) explains that the use of social media has increased awareness of the various aspects of Saudis, as well as increased interest of young people in public issues. Using a sample of 1,361 Saudis, who were questioned in order to identify the various reasons of using social media on April 2013, Al-Othman concludes that the most important reasons for using these methods lies in obtaining different knowledge and information. In addition, social media, including Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, helps in connecting people and discussing important social issues, including public policies, such as employment and education.

Al-Othman explains that despite the widespread use of social media among Saudis, they do not do so in order to urge citizens to take anti-government attitudes, even on personal matters that concern them. They emphasize that the use of the Internet should not be in an anti-government direction as much as it should be through its quiet and discreet support and guidance that helps the development of Saudi

society. In this sense, it is clear that the Saudi citizen is identified in advance with the reality of the Saudi government and its political orientations.

Regardless of the freedom that comes with social media sites, it is still imperative to note that the use of it is still done in a way that reflects how communication is done in the real society; where it is gender segregated. Social media also helps women with updating their personal information. Along with allowing females to run in the election, social media has been the only other change in the election process. It has allowed the voters to communicate with their nominees directly and vice versa. In the following, I will explain in detail the role of social media on women's lives, as determined from the selected interviews.

4- The Importance of Social Media for the Elected Women:

The responses of the elected women represent a great deal of awakening because they represent the most educated and most reflective of social and political variables in contemporary Saudi reality. In addition, their acceptance into the municipal electoral process is an important fact in the Saudi context, making their views of the social media of great importance reflecting a large area of Saudi society.

Despite the deep impacts of social media on Saudi women, it is important to clarify that it is a relatively new tool in Saudi Arabia even though many people use it. So, before we talk in detail about the impacts of social media on women's life, it should be noted that many elected women emphasize the importance of the Internet in their lives, especially in the areas of knowledge research, and reading on specific topics. The Internet has played a major role in disseminating knowledge among women, acquiring different experiences, and familiarity with many topics that were difficult to learn in the context of conservative Saudi society (Oshan 2007; Park 2010; Strandberg and Carlson 2017).

Many of the elected women assert that in our modern time an ignorant person is one that isn't able to use the internet. Using the internet, according to them, is very important nowadays. It is important to communicate with others and inform them as well as learning about the world. People used to depend on traditional media,

but after the appearance of social media, people communicate among each other easily and faster than before.

Participant (12) explained that:

> *Internet is very important in allowing me to focus on some topics which are very important to some people who cannot use the internet as my parents. Sometimes, I followed specific topic because my parents care about it, so I read about it and explain it to my parents.*

In addition, the internet gives users new freedoms they have never dreamed of before. Saudi women would enter the various internet sites and make their claims, both social and, to some extent, political. This wouldn't have been easy without social media. The internet has provided a constant awareness of what is happening in the world. Participant (9) said that:

> *It is hard to create a brainstorming atmosphere with the community face to face; social media allows us to communicate deeply without fear and with more empowerment, mainly for women.*

It is clear that modern generations are more familiar with the use of the Internet because of the educational and research requirements associated with them, which helps to communicate with older generations, and the transfer of knowledge from the younger generations to the older generations, especially within the framework of the family allowed to communicate directly (Al-Mustapha 2011: 44; Daoudei 2017: 242; and see also, Al-hajery 2003; Al-Mouhandis 1986; Alsuhaibani 2017; Al-Yamani 1985).

Education provides a great deal of information technology for young Saudi graduates. Knowledge of the Internet is important in view of two dimensions. First, it greatly helps in the search for work through it, and second, it has become one of the most important contemporary requirements for joining any work, whether governmental or private (Zafar 2016: 76-77; see also, Commins, 2015).

There are many studies that reveal the importance of using the Internet in scientific research on the one hand, and to meet the requirements of the work on the other (Bangert and Al-Shahri 2016: 1-23; see also, Al-Salem 2005; Gazzaz 2006; Perry et al., 1998).

Participant (9) used to use the internet in her work and research. She said that:

I did not use the internet for entertainment, but for research. I was the first one in my home who was able to use internet. There were no restraints on using the internet in our home for anybody. The most important sites to me were the technical ones which helped me improve my skills. Due to my professional manner in using the internet, I was able to communicate with other associations and charitable societies offering them suggestion on improving their own sites and giving them many solutions to make their own sites more appealing to people.

The elected women emphasized the importance of using the Internet in their lives, and consequently the use of social media. They have shown that the use of the Internet is linked to education and scientific research, and the use of social media has greatly helped to expand their understanding of the world around them, and gain new knowledge experiences.

Using social media allows women to know many things and acquire more information. Also, it allows women to improve their own awareness and participate in any discussion with giving good and respected opinions. The importance of using social media for women is that it allows them to improve themselves in a short time in comparison to traditional media.

Unlike traditional media, modern media in particular have given women new unique worlds of freedoms that were previously unavailable to them, especially in conservative societies such as Saudi Arabia. She can now access the world of the Internet and determine the nature of the sites she wants to browse. Access to the Internet with artificial identities greatly helps women to overcome the real constraints imposed on them, and the feeling of new virtual freedoms that help them express themselves within the framework of anonymity. Despite its negative aspects, this at least gives it new spheres that traditional media cannot provide.

Participant (14) says that:

Mainly, I use WhatsApp to communicate with my family and my relatives. I depended mostly on the Arabic language to communicate with others and in few participants, I use English.

Many participants have shown the importance of social media in the lives of Saudi women. They reveal that the search through these sites is largely via the use of

Arabic sites, and if it is difficult to obtain certain information through the use of Arabic they switch to English-speaking sites.

All the elected women emphasized that the Internet was not used from the outset for the entertainment as much as for the need for research on university study, or because of the need for work. It can also be said that elected women are considered to be the generation whose university education has been linked to the emergence and rise of the Internet and the associated effects.

Education, in particular, has been linked in one aspect to the use of the Internet in scientific research and communication between students, which necessitated students to use the Internet, and then social media. This means that what began for scientific research has subsequently shifted to use in everyday life or to a precise accompaniment.

5- Social Media and the New Public Sphere for Saudi Women:

Saudi women use specific kinds of social media, and identify each type of use, which helps them to communicate with others, or achieve some benefit. The use of these different sites helps in creating what Altuwayjiri calls the "feminized public sphere" which allowing women to communicate with each other, lobby and fight for their rights (in, Maestri and Profanter 2017: xi).

In this sense, social networking sites create a new feminist sphere of their own, which may perpetuate gender segregation, but it gives women a new kind of free expression, unmonitored socially and homely. It is a new development that gives women some degree of freedom, even at the level of virtual reality, which must reshape their own consciousness, which will manifest itself in the future in certain realistic behaviors and aggregations.

Although the earliest beginnings of Internet use for Saudi women were related to scientific research and work requirements, it later differed as social media became an important means of communicating with friends and relatives alike, creating new spheres for discussing both social and political issues (Zayani 2018:8). Participant (1) said that:

I did not use the internet for entertainment or chatting with friends. Nowadays however, my use of the internet has changed, and I use social media to communicate with my friends and relatives. Social media controls our own lives and determines how we get our information and knowledge.

This means that the use of social media is taking up some time for users, including the elected women. There is a wide diversity among elected women about the number of hours of Internet usage and the time of use. Some emphasize the limited use of the internet by one to two hours, while others point to a higher rate of up to five or six hours per day. Overall, the average Internet usage among elected women is two to five hours a day.

As for the time of use, some women asserted that it combines early morning and evening before bed, while others use the Internet intermittently throughout the day. The intermittent Internet use is assisted by the widespread possession and utilization of Smartphones due to their ease of use. Smartphones are now considered the best choice. They are light weight, easy to carry, allow women to access what they want, how they want and the way they want. Smartphones have become the easiest and fastest way to use social media (Fadaak and Roberts 2018: 56-59; Taylor 2013: 819). The availability of Smartphone in such a way has greatly made the use of the Internet and its associated means an integral part of everyday life. This reflects the huge impact of these new technologies on the lives and practices of individuals.

Elected women reveal the use of the Internet through certain media, whether e-mail or other social media. Some of them clarify that they use social media daily, especially WhatsApp and Hotmail (although not related to social media), because both of them are very important to their communication with other women in order to achieve their needs.

Despite the importance of using social media in communicating with other women, some of the elected women preferred direct communication with other women. They preferred direct encounters more than social media. Social communication is virtual communication. Face to face communication, according to some of them, is better, but to reach a large number of people, social media is of course the "go to" method (Alyedreessy et al., 2017:111). Participant (12) explained that:

We still rely on traditional means of communication, but the future will be for the means of social communication, and with it we will see an increase in the culture of awareness in all areas and all segments of society. I still read newspapers every day, but I think that one-day newspapers will disappear. Television and radio will remain. Whether television at home or radio in the car or even on smart devices, people still utilize these sources.

Rawas (2016) argues that individuals who used the Internet to find solutions to their problems were active in practice before the advent of the Internet through the use of public sphere and the creation of independent civic organizations. They use the Internet as a new public sphere to achieve their goals, without ignoring the old means of communication. They use the Internet because of its rapid ability to communicate with others, and because of its ability to reach more followers and interested people. They find no contradiction between the use of the Internet as a new and useful medium of communication, and the continued use of old media for communication.

Al-Mohsen's study (2006) on the modernization of education related to Saudi women clarified that students and their mothers emphasized the importance of traditional social media such as newspapers, radio and television as still important sources of information. Despite the emergence of modern social media, it is remarkable that mothers encourage their daughters to take advantage of traditional means that did not exist in their time.

Although many participants emphasize the use of modern media in relation to traditional media, they believe that the use of Smartphones has greatly helped to communicate between individuals and inreased awareness of what is happening within their communities. Therefore, some participants believe that social media will replace traditional means in the future to become the dominant means of communication between people.

There is no doubt that the use of different means of the internet helps women to do some tasks and follow interests that would have been impossible using traditional means of communication. Participant (11) stated that she used the Internet to help her disabled son. She established a group via WhatsApp that included families with disabled children like her son, to communicate with each other and learn how best to help their children. Through this communication, they appointed a trainer

for their children and designed a program to help disabled children at home. This case saw social media as very important in this type of service, facilitated by the ease of communication via Smartphones (Fadaak and Roberts 2018: 56-57).

Using smartphone facilitates dealing with the internet and allowing use of social media in any time we want and need. This is the most important difference between the social media and old media. The social media allows women to communicate very easy in any time and in any place. They can communicate with others from their homes, offices, or restaurants.

In addition to the importance of WhatsApp in rapid communication, whether with family, relatives or friends, and in communicating quickly, easy and orderly, many elected women stressed the use of Facebook and Twitter. They liked the features such as the ease of participation by placing comments on many topics and by becoming involved in the various dialogues and discussions that take place through them.

In addition, one can download different photos and videos via Facebook. Although many elected women stated that they use Twitter for discussions and comments, they asserted that the majority of Saudis use Facebook compared to other means, including Twitter. This is because Facebook is more or less related to social practices than serious political topics of interest to Twitter users.

Saudi women who use technology and social media very much represented mainly the current generation. This could lead to a significant form of social and political mobility; expand their abilities associated with the debate and lead them to demand additional freedoms (Saudi Arabia Social Media Statistics 2018; Shirky 2011; State of Social Media 2018; Sun et al., 2007).

In conclusion, Saudi women use social media for the following purposes: update their information about the election; informing themselves about new topics locally and globally; discussing social and political issues about their community in a limited scale; and understanding what others wrote about Saudi Arabia and sometimes joining discussions that are relevant to them.

The most important topics discussed through social media sites are often related to various social issues that aim at improving the living conditions of the Saudi Citizens. Not only this, topics also deal with assessing the conditions of women and increasing their value in Saudi society.

However, if we assume that there is a strong relationship between women's empowerment and the use of modern technology and modern social media, we should accept that Saudi women's position is on its way to becoming the best in the world. Against the enormous expansion in the use of technology and associated tools, the Saudi reality suggests, on the contrary, that women still suffer from many difficulties, notably the difficulty of driving a car, and male guardianship in many procedures despite current attempts to mitigate this (Sarsar and Stephan 2016: 348).

Many participants used more than one social media account. For example, participant (2) said that she has accounts on Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat and hotmail. Participant (13) said that she has both Twitter and Snapchat, while participant (17) clarified that she has Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook. This difference among women is, of course, due to the type of special needs of each, the extent to which these methods are used, and the extent of their overall use. This will be illustrated by the next point that will address the impact of the use of these tools on the electoral process itself, and the extent to which they are utilized.

6- The Role of Social Media in Municipal Election Process:

Allowing Saudi women to participate in the electoral process through candidacy or voting is a very important event in Saudi society, regardless of the inconclusive results (Al-Sulami 2018; General Directorate of Elections 2015; McDowall 2016). The nomination of a group of women across the Kingdom for municipal elections is linked to their higher educational level, as well as their ability to participate more or less in the burden of the electoral process and communication with the public, especially women.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasize that women's participation in elections does not mean a change in the rules imposed on them socially, but rather that they must participate in the electoral process according to pre-established societal rules, whether formally through the government or informally linked to the general societal context (Shaw et al., 2018: 164; Coleman 2013: 156).

Although the decision to allow women to run and vote surprised many locally and globally, it was accompanied by another widely-used variant, Social Media. It is a strongly imposed variable as I have already explained, and has become a common practice and accepted within a conservative social framework. It was not possible for women to ignore social media during the electoral process. In the following, I identify the different practices of women through the use of these methods and the extent of success associated with them.

6-1 Elected Women's Regulations for Using Social Media:

The general nature of the use of social media by elected women is characterized by two factors: the first is the moral character that encourages adherence to religious teachings while using these methods and the second is related to the need to use these media in a way that does not harm Saudi society socially and politically. Any assessment of the use of social media by elected women should therefore be interpreted in the light of these two factors (Al-Sudairy 2017: 123-125).

Elected women see the need for a set of regulations for how they communicate with others online, whether they are supporters or opponents of the candidates. It is necessary to deal with credible sites in the information obtained through them. Elected women emphasize the need not to participate, intentionally or unintentionally, in spreading rumors and lies that affect the cohesion and unity of society. Thus, most elected women see the possibility of communicating with others, especially women, who adhere to those rules associated with preserving society on the one hand, and ensuring commitment to Islamic ethics on the other (Bano 2018; Rawas 2016; Shalaby 2008).

These regulations allow women to depend on each other in order to avoid and counter any misleading and damaging information spread by malicious websites,

which strive to demean the efforts of Saudi women. It is hard to satisfy everybody online. Social media is the arena of conflict between ideas and opinions, so it is hard to please everyone who uses it.

Many elected women clarified that despite the difficulties of reaching to an agreement online, social media is one of the most important tools of communication in Saudi Arabia. Participant (18) said that:

> *It is hard to imagine our life without social media. It is important to maximize its positive aspects and minimize its negative aspects. While using social media, we tried to avoid any aggressive and vulgar language and discussions.*

According to most of the elected women, engaging in intense discussions on social media brings with it many problems such as using vulgar language in dialogue, or working to direct the discussion towards specific destination that some want for certain interests, and attempting to impose certain opinions that may be unfavorable to society, and contrary to its values and customs. In addition, such sites may be used to deepen ethnic, tribal, religious or even territorial disputes. Hence, it is necessary to be vigilant when participating in the discussions of social networking sites and to be cautious towards such irregularities that cause the division of the society and weaken it in the long run. Participant (10) said that:

> *I see that people who use social media should be truthful in whatever they spread. There is no need to spread rumors and lies or talk in a provocative manner. If people can abide by these rules, social media will be used to better the Saudi society and improve it.*

This conservative, and perhaps calm, attitude of elected women to the internet and social networking sites reveals the real beginnings of organized work among women and the ability to create active movements, at least for the time being, via social media. The majority of the elected women have never been personally attacked by anyone on social media. According to them, if they were attacked as such, their response would be a very polite. (They expressed the belief that answering an attack with a similar manner of comment would only worsen the situation and destroy reputations.)

Women's reliance on social networking sites is mostly for understanding what is happening in the Kingdom on a general level. Many elected women expect that the

number of social media sites will increase in the upcoming years and take up more hours of people's time. In addition, they asserted that social media helps people to communicate quickly, and helps to discuss topics efficiently. According to them, it is true that conflict sometimes develops online between users, but the wiser person is the one who creates a calm dialogue between others and himself/herself.

This calm and conservative view is not only about the Internet and new social media, but also about traditional means of communication. In his study, Akeel (2003) demonstrated the impact of traditional media on women, by interviewing a number of Saudi women who work in various media such as journalism, radio, and television with 4 to 24 years of work experience. In his interviews with these women, Akeel found that there was a rejection of Western feminist trends by these women, particularly with regard to some of the goals and means associated with Western feminism, especially the absolute freedoms of women that do not correspond to the nature of Saudi society. It is interesting to note that this rejection of Western feminism is made despite the fact that these women assert that they seek to achieve the same goals of Western feminism such as equality in work and education. The study emphasizes the existence of social, economic and political obstacles in the Saudi context, in particular social obstacles such as traditions, values and misunderstanding of Islam and the associated weak opportunities for women to have adequate education and employment (see also, Abu-Nasr and Nereim 2016; Al-Abd Al-Hay 1983; Al-Alamy 2015; Al-Yousef 2009).

6-2 The Functions of Social Media During the Election:

In spite of this calm trend of elected women towards use social media, it does not mean a kind of appeasement and weak activity, as much as acceptance of social values and norms. In some situations, they work through them, and in others, they resist and work to change them. Al-Mufarreh 2017 conducted a study on the importance of the Internet for Saudi activists, and the extent to which the society accepted the discouse defending women's rights, through an ethnographic analysis of some of the material published by women on Twitter and YouTube, in addition to articles published online. He said that the use of social media to empower women, and increase their awareness of their rights, have helped Saudi women's

rights defenders to easily engage with Saudi society on the one hand, and to resist the socio-cultural context against women's rights on the other.

Most elected women used social media extensively during the elections only to learn about the latest developments related to the electoral process. They indicated that they use Twitter in particular during the elections to get acquainted with their followers, their requests, and the nature of the topics they discuss. For many elected women, Twitter has helped them to gain a good understanding and receive a daily update of all that is related to the election process. Most of their tweets or retweets were religious tweets that empowered females. Some of them were also patriotic tweets that encouraged the love of the country (About a sociological understanding of Twitter, see Murthy 2012; Murthy 2013; Noor Al-Deen et al., 2016).

This is consistent with the above-mentioned predominance of religious moral character on the one hand and the national character on the other hand on women's use of social media. Women focused on good and positive discussions. Participant (15) said that:

> *I generally do not get into debates. If I am bothered by someone in a discussion, I send them verses of the Quran and ask if he would agree with something similar happening to one of his sisters, usually they feel ashamed and apologize.*

In the absence of political and, to some extent, social activities, religious attitudes find themselves a great deal of practice for individuals in general, and women in particular, which is also consistent with the conservative Arab context. The particular understanding of Islam and the societal culture play a major role in influencing the status of women and thus oppressing them. In addition, the failure of Arab governments to achieve real economic and social development has led to the rise of the moral aspects and the dominance of religious conservative thought, which makes it difficult for the Arab feminists, in that it creates a hostile climate against them, and rejects their orientations (Abukhalil 1993; Al-Haydar 2012; Cavatorta and Durace 2014; Herb 1999; Kattan 1999; Schliep 2017).

In spite of the above, elected women have found in social media a real opportunity to express themselves and face the outside world. Participant (9) explained why she preferred one social media more than the other by saying that:

> *When it comes to Twitter, I depend on it for many reasons such as: talking with many people, answering any question from the public, discussing anything with the audience. The government itself has recently realized the importance of Twitter to communicate with the public. To some extent, even more than the governmental formal site. People would follow us and read what we tweet and discuss it with us.*

For the elected women who rely on Twitter in particular, they emphasize more attention to social topics than any other. They also believe that Twitter helped them in their work in the municipal council by following thinkers, university professors, specialists, planers and other opinions, advice and experiences.

In general, the elected women confirmed their reliance on Twitter during the elections and later their appointment as members of the municipal council. The reliance on Twitter has been high in the council, where it has been used to develop plans and strategies of interest to the community, which were very difficult to discuss among women and other male members, or even between women and other women in the community. The use of Twitter has saved a lot of effort and money to identify the views of citizens and the needs of the community to which they belong.

Although the proportion of women using Twitter is high among elected women, this does not mean the absence of other means. The participants showed that they are using other means of communication such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, and each provided justification for the use of these methods or one of them alone (Safranak 2012).

Most of the means used by the elected women were Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The service they used most, due to its ease to use, was WhatsApp. Ease seems to be an important and fundamental criterion to prefer one way over another. All participants emphasized that ease of use was a fundamental reason for choosing one medium of communication and not the other.

While some participants asserted the use of Twitter to follow the campaign, and topics raised by citizens, others clarified the importance of WhatsApp also in terms of its effectiveness in communicating with relatives and friends during the elections. The effectiveness of this mean stems from the rapid understanding of the reality of elections, and the latest developments in them, in particular the issues raised by supporters and opponents (Fadaak and Ken 2018; Maestri and Profanter 2017).

Each woman is accustomed to a particular means that makes it the easiest way from her point of view. In this context, it can be said that Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook are the most commonly used among the elected women.

From the point of view of the elected women, whatsApp and, of course, other means are characterized by lower cost of using compared to the cost and difficulty of communicating directly with community members in everyday life. Many elected women use many apps and software's such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram. But they focus on using specific means according to their benefits, like using WhatsApp which connects them with their personal world and using Twitter which connects them with the rest of world.

Participant (9) added that:

> *Regarding WhatsApp, I depend on it in communicating with my family, friends, and the team who directs my election and in my formal dealings. This program facilitates many things to me, especially in my contact with the members of the municipal council and the development committee. It has also decreased the amount of text messages I sent hence, consequently, decreased the costs and reduced the number of direct meetings among members. We created different groups on WhatsApp and used it to communicate among each other.*

In the light of the above, social media played a significant role during the election campaign of women candidates. Whatever the means used, whether Twitter, Whatsapp, Facebook or others, they helped women to communicate easily between themselves on the one hand, and between themselves and citizens belonging to the community and observers of the elections, compared to traditional means on the other hand (Aifan 2015; Al-Hamadi 2017; Dresch and Piscatori 2013; Strandberg 2015).

These means have certainly helped to create new public spheres for women, which, for the first time, allowed them to move easily through follow-up of users, monitor the issues they discuss and know their views on the situation of their community, as well as the ability to form special groups between followers in order to communicate only among themselves.

6-3 Social vs. Political Activities:

Most of the elected women asserted that their objective was to play a social role primarily through social media, and even those who referred to a political role asserted that it is a minimal role and that its purpose was in the defense of the Kingdom and against anyone trying to undermine the stability of society. Studies on the political behavior of Saudi women and the various developments associated with their political behavior are extremely rare, given the recent democratic experience in Saudi Arabia and the recent permitting of elections. Many elected women have asserted that they have gained their community experience through social work based on helping others, as happened during the floods in Saudi Arabia, particularly in Jeddah. However, there are some studies that refer to women's political behavior in other Arab and Gulf societies (Al-Falah 1987; AlMal 2017; Al-Oraimi 2004; Alothman 2013; AlSalem 2015; Alshamsi 2014; Azimova 2016).

Despite the fact that most of the elected women emphasized their social practices and abandoned their concern with political action, all practices they referred to on social media, regardless of their type, turned out to be more political than social regardless of women's awareness. Talking with others, forming special groups with special goals, forming a special team to monitor the electoral process, following up supporters and opponents, and identifying the most important problems faced by the community and trying to find solutions to them, all reveal a new awareness among women that calls for the existence of new practices (Margetts 2015; Zhang and Chia 2006).

The level of awareness is not limited to these aspects, but also to the global consciousness, which has made many elected women aware that social media has

also given them the ability to communicate with anyone anywhere in the world, which cannot be achieved through traditional media, and certainly via direct personal contact. This sense of global feelings is new for all Saudi citizens, especially for the elected women (Bangert and Al-Shahri 2016; Chang et al., 2011; Daoudi 2016; Dresch and Piscatori 2013).

Awareness is a matter of great importance for Saudi citizens in general, and for Saudi women in particular. The level of awareness largely determines the understanding of the reality on the one hand, the nature of the issues being dealt with on the other, and the ways to deal with them on the third. In general, it is the degree of women participation in Saudi society that will determine in the future the degree of awareness that they will gain.

Social media has also provided these women with a useful feature of quickly choosing between different topics, the immediate ability to follow them, and the collection of information associated with them. Although this feature may be available through traditional media, it is still controlled by the sender, but here and via social media users have a wide choice, intervention, analysis, and participation capabilities. This will certainly lead to many positive aspects in the long run (Kamau 2016; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Murthy 2012; Noor Al-Deen 2012; Obeid 2015).

Despite the feelings of freedom of elected women, they asserted that they are following specific regulations that enable them to deal ethically online. Despite the social and political constraints that exist, many elected women have asserted that they are monitoring themselves while participating in social media so as not to become engaged in any social or political debates that may conflict with the teachings of the state and the ruling family. This is due again to talk about the conservative nature of women themselves, regardless of the tremendous technological developments in Saudi Arabia, and regardless of the size of the huge expansion in dealing with social media. This is linked to the nature of conservative socialization, religious and societal constraints, and the slow political movement in

the Saudi Kingdom (Al-Sudairy 2017; Alsuhaibani 2017; Al-Sulami 2008; Wynbrandt 2 010).

It can be argued that social media accelerates the operational skills that women acquire during the electoral process.

The development of political awareness of Saudi women is not as great as the development of their abilities to use modern technology and various social media. Women are facing a cultural lag in the literal sense of the word, where the rapid development on the material level is contrasted with the preservation of traditional and semi-traditional structures in Saudi society and in particular the foundations of male dominance, and the retention of the ability of the tribe to impose control and domination of its members (Dash 2004: 28).

Women have learned from social media to improve their abilities of talking with other people. Although the skill of speaking and debating with others seems normal to other human societies, the reality of Saudi women, which is so closely linked to the domestic and kinship context, requires that they only talk with family members, not with anyone else, especially males. Social media has helped Saudi women to talk with other people without moving from their home. The technical nature of this issue also has intellectual and mental implications.

For the first time a woman can talk to other people who are strangers to her, among them may be unrelated males, and for the first time she takes her decision to choose when to enter the various sites, determines the nature of topics, and even determines whether she wants to talk with him/her or even block him/her. It is true that many of these changes are in the form of conservative, religious reference, but it certainly adds profound social changes to the reality of Saudi women (Bano 2018; hamdan 1990; Rawas 2016; Shalaby 2008; Sun et al., 2007).

The use of the Internet and social media has also greatly helped the elected women to have a vast amount of information and knowledge. In addition, they know the outside world easily without moving from their home and without being subjected to male guardianship. In this new situation, Saudi women have become the owners

of the world and are able to move between different regions and learn about different events (Alyedreessy 2017).

6-4 Social Media and the Municipal Election:

In regards to the electoral process, Social media helped the candidates to a great extent in informing people about them and about their programs. The skill of talking to others, the ability to acquire different knowledge and topics, and the identification of different discussion frameworks, greatly help elected women to inform people in the community about their electoral programs.

In this context, social networking sites represented real platforms for communicating with voters in response to their questions on the one hand, and to clarify the aspects of the candidate program and what will benefit the community on the other hand. One candidate confirmed that this method saved her a lot of money. Instead of printing huge numbers of the program, a limited number was printed and published on WhatsApp and Facebook to all followers (Altuwayjiri 2017).

It has played also very important role in helping women voice their opinions everywhere. In light of the many discussions in which women participate through social media, they feel able to present different opinions that others must either approve or oppose. It is a very important issue for any electoral process as it develops women's ability to participate politically and lead others.

Also, social media helps in spreading electoral culture in Saudi society and allows people to accept women's participation in the election. Despite the importance of the electoral event in Saudi Arabia, in the past it may not have been possible to feel it. In light of Saudi Arabia's enormous area, social media has helped individuals become familiar with the electoral process. Through this virtual follow-up, citizens are certainly forming new concepts that were not on the scene before. This helps on the one hand to create a new political culture and on the other to accumulate this culture to take a new stream in social reality.

Despite the importance of social media in the electoral process, many elected women have stressed the important role played by family and relatives. The role of the husband here is very important in terms of acceptance of his wife's candidacy in the electoral process, and in terms of the support he provides to her during the electoral process. It is important to note that the husband's acceptance of his wife's candidacy is of paramount importance in the context of male dominance and the criticism and mockery of more conservative and traditional men (Hamdan 1990; Herb 1999; Joseph 2018).

This means that while using social media as a modern and new sphere for women is important, they cannot ignore traditional spheres such as family, kinship and tribe. This may be due to the fact that traditional spheres are a safe haven for Saudi citizens in general under the restrictions imposed on them. In this context, Montagu 2015 sees that there are many difficulties faced by individuals regarding participation, decision-making and the ability to influence the Saudi government. The state has closed the most outlets for civil expressions and related institutions. Although media is a new sphere, it is incapable of inciting individuals to actively participate in politics. This ultimately leads to a widespread association with traditional spheres, especially the family. Participant (15) said about the importance of traditional spheres in the municipal election:

> *I think it is a useful experience for women in the Kingdom, especially if they get the support they need from their husbands, relatives, and the community in which they live in.*

The protection afforded by the family is not the product of the status quo in the Arab world in general, as it is the result of long periods of domination of authoritarian constraints that prevent the formation of any effective institutions representing civil society and linked to the policies of the ruling regimes, which impeded the democratic transition. In a study of five Arab countries, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen and Lebanon, Cavatorta and Durace (2014 showed that the civil society in the Arab world is like the ruling authorities, supporting authoritarianism and undermining democracy. Hence, civil society institutions in the Arab world are an extension of the state's authoritarianism and supportive of it. Perhaps this explains once again the connection of individuals to the usual family

sphere, and also explains that social media, with its virtual influences, takes a long time to make an effective impact on Arab social and political changes.

Despite belonging to traditional structures such as family and tribe, women are trying through social media to create social networks through which to develop the reality of women. Many asserted that they were able to share ideas, and gain feedback in order to improve their own program. Participant (19) said that:

> *By using social media in my area I contacted people and informing them about any project I want to achieve in the area. For example, I encouraged them to participate in charity program of helping poor people and also informing them about any summer activities for their kids, such as learning English language and computer.*

Participant (1) added:

> *I have many social activities related to support elder women. We arrange many visits to elder women in order to discuss their problems and support them.*

This philanthropic approach is in harmony with the nature of Saudi society, and here women's electoral programs seem to be closer to the charitable work associated with the teachings of Islam. Montague (2010) sees a strong relationship between the Saudi voluntary sector and the Royal family. He sees this sector as a rising force at the level of socio-political dialogue and social reform. This sector relies on the use of traditional forms of social interaction such as the focus on the charitable sector. NGOs also play a big role in this context, where there is an opportunity for both citizens and the government through the Al-Saud family in establishing a new and effective dialogue.

Despite the importance of the charitable sector and the magnitude of its enormous influence in the Kingdom, it helps to raise social influences at the expense of profound political changes in Saudi society. But this sector, especially with the rise of social media, can play a major role in strengthening the relationship between citizens and the state, creating a new qualitative sphere for civil society.

Social media creates social networking with citizens to help those in need, and to help identify and develop information about community problems. Thus, during and after the electoral process, women's efforts have gone beyond the focus on

needy groups to move towards the development of society as a whole. Women have addressed community problems such as improving the road network, planting trees, and improving educational and health services. This means extensive intervention in the local policies of the community, and the exploitation of the possibilities provided by social media to raise these problems, and find ways to address and solve them. Participant (11) said that:

> *Although I did not actively use social media, I sometimes used to discuss social issues in our community. We used to think about improving our community through improving the road network, schools, and street cleaning.*

The most important aspect of using social media here is that it allows women to publicize problems and needs faster and more efficiently than any other tool. By using social media, women can make information known to the public and hence, force the government to change their own situation or improve it.

Even though there are plenty of cons of social media, we can't disregard all the pros of it. It has helped many of people communicate with each other, specifically females. It has given women in the Kingdom a chance to communicate with each other and other people. This was not available for the older generations. How this will affect the Kingdom is yet to be seen, but hopefully, it will be for the better.

7- The Impacts of Social Media on Democratic Transition In Saudi Arabia:

After reading the interviews with elected women deeply, the study identified a range of nodes which include: education, family and relatives, friends and neighbors, gender, religion, social media, traditions, tribe, democracy, social and political change, and finally the municipal election. Through the use of the NVivo program, a number of sub-themes were reached, then the main themes, which, as mentioned above, included the issue of democracy and its associated profound social and political changes, then the issue of human rights as a clear manifestation of any democratic practices, and finally social media as a fundamental issue in the current study.

NVivo program helps to deconstruct the interviews either by determining the nature of the concepts and words used and the synonyms associated with them, or

by monitoring the sentences containing these concepts and words. In both cases, the program determines the specific weight of each concept or sentence for each interview individually and for the total interviews. This has greatly helped in determining the extent to which elected women understand the different issues raised in the interview form, as well as help to understand the nature of their understanding of Saudi reality and related issues.

Although many elected women have addressed the issue of social and political changes and have asserted the social nature of the change in the Kingdom, most of them did not approach the word democracy, and moved away to talk about social aspects and charitable work in the Kingdom.

In fact, all elected women have moved away from the idea of talking about democracy and the consolidation of human rights in the Western sense, which is based primarily on the transfer of power and the establishment of political parties and participation in various elections. This may seem strange to researchers who are ignorant of the social and political realities and the nature of the changes that the Kingdom is facing now.

The modernization process in the Kingdom for decades, which has been occurring rapidly since the end of the twentieth century until now, has created many changes at the material level, through the establishment of schools, universities, modern road networks and hospitals. These are very important things that have certainly had many repercussions on the citizens, transforming them from Bedouin life to modern urban life where the city and the modern aspects associated with it.

Saudi society, on the other hand, has not changed equally in terms of awareness and modernization of traditional structures such as family, tribe, and general societal context, as well as the widespread dominance of clerics. These traditional structures are affected by many factors impacting the structure of society such as education, work, satellite channels and finally the widespread use of the Internet and associated social media. Every modernization and technological development has its societal effects, whether the society accepts or not.

This is what happened in the Kingdom significantly. Over the past years there have been many declared and undeclared conflicts between the radical and conservative forces. Throughout all these conflicts, the ruling family has been trying to take a somewhat neutral attitude to public opinion, emphasizing the values and customs of society. But this has been greatly altered by the great openness in which King Abdullah allowed Saudi women to participate in the electoral process, both as voters and candidates, which was eventually achieved in 2015 despite widespread societal opposition from traditional forces.

Later, King Salman and his crown prince continued to grant women many of their own rights, such as traveling, driving, and extracting their own papers. This leads to emphasize upon the continuity of social and political transformations in the Kingdom through the King. It means that any changes will take place at least in the short term within what the king sees, and somewhat far from active political participation by citizens in general and women in particular.

This top-bottom approach, which is linked to royal changes despite its great importance, leads to many negative aspects such as the dependence of citizens, including women, on the state represented by the king and his various powers. This approach also weakens civil society through the lack of real communication and interaction between individuals, raising their level of awareness, and helping them to establish their own civil organizations. This makes individuals obtain their rights as a gift given to them by the authorities and not as rights acquired through hard work and persistent claims.

In the light of the foregoing, most of the cases of the study were not exposed to political changes in the accepted sense, as much as they stressed their association with the ruling authorities, and the need to work through the rules imposed through them. In this situation, the elected women are products of the environment into which they were born and so they have certain boundaries of awareness associated with them at least at the present stage. These conservative perceptions of the nature of political change and democratic transitions have also led to a conservative perception of social media.

Despite the higher education level of elected women, which makes them very aware of the importance of social media and the benefits of using them, their conservative perceptions have made them deal with these tools in the light of their pre-imposed frameworks. This explains why any technological variable is linked to the social and political context in which it exists. Social media is ultimately governed by the Saudi context in which it exists. However, the current study believes that the Internet and then social media will bring social and political changes in Saudi society in the coming years. In light of the dramatically higher rates of education among women, and in light of the new spheres offered by the Internet to Saudi women, we must expect new changes in their mentality and level of awareness, and therefore new changes at the social and political levels.

Conclusion:

No one can ignore the importance of the Internet in contemporary societies, and there may be no modern technological means that have influenced the nature of human societies and their intellectual structures in modern times such as the Internet and associated means. But ultimately, technology, including the Internet, depends on the nature of the society in which it exists. The Internet will not create a democratic context in an authoritarian society, and vice versa. Like other factors, it may help in some degree of political mobility, but technology alone cannot make this shift.

This also applies to Arab societies in general and Saudi society in particular. The Internet is governed by the conservative Arab context and the nature of relations between its social forces. Hence, the Internet will represent the nature of the social reality in which it exists, and operates according to its predefined features and frameworks.

Elected women praised the role of the Internet in their lives in general, and in the electoral process in particular. But their conservative socialization, and the nature of traditional family and tribal frameworks, governed their perceptions of social media and painted it in a socially ethical form that prevented most participants from talking about any political perception of their own.

Therefore, most of the participants focused on the role of social media in creating social networks through which they can communicate with citizens in order to improve their social conditions of life, and also to develop services related to the community. This approach seemed closer to pro-state and willing to deal with it in accordance with its pre-imposed frameworks. In other words, most, if not all women participating in the electoral process, do not want to present any political views that are different or contrary to the state agenda, as much as they want to work according to their predetermined frameworks.

In conclusion, social media provided new skills for women, such as the ability to follow social and political topics, engage in all kinds of discussions, present all their opinions, and work to form new groups online. These skills are closer to the development of understanding and leadership. But despite the impacts of social media, women have not been able to establish new political visions that will enable them to claim their rights and help them to establish effective feminist movements in society. Nevertheless, the impact of social media at its current weak levels on Saudi women will evolve significantly in the coming years, opening up new avenues for political action, especially in light of the current pro-women political leadership.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

1- Saudi Reality Today

The current study deals with many aspects of the Saudi society through previous studies or what is known as secondary data. In addition, the study also has an empirical aspect which addresses the reality of Saudi women by focusing on the elected women of municipal councils in 2015. The study also tries to identify the important role played by education in the life of the elected women in addition to the role of social media in their lives, and its impact on the electoral process.

The study stresses the importance of oil as a fundamental variable in the Kingdom. Despite the attempts of successive governments to diversify the various sources of income, oil is still the decisive variable in the economic development of the Kingdom. Oil has played many roles in the material modernization in Saudi Arabia, including the construction of modern cities, airports, universities, schools, road networks and other infrastructure. In addition, oil has moved the Saudi citizen from Bedouin life to urban life and related new developments.

The problem with this kind of modernization is that it is top-bottom modernization by the rentier state, which has enormous sources of income. The state defines all forms of modernization, and it also employs its citizens, gives them high salaries, and allows them to live a life of material comfort. Hence, the relationship between the state and the citizens is determined by what the former spends, and obedience and loyalty from the latter.

State domination of the public sphere weakens the social and political participation of citizens, thereby greatly weakening civil society and its associated institutions. In spite of the important measures practiced by the ruling family from time to time with regard to the status of the Saudi citizens in general, and Saudi women in particular, these measures have not been able to change the conservative societal perceptions based on customs and traditions and the influential role of the tribe and kinship relations and misinterpretations of religion, especially with regard to Saudi women and their associated spheres.

Despite state domination, there are many other spheres that allow women new areas of leaning and activity, including education and various social media. The study considers that education plays an important and influential role in the life of women; both at the level of raising their own awareness, or by helping them in getting a new job. Although the percentage of educated Saudi women is high, they are significantly lower than would be statistically expected in terms of access to a job market.

Despite the widespread penetration of the Internet in the Kingdom, and the enormous use of social media, many studies have not been able to monitor the actual effects of this new technological variable. In this context, the current study finds that evaluating the effects of using social media needs a reasonable time frame in order to ascertain the degree of impact on users in general and women in particular.

2- Social Media and Political Participation

The study deals with many theories of political participation, and shows that each theory focuses on a certain aspect of social reality, which means that the subject of political participation needs a variety of theories through which to determine the nature of the political situation of any society. The present study has benefited greatly from the theory of modernization and institutional theory, which help in understanding the nature of social and political changes taking place in the Kingdom, as well as to identify the nature of active institutions in the Kingdom.

In general, many studies have emphasized the lack of political participation in poor societies such as many African countries, particularly for women. Studies differ on the nature of the elements involved in this participation. With regard to Arab societies, many studies explain the lack of political participation of women due to conservative Islamic influence, traditional cultural status, the role of the tribe and family, and male dominance in the societal public sphere. These factors are also consistent with studies of Saudi women's weak political participation, despite the many political transformations the kingdom has taken to improve women's conditions.

In the context of political participation, the Internet and thus social media appear to

be an important factor for women. Most studies have shown the importance of using the Internet and social media to raise women's awareness through new spheres and the enormous potential of social networking sites for women to interact with each other and with other males in society. While traditional structures severely restrict women's mobility and their interaction with others, the Internet gives women new spheres of freedom, interaction and knowledge, even without moving from their homes.

3- Saudi Women and Democratic Process

The study ends with a set of important findings based on in-depth interviews with women elected to the 2015 municipal elections in Saudi Arabia including three important issues, democracy, women's rights and the role of social media. In general, one can say that there is a lack of democratic perception of elected women, and even they avoid talking about democratic and political transition in the Kingdom.

While it is important to allow women to participate in Saudi Arabia's electoral process, it is still a limited step in many respects. Firstly, the decision to allow women to participate in the elections is a royal decree, and secondly, this decision is incompatible with the level of women awareness in the Kingdom that is still based on conservative and traditional structures in society, thirdly, charitable and social work prevails over elected women, making it a popular alternative to talking about any other political activities.

Although allowing women to participate in the electoral process is linked to a perception of the ruling family, and what the study calls "top-bottom" approach, the results show some degree of awareness regarding the ability of women to communicate with each other, their feelings of social responsibility, and a form of solidarity. In addition, women have confirmed their representation of women in the Kingdom as a whole, with a focus on needy women in the communities in which they live.

Despite the conservative role of traditional structures such as family and tribe, many elected women emphasize the importance their family and their tribe offered in support before and during the electoral process. Nevertheless, some elected women explained the negative impact of this association with traditional units,

especially the tribe, because it caused the success of some unqualified candidates because of the vote submitted by members of their tribe.

4- Saudi Women's Rights

The study reveals a great interest by the Saudi authorities in the enactment of laws supporting women's rights, but it is noticeable, and in the light of what was confirmed by the elected women, that the society enacted its own laws in isolation from the official laws.

For example, interviews with elected women reveal that there is no formal law prohibiting women from driving, but it is strange that all institutions in the country treat women as if there is a formal law that prevents them from obtaining their own driving license. There are many other societal laws that impose on girls special educational disciplines and prevent them from traveling and movement on their own. This is helped by the general societal acceptance of such attitudes against women, as well as the conservative tribal structure that still focuses on the honour of women and links it with the honour of the tribe.

In general, direct intervention by the state and the ruling family has played a major role so far in imposing neo-liberal visions on society, which reached unusual levels during the reign of King Salman and his crown prince, where many laws were passed that allow women activities such as driving the car, traveling abroad and getting its official papers from government departments without the consent of its male guardian.

Despite societal and male dominance elected women stresses that education is significantly higher among females, and that this is not in harmony with the low percentage of women working in the Kingdom compared to men. In addition, most of the study cases reveals the importance of the step to allow women to participate in the elections, as a step on the road that needs a lot of efforts to support and expand their position.

5- Social Media and Its Impacts on Saudi Women

The study reveals the importance of the Internet and social media for Saudi citizens in general and for Saudi women in particular. Social media helps to

communicate easily between women, which was not available through actual civil society. Hence, we could talk about a virtual civil society provided by social media.

In this context, it can be argued that the use of means of communication helps to shape virtual awareness among women. With the possibilities of communication, easy access to information, freedom of expression and discussion, and engaging in many dialogues, these tools help women develop their level of awareness both on local and global issues.

The study also shows the importance of education in dealing with social media. All the elected women clarify that they started using the Internet initially for scientific research and conducting various academic researches, but at a later stage they started dealing with social media in order to interact with relatives and friends. This is an issue that became very clear during the electoral process, where many women state their use of social media to a large extent because of the ease of communication with the followers, and the money saved.

Although social media is important for the elected women, it is difficult to judge its importance in the democratic transition in the Kingdom. It is clear from the interviews conducted by women that they are always distancing themselves from any political talk or desire for profound political changes, as much as they talk about social changes within the framework of socially and politically permissible. Certainly, this is reflected in their vision of social media, which they emphasize the need to deal with social changes through what preserves the frameworks of Islamic society and does not harm the Kingdom socially and politically.

In this context, through many of the concepts used in the study such as democracy, human rights, political participation, social media and traditional social contexts, the study reveals that traditional societies in which social transitions take place through the ruling authorities, will witness some degree of social and political change. This change remains a limited change based on the wishes of the authorities, as long as the citizens themselves have not made enough effort to obtain these rights. In this context, no modern technology tool or medium such as the Internet and social media will be separated from these conservative contexts in society. These tools will continue to be governed by the evolution of

society. When society is traditional, these tools will likewise be traditional and vice versa. Nevertheless, the tremendous developments in the field of women's rights in the past months may require greater efforts from Saudi women to benefit from them and work to support and develop them.

It should be noted here that the reality of Saudi women is not significantly different from the reality of women in other Gulf societies, despite what appears to be the broader area of freedom enjoyed by women in these societies. Women in other Gulf societies are governed by the same social and political contexts imposed on Saudi women, especially the domination of the family and the tribe, in addition to the weak political participation by women in these societies.

Nevertheless, it can be said that women in the rest of the Gulf societies enjoy many rights that guarantee them freedom of movement and travel at home and abroad, and that they can work with their male citizens and study with them side by side without any prior restrictions. In general, the distance between Saudi women and women in other Gulf societies, with regard to such rights, has reduced significantly in light of the widespread liberal regulations associated with King Salman and his crown prince. This is aided by the widespread use of social media, in terms of creating new social and political spheres for communication, and producing new awareness and knowledge patterns in current Saudi society.

Despite the stability of the position of the elected women to municipal councils until now, in addition to the issuance of a royal decision renewing their membership in thess councils for two years, the social and political transformations in the Kingdom will reveal the nature of this experience and the size of societal acceptance to it. The upcoming municipal elections, whose dates have not been announced, will show the actual and real extent of accepting women socially and politically, especially after the current unprecedented transformations that flow in the context of the women's movement and emancipation.

Bibliography

Abdo-Katsipis, Carla B. (2017). Women, Political Participation, and the Arab Spring: Political Awareness and Participation in Democratizing Tunisia. Journal of Women Politics & Policy, Volume 38, Issue 4. Pages: 413-429.

Abdul-Aziz, Moudi Mansour. (1994). Settling the Tribes: Role of the Bedouin in the Formation of the Saudi State. Melbourne: Echoes.

Abdulmohsen, Dareen. 2018. Working Women in Saudi Arabia Since 2012. PhD Presented to George Mason University.

Abramovitz, Mimi,1988. Regulating the Lives of Women, Social Welfare Policy from Colonial time to the Present. Boston, MA : South End Press.

AbuKhalil, As'ad. (March 1993). Toward the study of women and politics in the Arab world: The debate and the reality. Feminist Issues, Volume 13, Issue 1, pp 3-22.

Abu-Nasr, Donna and Nereim, Vivian. 2 January 2016. *Saudi Women Are Joining the Workforce in Record Numbers*. 10 August 2015.

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-08-10/saudi-women-are-joining-the-workforce-in-record-numbers Retrieved on July 9, 2019.

Acker, Joan. 1992. From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions. *Contemporary Sociology*. 21(5), 565-569.

Afif, Suad. (July 7-10, 2010). Voluntary Work in Civil Society: Saudi Women Volunteers as a Social Capital. Paper Presented at the Ninth International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research (Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey , July 7-10, 2010).Online, Retrieved on 15/8/2019.
https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.istr.org/resource/resmgr/working_papers_istanbul/afif_wp10.pdf

Afolabi, Olugbemiga Samuel. (2017). Trends and Patterns of Women Participation and Representation in Africa. *Gender & Behaviour.* 2017, Vol. 15 Issue 4, p10075-10088.

Ahmed, S. (March 1999). Islam and Development: opportunities and constraints for Somali women. Gender and development, Volume:7, Issue:1, Pages:69-72.

Aifan, Hanan Ahmad. (2015). Saudi Students' Attitudes Towards Using Social Media to Support Learning. PhD Presented to Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas.

Akande, B., A., R. 2007. The Evolution of Women in Middle Eastern Politics Opportunities f   or Women in the Parliament. Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis, the Fletcher school, Tufts University, http://fletcher.tufts.edu

Akeel, Maha Mostafa. (2010). Saudi Women in Mass Media. Al-Dar al Arabiya for Sciences.

Akeel, Maha Mostafa. (December 2003). An Investigation of Saudi Women's Experiences in the Media and their Opinions about their Status in it, the Barriers they Face and the Issues they Address. A thesis submitted to the Graduate Program in Communication Studies for the Master Degree, Faculty of Communication and Culture. University of Calgary, Alberta.

Al- A'ali, Ebtihaj; Al-Shammari, Minwir M.; Masri, Hatem. Eds. (2017).Arab Women and Their Evolving Roles in the Global Business Landscape. USA: IGI Group.

Al- Barghouti, Tamim. (2008). The Umma and the Dawla: The Nation-State and the Arab Middle East. USA, MI: Pluto Press.

Al- Nakib, Farah. (2016) Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life, 1st Edition, USA: Stanford University Press.

Al- Rasheed, Turki. (2017). Public Governance and Strategic Management Capabilities: Public Governance. Taylor and Francis Group.

Al-Abd Al-Hay, Abdelkhalek A. (1983). Contemporary Women's Participation in Public Activities: Differences between Ideal Islam and Muslim Interpretation with Emphasis on Saudi Arabia. PhD Presented to University of Denver.

Al-Ahmadi, Hanan. (2011). Challenges facing women leaders in Saudi Arabia, Human Resource Development International, 14:2, 149-166, DOI: 10.1080/13678868.2011.558311(online). http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2011.558311

Al-Alamy, Abdullah. 2015. Woman against Norms: Saudi Women between Reality and Challenges. (in Arabic). London: Dar Alsaqi.

Al-Ali, Nadje. (2000). Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East, The Egyptian Women's Movement-Cambridge University Press.

Al-Ankary, Khalid M.; El-Bushra, El-Sayed; Tietze, Wolf. Eds. (1989). Urban and Rural Profiles of Saudi Arabia, Stuttgart: Gebrüder Borntraeger.

Al-Anzi, Jomah. (2002). Dependency Relationship and Media Consumption: Perspective of Saudi People. PhD presented to College o f Journalism and Mass Communications University o f South Carolina

Al-Asaf, Mohammed Ibrahim. (2013). Democracy in the Contemporary Arab Thoughts. Lebanon: Arab Institute for Research & Publishing.

Alazami, Marzouqah Q. (2014). The Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS): Its role in shaping women's political participation in Kuwait (1963–2010). University of Missouri, Columbia.

Aldakheel, Khaled Abdulaziz. (2012). Development of awareness: the power of society and men in the Saudi women's novel. PhD Presented to University of Exeter.

Aldhaheri, Amina K. (2011). Arab Women Using Internet: Case Study the UAE and Oman. 5th International Technology, Education and Development Conference. edited by: Chova, LG; Torres, IC; Martinez, AL. Valencia, Spain, pp. 4579-4586.

Aldhaheri, Amina K. and Al-Noaimi, Aisha Abdullah. (2012). The UAE Public Opinion Towards Women Political Enabling: An Analytical Study of the Experience of Women's Membership in the Federal national Council of UAE. Eds by Chova, L.G.; Martinez, A.L.; Torres, I.C. Valencia, Spain

AlDoubi, Suzan Hassan. (Spring 2014). Road to Leadership: Experiences of Saudi Women in Higher Education. PhD Presented to School of Education, Colorado State University. 6th International Conference of Technology, Education and Development (INTED); Valencia, Spain, PP. 2602-2609.

Aldrich, John. (1996). *Why Parties? The Origins and Transformation of Political Parties in America.* Chricago: University of Chicago Press.

Alfalah, Matrook. (1987). The impact of the processes of modernization and social mobilization on the social and political structures of the Arab countries with special emphasis on Saudi Arabia. PhD presented to University of Kansas.

Al-Farsi, Sulaiman. (2013). Democracy and Youth in the Middle East: Islam, Tribalism and the Rentier. London: I.B Tauris.

Al-Fraih, Ibrahim. 2018. Between convention and Westernization: negotiating gender, religion and traditions in the contemporary fiction of Saudi women. PhD Presented to the University of Manchester.

Alghamdy, Saeed Saleh Goshash. (May 2011). A Step towards Democracy? 2005 Municipal Election in Saudi Arabia. A thesis presented for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy. Cardiff University: School of Journalism, Media, and Cultural Studies.

Alhamadi, Asma Abdulmana. (2017). The Influence of Social Media on Saudi Graduate Students: An Explanatory Case Study of Six Saudi Graduate Students Studying in American Universities. PhD Presented to Kansas State University.

Al-Hameli, Asmaa. (Jan 26, 2016). The UAE majlis: a treasure to be cherished. Online, Retrieved on 15/8/2019. https://www.thenational.ae/uae/the-uae-majlis-a-treasure-to-be-cherished-1.204083

Al-Hasan, Hasan Afif. (2019). Killing the Arab Spring. Algora Publishing.

Al-Hayat. (2005, December 7). Two Saudi women have been appointed at Jeddah Chamber Elections. Retrieved 22 February 2019, from http://www.alhayat.com/article/1627084/

Al-Haydar, Tariq. (2012). Women, Gender and the Nation-State in American and Saudi Culture. PhD Presented to The George Washington University.

Alhumaidi, Khalid Saud. (May 2016). Regime stability in Saudi Arabia: The role of the population composition represented by the tribes. MA submitted to the department of Political Science, University of South Dakota.

Al-Jabri, Mohammad Abed(2009). Democracy, Human Rights and Law in Islamic Thought. Beirut: Comtemporary Arab Sclarship in the Social Sciences, I.B. Tauris.

Al-Kawary, Ali Khalifa. (2002). Democratic Issue in the Arab World (in Arabic). Lebanon: Center for Arab Unity Studies.

Al-Kawary, Ali Khalifa. (2004). The Crisis of Democracy in the Arab World. Syria: Dar Al-Saqi.

Al-Khateeb, Salwa Abdel Hameed. (1998). Women, Family and the Discovery of Oil in Saudi Arabia. Marriage & Family Review, 27:1-2, 167-189.

Al-khateeb, Salwa. (2007). The Oil Boom and Its Impact on Women and Families in Saudi Arabia. In Al-Anoud Al-Sharekh, ed. The Gulf Family: Kinship Policies and Modernity. London: SOAS.

Allan, Stuart and Thorsen, Einar. (2009). Citizen Journalism, Global Perspectives. NY: PETER LANG.

Allen, Calvin H. (2016). Routledge Library Editions: The Gulf: Oman: the Modernization of the Sultanate (Volume 14) 1st Edition, UK: Routledge.

AlMahraj, Yazeed Abdullah. (2019). Public Relations in Saudi Arabia: An Islamic Perspective. pp. 98-114. In, Almutairi, Talal M. and Kruckeberg, Dean. Public Relations in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: An Arab Perspective Routledge.

Almal, Jawahar Abdulla. (2017). Local Politics: Examining the Political Participation of Qatari Women in the Central Municipal Council Elections. Master degree presented to Qatar University.

Al-Mallakh, Ragaei. (2014). Saudi Arabia: Rush to Development: Profile of an Energy Economy and Investment. London: Routledge.

Al-Mohsen, Mohsen. (2006). An Exploratory Study of the Views of Modernization of Educated Saudi Women. A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Education for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of Pittsburgh.

Al-Mouhandis, Zakiah B. (1986). Higher Education for Women in Saudi Arabia. PhD Presented to University of San Francisco.

AlMtairi, Naief M.(August 1985). Development of Oil and Societal Change in Saudi Arabia. Master Degree Presented to University of North Texas.

Al-Mufarreh, Raniah. (2017). To Drive or Not to Drive: A Critical Analysis of Saudi Female Advocates' Discourse. PhD Presented to University of Florida.

AlMunajjed, Mona. (1997). Women in Saudi Arabia Today. London: MacMillan Press.

Al-Nagar, Baker Salman. (2018). Difficult Modernity in the Arab Gulf Countries, the Transformation of the State and Society. London: Dar Al-Saqy.

Al-Naqeeb, Khaldoun. (2014). Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula. UK: Routledge.

Al-Oraimi, Suaad Zayed. (2004). Gender and development: The role of women in the formal economic and political spheres in the United Arab Emirates. PhD presented to the American University in Washington.

Alotaibi, Awadh. (July 2015). Media Portrayal: How Are Saudi Arabian Youth Presented in Traditional Media?. M.A. Presented to Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Western Illinoifs University.

Alothman, Abdulaziz B. (August 2013). A Survey of Social Media Users in Saudi Arabia to Explore the Roles, Motivations and Expectations toward Using Social Media for Social and Political Purposes. A thesis presented to the Arkansas State University.

Aloulou, Wassim J. (2018). Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia. Pp. 120-1511, in Al-A'Ali, Ebtihaj; Al-Shammari, Minwir M. and Masri, Hatem. Arab Women and Their Evolving Roles in the Global Business Landscape. USA: IGI Global.

Al-Rashidi, Kasib D. 2000. Predicting attitudes toward women working in mixed settings with men: The case of Saudi women working in hospitals. PhD Presented to Wayne State University.

Al-Romehy. (1995). Al-khaleej Laisa Nafta (Gulf is not Only Oil). In Arabic. Kuwait: Dar- Aljaded.

AlSalem, Fatima. (2015). Digital media and women's political participation in Kuwait. PhD presented to Indiana University.

Al-Salem, Salem Ali. (August 2005). The Impact of the Internet on Saudi Arabian EFL Females' Self-Image and Social Attitudes. A Dissertation Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research for the Degree Doctorate of Philosophy. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Alsayah, Abdelrahman Mohamed. 2012. Saudi women work between reality and desired. (in Arabic) KSA: Dar Al-Kefah.

Alshamsi, Mansoor Jassem. (2014). Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia: The Quest for Political Change and Reform. USA: Routledge.

Alsharkh, Yousef. (April 2012). The Social Media Effect on the Families of the Saudi Society from the Perspective of the Youth. A thesis presented for the degree of Master of Global Technology, Arizona State University. (Online) http://repository.asu.edu/attachments/93616/content/tmp/package-9oc5Q8/Alsharkh_asu_0010N_11662.pdf

Al-Subhi, Ahlam Khalfan. (2016). Women's representation in majlis al shura in Oman: How do gender ideology, Islam, and tribalism matter? PhD presented to Iowa State University.

Al-Sudairy, Hend. (2017). Modern Woman in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Rights, Challenges and Achievements. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Alsuhaibani, Fatimah. (2017). Women's Education in Saudi Arabia. PhD Presented to the Claremont Graduate University.

Al-Sulami, M.F. (2008). Reforms in Saudi Arabia: The case of municipal elections. Journal of King Abdulaziz Univesity, 16 (2), 113–135

Al-Tamimy, Abd-Elmalek Khalat. (December 2018). Modernity and Modernization in the Gulf States since the Middle of the Twentieth Century. Kuwait: Alam El-Ma'refa, No. 467.

Altman, D., & Perez-Linan, A. (2002). Assessing the quality of democracy: Freedom, competitiveness and participation in eighteen Latin American countries. *Democratization*, *9*(2), 85–100.

Altorki, S., and El-Solh, S. (1988). Arab Women in Entrepreneurship: Self-Reported Motivations and Correlates with Success in the Field. Studying your own society. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Altorki, Soraya and Cole, Donald P. (1998). Change in Saudi Arabia: A View from "Paris and Najd". Pp. 29-52. In, Hopkins, Nicholas S. and Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. Eds.(1998). Arab Society: Class, Gender, Power, and Development. American University in Cairo.

Al-Turaiqi, Abdullah. 2008. The Political System of Saudi Arabia, Ghainaa Publications.

Altuwayjiri, Norah. (2017). Political Tweeting: The Impact of Social Media on the Political Awareness of Saudi Women. Pp. 149-166, in. In Maestri, Elena and Profanter; Annemarie. Arab Women and the Media in Changing Landscapes. Palgrave Macmillan.

Al-Ubied, Al-Joharah Abd-Alaziz S. (2012) Female Representation by Saudi Artists. MA Presented to University of Sussex.

Alwedinani, Jawaher Awwad. (2016). Gender and Subject Choice in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia . PhD presented to University of York Department of Education.

Alyamani, Abdulrahman Abdullah. (1985). Women's Higher Education and Women's Employment In Saudi Arabia. PhD Presented to University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Alyedreessy, Leena Maria;   Helsdingen, Anne S.; Al-Sobaihi, Bayan. (2017). Social Media, Social Inclusion and Women's Self-Esteem. Pp. 111-122. In Maestri, Elena and Profanter; Annemarie. (2017). Arab Women and the Media in Changing Landscapes. Palgrave Macmillan.

Al-Yousef, Nora Abdelrahman. 2009. Saudi Women Empowerment. (In Arabic). Online: http://fac.ksu.edu.sa/sites/default/files/book.pdf

Al-Zahrani, Abdul-Razzag Homoud. (1986). Saudi Arabian Development: A Sociological Study of Its Relation to Islam and Its Impacts on Society. PhD Presented to Washington State University.

Amenta, Edwin. (1998). Bold Relief: Institutional Politics and the Origins of Modern Social Policy. USA: Princeton University Press.

Amenta, Edwin. 2003. "What We Know about the Development of Social Policy: Comparative and Historical Research in Comparative and Historical Perspective." Pp. 91–130 in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* edited by D. Rueschemeyer and J. Mahoney. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Amenta, Edwin. 2005. "State-Centered and Political Institutionalist Theory: Retrospect and Prospect." Pp. 96–114 in *Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization* edited by T. Janoski, R. Alford, A. Hicks, and M. A. Schwartz. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Amenta, Edwin; Nash, Kate and Scott, Alan. (2012). The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology. UK: Wiley Blackwell.

Amer, Moniah. (2016). Examination of Saudi Arabian women's perception of social media use. PhD presented to Bowie State University.

Amin, Samir. (2018). Modern Imperialism, Monopoly Finance Capital, and Marx's Law of Value: Monopoly Capital and Marx's Law of Value. New York: Monthly Review Press**.**

Amin, Samir. (June 2000). The Political Economy of the Twentieth Century, Monthly Review, V.52, I2, p.1.

Amin, Samir. (June 2001). Imperialism and Globalization, Monthly Review, V.53, I2, June 2001, p.6.

Amnesty International. (24 July 2018). What are Human Rights? Online Retrieved on 1/8/2019. https://www.amnesty.org.uk/what-are-human-rights

Amott, Teresa and Mattheai, Julie. (1996). Race, Gender, and Work: Multicultural Economic History of Women in the United States, Boston. MA: South End Press.

Anderson C. 1996. Political action and social integration. American Journal of Political Science. N.24:105–125.

Anderson, Margaret and Collins, Patricia Hill (Eds.). (2001). Fourth Edition. Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Arab Human Development Report 2016. (2016). Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality. N.Y. : UNDP United Nation Development Program.

Arab Social Media Influence Summit. 2015. Social Media Report. Prepared by TNS. Retrieve 18 November 2015. www.wpp.com/.../media/.../arabsocialmediareport-2015

Arato, Andrew and Cohen, Jean L. (1994). Civil Society and Political Theory. First MIT Press.

As'ad, Mohammed Ahmed. (1981). The Possibility of Change in Bedouin Society, A study of Current Development in Saudi Arabia. A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Claremont Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Faculty of Government.

Asencio, Hugo. (2015). Cases on Strategic Social Media Utilization in the Nonprofit Sector. IGI Global.

Ayubi, Nazih N. (1995). Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East. New York: I.B. Tauris.

Azimova, Amalkhon Y. (August 2016). Political Participation and Political Repression: Women in Saudi Arabia. A Thesis Presented to The Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies University of Denver. (online)
http://search.proquest.com.ugrade1.eul.edu.eg:2048/pqdtglobal/docview/18 30773767/fulltextPDF/EE9DC0D2E52D429EPQ/2?accountid=37552

Azzahrani, Mariam. (2016). Saudi Women Perception and Legal Awareness of Their Human Rights. In Neil Alford and Jean Frechet. Proceeding of the Eighth Saudi Students Conference in UK. Imperial College Press.

Baca Zinn, Maxine and Dill; Bonnie Thornton (eds.). (1994). Women of Color in U.S. Society. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Baltimore, Paul Reed (2014). From the Camel to the Cadillac: Automobility, Consumption, and the U.S.-Saudi Special Relationship. PhD Presented to the Department of History, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Bangert, Art and Al-Shahri Mabarak Fayez. (2016). A Comparison of Saudi and United States Faculty Use of Information and Communication Technology Tools. Pp. 1-23. In Topor, F. Sigmund. Ed. Handbook of Research on Individualism and Identity in the Globalized Digital Age. USA: IGI Global.

Bank Audi. 2015. "Saudi Arabia Economic Report." Report.

Bano, Masooda. (2018). Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change, Evolving Debates in Muslim-Majority Countries. Edinburgh University Press.

Baran, Paul A. (1966). Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Barker, Derek W. M. (2009). Tragedy and Citizenship Conflict, Reconciliation, and Democracy from Haemon to Hegel. State University of New York.

Bazeley, Patricia (2013). Qualitative Data Analysis. London: SAGE Publication.

Bebawi, Saba, and Bossio, Diana. (Eds.) (2014). *Social Media and the Politics of Reportage. The 'Arab Spring'.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Beck, Cheryl Tatano. (2018). Secondary Qualitative Data Analysis in the Health and Social Sciences. New York: Routledge.

Beetham, D., Carvalho, E., Landman, T., & Weir, S. (2008). Assessing the quality of democracy: A practical guide. Stockholm: IDEA.

Beitler, Ruth Margolies and Martinez, Angelica R. (2010). Women's Roles in the Middle East and North Africa. USA: Greenwood.

Beitz, Charles. (2009). The Idea of Human Rights. Oxford University Press.

Bell, Daniel .(1973). The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting. New York: Basic Book.

Bell, Daniel. 1999. The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting. New York: Basic Books.

Berg, Bruce L. (2001). Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. MA: A Pearson Education Company.

Bernard, Russell H.; Wutich, Amber Y. and Ryan, Gery W. (2016). Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches. London: SAGE Publication.

Bernstein, H. (1971) 'Modernization theory and the sociological study of development', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 7:2, 141-160.

Bettelheim, Charles. (1975). Economic Calculation and Forms of Property. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Biju, M.R. (2005). Human Rights in a Developing Society. Delhi: Krishan Mittal.

Bimber, B., Cunill, M. C., Copeland, L., Gibson, R. (2015). Digital media and political participation: The moderating role of political interest across acts and over time. Social Science Computer Review, issue 33, 21-42.

Boersema, David. (2011). Philosophy of Human Rights: Theory and Practice. NY: Routledge.

Bosanquet, Bernard. (2011). The Philosophical Theory of the State. Cambridge University Press.

Boucher, David. (2009). The Limits of Ethics in International Relations Natural Law, Natural Rights, and Human Rights in Transition. Oxford University Press.

Boyatzis, Richard (1998). Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13, 210-230.

Boylan, Michael. (2014). Natural Human Rights: A Theory. London: Cambridge University Press.

Bray, Barbara and Darlow, Michael. (2015). Ibn Saud: The Desert Warrior Who Created the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.

Broadbridge, Adelina and Horne, Suzanne. *1996.* Volunteers in charity retailing: recruitment and training. Nonprofit Manage. Leadership 6:255–270.

Brockman, John. (2011). Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think?: The Net's Impact on Our Minds and Future. New York: Harper Perennial.

Bruns, Axel; Enli, Gunn and Skogerbo, Eli. (2015). The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics. Routledge.

Brysk, Alison and Shafir, Gershon. (2004). People Out of Place: Globalization, Human Rights and the Citizenship Gap. Routledge.

Brysk, Alison. Ed. (2002). Globalization and Human Rights. University of California Press.

Bühler, Julian; Cwierz, Natalia and Bick Markus. (2016). The Impact of Social Media on Cause-Related Marketing Campaigns. Pp. 105-119. In Yogesh K. Dwivedi et. al. eds. Social Media: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly 15th IFIP WG 6.11 Conference on e-Business, e-Services, and e-Society, I3E 2016 Swansea, UK, September 13–15, 2016 Proceedings. Springer.

Bühlmann, M., Merkel, W., Müller, L., & Wessels, B. (2012). The democracy barometer: A new instrument to measure the quality of democracy and its potential for comparative research. *European Political Science*, *11*, 519–536.

Burr, Vivien. (2015). Social Constructionism. New York: Routledge.

Bussemaker, Jet. Ed. (1999). Citizenship and Welfare State Reform in Europe. London: Routledge.

Butenschon, Nils A.; Davis, Uri and Hassassian, Manuel. (2000). Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications. Syracuse University Press.

Bystydzienski, Jill M. (1992). Women Transforming Politics: Worldwide Strategies for Empowerment. US: Indiana University Press.

Cammett, Melani and Diwan, Ishac. (2013). A Political Economy of the Middle East. USA: Routledge.

Campbell, Rebecca and Wasco, Sharon M. (December 2000). Feminist Approaches to Social Science: Epistemological and Methodological Tenets. American Journal of Community Psychology, V.28, Dec. pp.773-791.

Carapico, Sheila. 2001. 'The Dialects of Fashion: Gender and Politics in Yemen,' in Women and Power in the Middle East, eds. Suad Joseph & Susan Slyomovics (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Cardoso, Fernando Henrique and Enzo, Faletto. (1979). Dependency and Development in Latin America. CA: University of California Press.

Carothers, Thomas. (2010). Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Cavalier, Robert J. (2005). The Impact of the Internet on Our Moral Lives. New York: State University of New York Press.

Cavatorta, Francesco and Durac, Vincent (2014). Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World: The Dynamics of Activism. UK: Routledge.

Central Department of Statistics & Information. 5 january 2016. "Population distribution in the adminstrative regions by nationality." 2014. *Central Department of Statistics & Information.* Document.

Chafetz, Janet Saltzman. (1997). Feminist Theory and Sociology Underutilized Contributions for Mainstream Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology.* v23. p97 (24).

Chambliss, Daniel F. and Schutt, Russell K. (2015). Making Sense of Social World: Methods of Investigation. London: SAGE Publication.

Chamlou, Nadereh. (2004). Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa, Women in the Public Sphere. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.

Chandhoke, N. (September 2010). The 'Civil' and the 'Political' in Civil Society. pp. 1-24. Journal of Democratization.

Chang, Wen-Chih; Hsu, Ming-rein and Rau, P.L. Patrick. Eds. (2011). Internationalization, Design and Global Development_ 4th International Conference, IDGD.

Chase, Anthony and Hamzawy, Amr. Eds. (2008). Human Rights in the Arab World, Independent Voices. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Chen, Sicong. (2018). The Meaning of Citizenship in Contemporary Chinese Society, An Empirical Study Through Western Lens. Springer.

Choueiri, Youssef M. (2000). Arab Nationalism: A History: Nation and State in the Arab World. UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Clapham, Andrew. (2016). Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions) 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press.

Coicaud, Jean Marc; Doyle, Michael W. and Gardner, Anne-Marie. (2003). The Globalization of Human Rights. NY: The United Nations University Press.

Cole, Donald P. (Spring 2003). Where Have the Bedouin Gone. *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 2, pp. 235-267.

Coleman, Isobel. (2013). Women, Religion, and Security: Islamic feminism on the Frontlines of change. Pp. 148-159. In Seiple, Chris; Hoover, Dennis R. and otis, Pauletta. (2013). The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security Paperback.

Commins, David. (2006). The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia. London: I.B. Tauris.

Commins, David. (2015). Islam in Saudi Arabia. Cornell University Press.

Communication and Information Technology Commission. (2010). Information Technology Report 2010: The Internet System in Saudi Arabia. Online, Retrieved on 22/8/2019.
https://www.citc.gov.sa/ar/reportsandstudies/Reports/Documents/IT%20006%20A%20-%20IT%20Report%202010.pdf

Conte, Alex and Burchill, Richard. (2016). Defining Civil and Political Rights, The Jurisprudence of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Routledge.

Conway, M. Margaret. (1999). Political Participation in the United States. Washington: CQ Press.

Conway, M. Margaret; Ahern, David W. and Steuernagel, Gertrude A. eds. (2004). Women and Political Participation: Cultural Change in the Political Arena. Washington: CQ Press.

Cordesman, Anthony H. (2003). Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty- First Century: The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic and Energy Dimensions. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Cordesman, Anthony H. (2009). Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Courington. Karen and Zuabi, Vanessa. (Summer/Fall 2011). Calls For Reform: Challenges to Saudi Arabia's Education System. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. Vol.12, No.2. pp. 137-144.

Creswell, John W. and Creswell, J. David. (2018). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. London: SAGE Publication.

Crick, Bernard. (2003). Democracy: A very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Curtis, Bruce and Curtis, Cate. (2011). Social Research, A Practical Introduction.USA, Los Angeles, SAGE Publication.

Dahl, Marilyn. (2010). Failure to Thrive in Constructivism: A Cross-Cultural Malady. Sense Publishers.

Dahl, Robert A. (1970). Modern Political Analysis (2nd ed.) New Jersey, Yale University, Princeton Hall Inc. Englewood Cliff.

Dáil, Paula vW. & Wells, Betty L., eds. (2018). We Rise to Resist: Voices from a New Era in Women's Political Action. NC: McFarland &Company.

Danforth, Loring M. (2016). Crossing the kingdom: Portraits of Saudi Women. University of California Press.

Daoudi, Anissa. (2016). Rethinking Arabic Linguistics: The History of the Internet in the Arabic-Speaking Region and the Rise of e-Arabic. Pp. 227-243. In Goggin, Gerard and McLelland, Mark. The Routledge Companion to Global Internet Histories. Tyloer and Francis Group.

Dash, K.N. (2004). Invitation to Social and Cultural Anthropology. New Delhi: Atlantic publishers and distributers.

De Zúñiga, H. G., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17*(3), 319-336.

Deibert, Ronald et. al. eds. (2010). Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace. The MIT Press.

Dey, Ian. (1993). Qualitative Data Analysis, A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists. London and New York: Routledge.

Di Gennaro, C., & Dutton, W. (2006). The Internet and the public: Online and offline political participation in the United Kingdom. Parliamentary Affairs, Volume 59, Issue 2, pp. 299-313.

Diamond, Larry and Plattner, Mark F. eds. (2014). Democratization and Authoritarianism in the Arab World. USA: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Diamond, Larry. (2009). The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Dickson, H.R.P. (1972). The Arab of the Desert, A Glimpse into Badawin Life in Kuwait and Sau'di Arabia. UK: George Allen & Unwin.

Diga, M., & Kelleher, T. (2009). Social media use, perceptions of decision-making power, and public relations roles. Public Relations Review, 35, 440–442.

Dijck, Jose Van. 2013. The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media. Oxford University Press, USA.

Doğruel, Fulya. (2015). A Long Road Ahead for Achieving Fully Fledged Equality: Saudi Women's Rights Activism. In Bakis, J. Karakoç, Karakoç, Jülide, Authoritarianism in the Middle East Before and After the Arab Uprisings. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Douzinas, Costas and Gearty, Conor. (2014). The Meanings of Rights: The Philosophy and Social Theory of Human Rights. Cambridge University Press.

Dresch, Paul and Piscatori, James. Eds. (2013). Monarchies and Nations: Globalization and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf. UK: I.B.Tauris.

Dunn, John. (2006). Democracy: A History. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Durham, M. and Kellner, D. 2002. *Media and cultural studies: Key works.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Eagleton, Mary. (Ed.). (2003). A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory. MA: Blackwell.

Economist Intelligence Unit. "Democracy index 2010." Report. 2010. Document.

Edwards, Beverley Milton. (2018). Contemporary Politics in the Middle East. 4th edition. UK: Polity Press.

Edwards, Michael. (2014). Civil Society. UK: Polity.

Ehrenberg, John R. (2017). Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea. New York: New York University Press.

Eid, Gamal et. al. 2015. #Turn_Around_and_Go_Back. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, Egypt.

http://anhri.net/wpcontent/uploads/2015/05/turnaround_and_gobackfinal-1-Autosaved.pdf

Eide; Asbjern; Krause; Catarina and Rosas and Allan Rosas. (2001). Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Eisenstein, Hester. (2010). Feminism Seduced, How Global Elites use Women's Labour and Ideas to Exploit the World. Routledge.

Elbadawi, Ibrahim and Kubursi, Atif (2017). Kuwait Democracy: Elusive or Resilient? Pp. 209-239. In Elbadawi, Ibrahim and Makdisi, Samir. Eds. Democratic Transition in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit. Cambridge University Press.

Elbadawi, Ibrahim and Makdisi, Samir. Eds. (2011). Democracy in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit. Routledge.

El-Ghannam, Ashraf R. (2003). Analytical study of women's participation in political life in Arab societies", Equal Opportunities International, Vol. 22 Issue: 8, pp.38-53.

Elhadj, Elie. *Saudi Arabia's Agricultural Project: From Dust to Dust*. 3. June 2008. Web Site. 2 January 2016.

Emmanuel, Arghiri. (1972). Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Engelder, Carl J. (2007) Fundamentals of Semi-Micro Qualitative Analysis. UK: Ehrsam Press.

England, Paula. (Ed.). (1993). Theory on Gender, Feminism on Theory. NewYork: Aldine and Gruyter.

Eum, Ikran. (2014). The Arab Spring and Paradigm Shift of Saudi Women's Self-Awareness for Women's Movement. Journal of Middle Eastern Affairs. V. 13, Issue 4. Pp. 63-90.

Eyadat, Zaid. (August 2009). An Alternative Model of Transition in Middle East: Bounded consociationlism. A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Department of Political Sciences, University of Southern California.

Fadaak, Talha H. and Roberts, Ken. (2018). Youth in Saudi Arabia, Palgrave Macmillan.

Fageeh, Esam. (2012). Participation of women in the Saudi Shura Council : Impact of the internet and perception of Saudi Citizen. Master Degree presented to University of Bedfordshire, UK.

Fahim, Kareem. (2 August 2019). Saudi Arabia allows women to travel without permission from men. Washington Post. Online, Retrieved on 11/8/2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/saudi-arabia-allows-women-to-travel-without-permission-from-men/2019/08/02/532fb432-b4f1-11e9-acc8-1d847bacca73_story.html?noredirect=on

Fairclough, N. L. (1989). *Language and power.* New York: Longman.

Farrar-Myers, Victoria A. and Vaughn, Justin S. eds. (2015). Controlling the Message: New Media in American Political Campaigns. NYU Press.

Fattah, Hassan M. *Saudi Arabia Begins to Face Hidden AIDS Problem* .8 August 2006. 2 January 2016.

Ferree, Myra Marx and Tripp; Aili Mari. (2006). Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights. New York: New York University Press.

Ferree, Myra Marx, Judith Lorber and Beth B. Hess, (Eds.). (2001). Revisioning Gender, Walnut Creek. CA: AltaMira Press.

Finkel, Steven E., and Karl-Dieter Opp. 1991. "Party Identification in Collective Political Action." Journal of Politics, Volume 53, pp. 339–71.

Fisk, Robert and Cockburn, Patrick. (2017). Arab Spring Then and Now: From Hope to Despair. Independent Print Limited.

Forbes. *Saudi Arabia*. December 2015. Website . 1 January 2016.

Ford, L. (2017). *Women and politics: The pursuit of equality*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Frank, Andre Gunder. (2011). World Accumulation. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Freedman, Rosa. (2015). Failing to Protect, The UN and the Politicization of Human Rights. Oxford University Press.

Frost, Mervynn. (2002). Constituting Human Rights: Global Civil Society and the Society of Democratic States, London, Routledge.

Funsch, Linda Pappas. (2015) Oman Reborn: Balancing Tradition and Modernization 1st ed. UK: Palgrave Macmillan

Gabriela, Taylor. (2013). Give Your Marketing a Digital Edge. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Gazzaz, Osman Bakur. (April 2006). Internet Influence and Regulation: A case Study in Saudi Arabia. A Thesis submitted to the Center of Mass Communication research for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of Leicester.

General Directorate of Elections, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (GDE). (2015). Result and statistic. Retrieved 15

February   2019,   from
http://www.intekhab.gov.sa/Arabic/Pages/statistics.aspx

Giddens, Anthony. (1990). The Consequences of Modernity. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gies, Lieve. (2015). Media, Culture and Human Rights Law. NY: Routledge.

Giroux, Henry A. 2009. "The Iranian Uprisings and the Challenge of the New Media: Rethinking the Politics of Representation." *Fast Capitalism* 5.2 Web. Retrieved 11 Nov. 2015.
http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/5_2/Giroux5_2.html

Goldman, Merle. (2005). From Comrade to Citizen: The Struggle for Political in China. Harvard University Press.

Goldstone, Jack A. 2003. "Comparative Historical Analysis and Knowledge Accumulation in the Study of Revolutions." Pp. 41–90 in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Gomathi C. and Gowtham P.V. 2013. Social Media Networking State of Social Media. Proceedings of National Conference on New Horizons in IT. Retrieve 22 November 2015.
http://www.met.edu/Institutes/ICS/NCNHIT/papers/47.pdf

Goodin, Robert E. and Reeve, Andrew. Eds. (1988). Liberal Neutrality. Routledge Revival.

Goodman, Ryan and Pegram, Thomas. eds. (2012). Human Rights, State Compliance, and Social Change Assessing National Human Rights Institutions. Cambridge University Press.

Gratton, Chris and Jones, Ian. (2004). Research Methods for Sports Studies. USA: Routledge.

Grbich, Carol. (2012). Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction. SAGE publication.

Guazzone, Laura and Pioppi, Daniela. (2012). The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization: The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East. USA: Ithaca Press.

Gubrium, Jaber F. and Holstein, James A. (2001). Handbook of Interview Research, USA, Los Angeles, SAGE Publication.

Gutmann, Amy and Thompson, Dennis. (1998). Democracy and Disagreement. USA: Belknap Press.

Habermas, J. 1991. The Structural Transformation o f Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category o f Bourgeois Society. Cambridge: Polity.

Haddad, Tania and Al-Hindy, Elie. (2019). Religion and Civil Society in the Arab World: In the Vortex of Globalization and Tradition. Indiana: Routledge.

Haddow, George D. and Haddow, Kim S. (2014). Disaster Communications in a Changing World. Butterworth-Heinemann.

Haj- Ismail, H.A. (1994). The participation of urban women in political and economic activities in the Arab world. PhD presented to Keele University, UK.

Hakem, Lama M. (2015). Saudi Women's Public Empowerment: Barriers and Improvements. Nova Southeastern University.

Hallawani, Ebtesam Abdul-Rahman. 1982. Working Women in Saudi Arabia: Problems and Solutions. PhD Presented to the Claremont Graduate University.

Hamdan, Saeed Saeed. (1990). Social Change in the Saudi Family. PhD submitted to the Iowa State University.

Hamdan, Sara. (Jan. 16, 2013). Women Appointed to Saudi Council for First Time. New York Times. Retrieved on Feb. 10, 2019 from: https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/17/world/middleeast/women-appointed-to-saudi-council-for-first-time.html

Hamilton, Allison Joy. (2013). Competing pathways of the internet & new media's influence on women political candidates. PhD presented to the University of Iowa.

Hanafi, Sari and Arvanitis, Rigas. (2015). Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise. Routledge.

Hannon, Ragad Abdulhameed and Schumm, Walter Richard. (Oct. - Dec. 2017). Demographic Factors Associated with Online Shopping Experiences of Saudi Arabian Women. International Journal of Online Marketing. Volume 7, Issue 4, pp. 52-62.

Hardina, Donna. (2013). Interpersonal Social Work Skills for Community Practice. NY. Springer Publishing Company.

Hassan, Montaha. (2014). Determinants of civic engagement and political participation: A case study in Yemen. PhD presented to Georgetown University.

Have, Paul Ten. (2004). Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology. London: SAGE Publications.

Haykel, Bernard; Hegghammer, Thomas; and Lacroix. (2015). Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Haykel, Bernard; Hegghammer, Thomas; Lacroix. Eds. (2015). Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hegghammer, Thomas, "*Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia*", International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 84, No. 4 (Jul., 2008), pp. 701-715

Held, Colbert. (2015). Middle East Patterns, Student Economy Edition: Places, People, and Politics. Routledge.

Heradstveit, Daniel and Hveem, Helga. (2004). Oil in the Gulf: Obstacles to Democracy and Development. USA: Routledge.

Herb, Michael. (1999). All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchie, Suny Series in Middle Eastern Studies. New York: State University of New York Press.

Highfield, Tim. (2016). Social Media and Everyday Politics. UK: Polity.

Hilden, Joy Totah. (2011). Bedouin Weaving of Saudi Arabia and its Neighbors. UK: Arabian Publishing Limited.

Hitman, Gadi. (Spring 2018). Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism and Nationalism: The Evolution of Wataniyya into Qawmiyya. Digest of Middle East Studies, Volume 27, Issue 1, pp. 79-96.

Holden, David. (1982). The House of Saud: The Rise and Rule of the Most Powerful Dynasty in the Arab World. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston.

Hollow Words, Empty Reforms, Saudi Arabia's Effective Refusal to Reform Women's Rights. (June 2017). Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain.

Hoodfar, Homa and Ghoresishian, Ana. (2012). Morality policing and the public sphere: women reclaiming their bodies and their rights. PP. 234-268. In Hélie, Anissa and Hoodfar, Homa Hoodfar . London: Zed Books.

Howard, Phillip N. and Hussain, Muzammil. 2013. Democracy's Fourth Wave?: Digital Media and the Arab Spring. New York : Oxford University Press. Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: May 2013. http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acprof :oso/9780199936953.001.0001/acprof-9780199936953-chapter-0?print=pdf

Hubbord, Ben. (1 August 2019). Saudi Arabia Says Women Can Travel Without Male Guardians. The New York Times. Online, retrieved on, 11/8/2019.

https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/01/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-guardianship-women.html

Huckfelt, Robert and Sprague, John. 1995. Citizens, Politics and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Human Rights Watch, Saudi Arabia: Male Guardianship Policies Harm Women: Sex Segregation Keeps Women Out of Public Life (April. 20, 2008) http://www.hrw.org/news/2008/04/20/saudiarabia-male-guardianship-policies-harm-women

Human Rights Watch. (2008). Perpetual Minors, Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia. USA: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch. (2018). World Report. USA: Dar Yasin/AP. Human Rights

Huntingtan, Samuel and Nelson, Joan m. (1976). No Easy Choice: Political Participation in developing Countries. Cambridge, M A: Harvard University Press.

Hurst, Charles E. (2001). Social Inequality: Forms, Causes, and Consequences. 4th ed. Boston and London: Allyn and Bacon.

Inkeles, Alex. (1983). Exploring Individual Modernity. New York: Columbia University Press.

Internet technologies Glossary (online)
http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Facebook

Ishay, Micheline R. (2008). The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era. University of California Press.

Ismail, Salwa. (1995). Democracy in Contemporary Arab Intellectual Discourse. Pp. 93-112. In Noble, Paul; Brynen, Rex and Bahgat Korany. Eds. Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World. London: Boulder.

Jackman, Robert. (1987). 'Political institutions and voter turnout in industrialized democracies.' American Political Science Review. 81: 405-423.

Jamjoom, Mohammed. (12 January 2013). Small step forward for Saudi women, but will it affect their daily lives? CNN. Online, Retrieved on 12 febraury 201   https://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/11/world/meast/saudi-arabia-women/index.html

Janbi, Waad A. (2018). Feminist Analysis: Saudi Arabian women seize their freedom through cinema. PhD Presented to Long Island University.

Jawad, Haifaa A. (1998). The Rights of Women in Islam. Palgrave Macmillan.

Jayakumar, N.K. (2011). Human Rights: From Conceptualization to Realization. Pp.37-43. In In Nair, Sukumaran P. (2011). Human Rights in a Changing. Delhi: Kalpaz Publication.

Jenkins, J. Craig and Form; William. 2005. "Social Movements and Social Change." Chapter 15 in *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization* edited by T. Janoski, R. Alford, A. Hicks, and M. A. Schwartz. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Jenlink, Patrick M. (September 2007). Creating Public Spaces and Practiced Places for Democracy, Discourse, and the Emergence of Civil Society. Syst Pract Act Res, 20:429–440.

Jepperson, Ronald L. 1991. "Institutions, Institutional Effects, and Institutionalism." Pp. 143–163 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* edited by W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Johnston, Ronald. J., Charles J. Pattie, and David Rossiter. 1996. "The UK's Antiquated Electoral System: Bringing.

Johnston, Ronald. J., Charles J. Pattie, and Lucy C. Johnston. 1989. "The Impact of Constituency Spending on the Result of the 1987 British General Election." *Electoral Studies* 8:143–55.

Jones, Calvert W. (2017) Bedouins into Bourgeois: Remaking Citizens for Globalization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Joseph, Sarah and Castan, Melissa. (2013). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Cases, Materials, and Commentary. UK: Oxford University Press.

Joseph, Suad. (2018). Arab Family Studies, Critical Reviews. Syracuse University Press.

Kamau, Samuel C. (2016). Engaged Online: Social Media and Youth Civic Engagement in Kenya. Pp. 115-140. In Mustavairo, Bruce. Eds. Digital Activism in the Social Media Era: Critical Reflections on Emerging Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa. Palgrave Macmillan.

Kandil, Amany. (1995). Civil Society in the Arab World: Private Voluntary Organization. London: Civicus.

Kaplan, Temma. (2014). Democracy: A World History. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Karakoç, Jülide. ed. (2015). Authoritarianism in the Middle East, Before and After the Arab Uprisings. Palgrave Macmillan.

Karl, Terry L. (January 2007). Oil-Led Development: Social, Political, and Economic Consequences. Working Paper No. 80. Stanford University: Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law CDDRL. Online Retrieved on March 3, 2017: https://fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/No_80_Terry_Karl__Effects_of_Oil_Development.pdf

Karolak, Magdalena. (2014). Saudi Arabian Women's Rights and the Arab Spring Uprisings: Contextualizing Grassroots Activism and State Reforms. In Olimat; Muhamad S. eds. Handbook of Arab women and Arab Spring: Challenges and Opportunities. USA: Routledge.

Kattan, Samira Mahmoud. (1991). Women's work in Saudi Arabia: an analysis of tradition and change. PhD Presented to university of London.

Kéchichian, J.A. (2013). Legal and political reforms in Saudi Arabia. London: Routledge.

Kellner, D. 1999. *Habermas, the public sphere and the democracy: A critical intervention.* Available at: <URL:http://gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/2009_essays.html> [Accessed: 10 January 2016]

Khannous, Touria. (2011). Moroccan Women Contrabandists: interferences in public space. Pp. 248-258. in Sadiqi, Fatima and Ennaji. Eds. Women in the Middle East and North Africa, Agents of Change. Routledge.

Khunaizi, Tayseer Baqui. (1993). Economic, social, and political development in Saudi Arabia: A historical analysis. PhD submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Kansas.

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. Business Horizons, 54(3), 241-251.

Kim, Carolyn Mae. (2016). Social Media Campaigns: Strategies for Public Relations and Marketing. Routledge.

King, Nigel; Harocks, Christine and Brooks, Joanna. (2019). Qualitative Research. London: SAGE Publication.

King, Richard H. (1992). Civil Rights and the Idea of Freedom. Oxford University Press.

Kiraly, Miranda, Tayler, Meagan. Eds. (2015). Freedom Fallacy: The Limits of Liberal Feminism. Australia: Connor Court Publishing.

Kitschelt, Herbert 1994. *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kostakopoulou, Dora. (2008). The Future Governance of Citizenship. Cambridge University Press.

Kraidy, Marawan M. (2012). Reality Television and Arab Politics: Contention in Public Life. Cambridge University Press.

Kulack, Adam. (2017). The Role of Private, Non- Government Organizations and New State Institutions in the Gulf in the Development of Civil Society: The

Example of Saudi Arabia. Pp. 299-317. In, Thompson, Mark C. and Quilliam, Neil. Eds. Policy Making in the GCC, State, Citizens and Institutions. London: I.B. Tauris.

Kvale, S. 1983. The qualitative research interview: A phenomenological and a hermeneutical mode of understanding. *Journal of phenomenological psychology.*

Lahlali, El-Mustapha. (2011). Contemporary Arab Broadcast Media. Edinburgh University Press.

Langmia, Kehbuma; Tyree, Tia C.M.; O'Brien, Pamela and Sturgis, Ingrid. Eds. (2013). Social Media: Pedagogy and Practice. UPA Publishers.

Lawson Kay and Merkl, Peter H. Eds. 1988. *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lawson, Kay Ed. 1980. *Political Parties and Linkage: A Comparative Perspective.* New Haven: Yale University Press;

Le Renard, Amelie. (2014). A Society of Young Women: Opportunities of Place, Power, and Reform in Saudi Arabia. 1st Edition. US: Stanford University press.

Learner, K. Lee; Lerner, Adrienne Wilmouth; Lerner, Brenda Wilmoth. (2006). Human and Civil Rights: Essential Primary Sources. New York: Thomson Gale.

Leavy, Patricia. (2017). Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches. New York: Guilford Press.

Ledstrup, Martin. (2019). Nationalism and Nationhood in the United Arab Emirates. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lener, Daniel. (1958).The passing of traditional society: modernizing the Middle East. USA: Free Press.

Levine, D., & Molina, J. (2011). The quality of democracy in Latin America. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Lewis, James R. and Skutsch, Carl. (2001). The human rights encyclopedia. NY: M.E. Sharpe, INC.

Lijphart, Arend. (1999). Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in Thirty-Six countries. New Haven: Yale University.

Little, Andrew T. *Communication Technology and Protest*. The Journal of Politics, Vol. 78, No. 1 (January 2016), pp. 152-166.

Long, David E. and Maisel, Sebastian. (2010). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. USA: University Press of Florida.

Lorber, Judith. (1998). Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Lukes, Steven. 1974. *Power: A Radical View*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Lule, Jack. (2017). Globalization and Media: Global Village of Babel. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Mady, Abdel-Fattah. (2005). Islam and Democracy: Elite Political Attitudes and the Democratization Process in the Arab Region. PhD Presented to the Faculty of Claremont Graduate University, California.

Maestri, Elena and Profanter; Annemarie. (2017). Arab Women and the Media in Changing Landscapes. Palgrave Macmillan.

Magnani, Matteo; Montesi, Danilo and Rossi, Luca. (2013).Factors Enabling Information Propagation in a Social Network Site. Pp. 411-426. In Bradley S. Rees, Keith B. Gallagher (auth.), Tansel Özyer, Jon Rokne, Gerhard Wagner, Arno H.P. Reuser (eds.). The Influence of Technology on Social Network Analysis and Mining. Springer.

Majlis, a Cultural and Social Space. (2015). Online, Retreived on 15/8/2019 https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/majlis-a-cultural-and-social-space-01076

Makki, Yousif. (October 2011). Not what it seems: the role of the tribe in state–society relations in Saudi Arabia. Contemporary Arab Affairs, Vol. 4, No. 4, 445–462.

Mann, Chris and Stewart Fiona. (2000). Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Researching Online. UK: SAGE Publication Ltd.

Margetts, Helen. (2015). Political Turbulence: How Social Media Shape Collective Action. USA: Princeton University Press.

Marilley, Suzanne M. (1996). Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820-1920. Harvard University Press.

Mark, L. Hass and Lesch, David W. (2016). The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprisings. Westview Press.

Marvasti, Amir B. (2004). Qualitative Research in Sociology. London: SAGE Publication.

Matejka, Jaquelin Cranfill. (1983). Political Participation in the Arab World: The Majlis Mechanism (Middle East, North Africa). PhD presented to the University of Texas at Austin.

Mawsly, Mariam. 2017. Under Abaya. (In Arabic).

Mayer, Ann Elizabeth. (2013).Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics. Routledge.

McAdam D, Paulsen R. 1993. Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism. American Journal of Sociology. No. 99:640–67

McDowall, Angus. *Saudi Arabian women vote for first time in localelections*. 12 December 2015. Article . 1 January 2016.

Meijer, Roel. (2019). Reform in Saudi Arabia: The Gender-Segregation Debate. Middle East Policy Council. Volume XVII, Winter, Number 4, Online, Retrieved on March 3, 2019. https://mepc.org/reform-saudi-arabia-gender-segregation-debate

Metz, Helen Chapin, ed. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992. (Online) http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/

Meyer, David S. and Debra C. Minkoff. 2004. "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity." *Social Forces* 82:1457–1492.

Mies, Maria. (1986). Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World-Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor. London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J., USA: Zed Books; Atlantic.

Miles, M. and Huberman, A. 1994. *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Miles, Matthew B.; Huberman, A. Michael and Johnny Saldaña. (2013). Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. London: SAGE.

Miller, David. (2003). Political Philosophy, A very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press.

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. (2019). Online, Retrieved on 18/8/ 2019. https://www.mcit.gov.sa/en/media-center/news/92952

Mirahamadi, Gedieh. Ed. (2005). Islam and Civil Society. MD: WORDE. (Online) http://www.worde.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/WordeIslamSocieties.pdf

Mirshak., Nadim. (June 2019). Rethinking resistance under authoritarianism: civil society and non-contentious forms of contestation in post-uprisings Egypt. Pp. 702-719. Journal of Social Movement Studies.

Mitra, Subrata K. (2013). Citizenship as Cultural Flow, Structure, Agency and Power. Springer.

Mohamed, Farahat. (March 2011). The Determinants of Political Participation of Rural Youth: A Comparative Study between Male and Female Youth in Menoufiya Governorate. Journal of Agricultural Science. Faculty of Agriculture. Ain Shams University. V. 19. I.1.

Mohammadpour, Ahmed and Soleimani, Kamel. (March 2019). Interrogating the tribal: the aporia of 'tribalism' in the sociological study of the Middle East, British Journal of Sociology.

Montagu, Caroline. (March 2015). Civil Society in Saudi Arabia: The Power and Challenges of Association. Chatham House. Online:

https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150331SaudiCivil.pdf

Montagu, Caroline. (Winter 2010). Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector in Saudi Arabiya. *Middle East Journal,* Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 67-83

Morlino, Leonardo. (2011). Changes for democracy: Actors, structures, processes. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morlino, Leonardo. (September 2009). Qualities of Democracy: How to Analyze Them. Italy, Florence : Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane. Online, Retreived on 22/8/2019.

http://indicatorsinfo.pbworks.com/f/Morlino+Qualities+of+Democracy.pdf

Morris, Alan.(2015). A Practical Introduction to In-depth Interviewing. USA, Los Angeles, SAGE Publication.

Morsink, Johannes. (2009). Inherent Human Rights Philosophical Roots of the Universal Declaration. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mosley, Layna. (2013). Interview Research in Political Science. USA: Cornell University Press.

Mulgan, R.G. (May 2017). Defining Democracy. Journal of Political Science. Pp. 3-9.

Muller, Edward N. (1979). Aggressive Political Participation. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Munck, G. L. (2016). What is democracy? A reconceptualization of the quality of democracy. *Democratization*, *23*(1), 1–26.

Murthy, Dhiraj. (2013). Twitter: Digital Media and Society Series. Polity Press.

Murthy, Dhiraj. (December 2012). Towards a Sociological Understanding of Social Media: Theorizing Twitter, Sage Publications, Ltd, Vol. 46, No. 6, pp. 1059-1073.

Mutua, Makau. (2002). Human Rights A Political and Cultural Critique. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Nassef, Khadija. (2004). Women and Social Services in Saudi Arabia. Thesis submitted to The Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences, West Virginia University.

Nereim, Vivian. $50 Oil Puts Saudi Budget Deficit Beyond Reach of Spending Cuts. 16 Spetember 2015. Article. 1 January 2016.

Niblock, Tim. (2006). Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival. NY: Routledge.

Nickel, James W. (2007). Making Sense of Human Rights. USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Noble, Paul; Brynen, Rex and Bahgat Korany. Eds. (1995). Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World. London: Boulder.

Noor Al-Deen, Hana and Hendricks, Johm Allen. (2012). Social Media: Usage and Impact. UK: Lexington Press. NY: Continuum.

Oakley, Francis. (2005). Natural Law, Laws of Nature, Natural Rights: Continuity and Discontinuity in the History of Ideas.

Obeid, Azam. 2015. Social Media Impact on Arab Spring, a Comparison Study between four Middle Eastern Countries. Hawaii Pacific University, ProQuest Discovery Guides. http://search.proquest.com.ugrade1.eul.edu.eg:2048/docview/1755941431?accountid=37552

Opp, Karl-Dieter. 1990. "Postmaterialism, Collective Action, and Political Protest." *American Journal of Political Science* 34:212–35.

Oshan, Maryam S. (2007) Saudi Women Student and the Internet: Gender and Culture Issues. PhD presented to Loughborough University.

Osposito, John L. and Voll, John O. (1996).Islam and Democracy. UK: Oxford University Press.

Othman, Othman Abdullah. (1976). The Modern Nation of Saudi Arabia: An Introduction. A Master Degree Presented to Pacific Lutheran University, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Ottaway, Marina. (2003). Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism. Carnegie Endowment of International Peace.

Owen, Roger. (2004). State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East. UK: Routledge.

Packer, Corrinne A.A. (2002). Using Human Rights to Change Tradition: Traditional Practices Harmful to Women's Reproductive Health In sub-Saharan Africa. NY: Intersentia.

Padmakumar, K. (2011). Human Rights and Policing in A Plural Democracy. pp. 328-340, In Nair, Sukumaran P. (2011). Human Rights in a Changing. Delhi: Kalpaz Publication.

Park, Hyung Lae. (2010). Internet, Political Participation and New Digital Divide: Internet influence on Political Participation: Supplement or Revolution?. USA: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.

Parker, Chad. (2008). Transports of Progress: The Arabian Oil Company and American Modernization in Saudi Arabia, 1945-1973. A PhD Degree Submitted to Department of History, Indiana University.

Peltzman, Sam. (1998). Political Participation and Government Regulation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Perry, T., et al., 1998. Internet use by university students: an interdisciplinary study on three campuses. Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy, 8(2), 136-141.

Pitkin, Hanna F. (1972). The Concept of Representation. University of California Press: CA.

Powell, G. Bingham. (1986). "American turnout in comparative perspective." American Political Science Review. 80: 17-43.

Powell, William. (1982). Saudi Arabia and Its Royal Family. UK: Lyle Stuart.

Pratt, Nicola Christine. (2006). Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Propst, Leah. (2017). Women's Human Rights in Saudi Arabia and U.S.-Saudi Relations. Grin Verlag.

Przeworski, Adam and Limongi, Fernando. (1997) 'Modernization: Theories and Facts', *World Politics*, 49(2): 155-83.

Pye, Lucien w. (1966). Aspects of Political Development Series in Comparative Politics. Boston , MA: little, Brown , 1966) p. 52-55

Quaranta, Mario. (April 2018). The Meaning of Democracy to Citizens Across European Countries and the Factors Involved. *Social Indicator Research*. Vol. 136, Issue 3, pp. 859-880.

Rai, Shirin M. Ed. (2000). International Perspectives on Gender and Democratization. UK: Macmillan Press.

Rajkhan, Safaa Fouad. (June 2014). Women in Saudi Arabia Status, Rights, and Limitations. A paper submitted to the faculty of the University of Washington Bothell

Ramady, Mohamed A. (2016). The Political Economy of Wasta, Use and Abuse of Social Capital Networking. Springer International Publishing

Rambe, Patient. (2012). Critical discourse analysis of collaborative engagement in Facebook postings. Australian Journal of Education Technology. 28(2), 295-314.

Ravi, Bheemaiah Krishnan. (2019). Modern Media, Elections and Democracy. SAGE Publication.

Ravlich, Anthony George. (2008). Freedom from Our Social Prisons: The Rise of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. NY: Lexington Books.

Rawas, Randalah M. (2016). Online lead users and social change in Arab conservative societies: the case of Saudi Arabia. PhD Presented to University of Sussex.

Reda, Nawal. (June 2017). Political Participation of Arab Women and New Media: A case study of an electronic blogging. Human Science Journal. Algeria, No. 7. Pp. 228-240.

Reichenbach, Hans. (2006). Experience and Prediction: An Analysis of the Foundations and the Structure of Knowledge. USA: University of Notre Dame Press.

Reporters Without Borders. *Middle East and North Africa*. n.d. 1 January 2016.

Reuters. *Saudi plans spending cuts, revenue push to shrink 2016 Budget deficit*. 28 December 2015. Article . 4 January 2016.

Rice, Condoleezza. (2017). Democracy: Stories from the long Road to Freedom. New York: Twelve.

Richardson Jr. Glenn W. (2016). Social Media and Politics: A New Way to Participate in the Political Process. USA: Praeger.

Rieger, René. (2016). Saudi Arabian Foreign Relations: Diplomacy and Mediation in Conflict Resolution. Routledge.

Rizzo, Helen Mary. (2000). Islam, democracy and the status of women: The case of Kuwait. PhD presented to The Ohio State University.

Roberts, A. (2010). The quality of democracy in Eastern Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rodriguez, Adrianna. (2 August 2019). Saudi Arabia finally allows women to have passports, travel without a man's permission. USA Today, Online, retrieved on 11/18/2019.

https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/08/02/women-saudi-arabia-allowed-have-passports-travel-independently/1898054001/

Ronald Inglehart. 1997. Modernization and Postmodernization. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosenstone, Steven J and Hansen, John Mark.1993. Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America. NY: Macmillan.

Rostow, Walt. 1971. The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto 2nd edition. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Roux, Cornelia and Becker, Anne. Eds. (2019). Human Rights Literacies Future Directions. Springer.

Roxborough, Ian. (1988) 'Modernization Theory Revisited: A Review Article', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30(4): 753-61.

Russell Dalton. 1998. Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies. 2nd edition. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Ruth, Wodak (2008). Handbook of Communication in the Public Sphere. NY: Mouton de Gruyter.

Sadiqi, Fatima. eds. (2016). Women's Movements in Post"Arab Spring" North Africa. US: Palgrave Macmillan.

Safranak, R. March 2012. *"The Emerging Role of Social Media in Regime Change"* (PDF). Proquest Discovery Guides. Retrieved 12 November 2015. ProQuest Discovery Guides.

Saldana, Johnny (2009). The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Samin, Nadav. (November 2013). The Dark Matter of tribal Belonging: Genealogical Representation and Practice in Saudi Arabia. PhD Presented to the department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Princeton.

Sarsar, Saliba and Stephan, Manal. (2016). Overcoming the Divide: Arab Women between Traditional Life and a Globalizing Culture. pp. 331-351. In Mele, Vincenzo and Vujnovic, Marina. Eds. Globalizing Cultures: Theories, Paradigms, Actions. Haymarket Books.

Sassoon, Joseph. (2016). Anatomy of Authoritarianism in the Arab Republics. USA: Cambridge University Press.

Saudi Arabia Social Media Statistics 2018, Global Media Insight. (Online) https://www.globalmediainsight.com/blog/saudi-arabia-social-media-statistics/ Retrieved on 12 April 2019.

Saudi Embassy. *Administrative Regions*. n.d. Web Site. 1 January 2016.

Saudi Women's, Their Rights and Duties. (in Arabic) .2004. Medina. Online: https://www.kacnd.org/leqa_info/KACND_3th_InternationalMeeting_Inside.pdf

Sayigh, Yusuf A. (1978). The Economies of the Arab World (RLE Economy of Middle East): Development. Routledge.

Sayyid, Mustapha K. (2007). International Dimensions of Middle Eastern Authoritarianism: The G8 and External Efforts at Political Reform. Pp. 215-230, in Schlumberger, Oliver. Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes. CA: Stanford University Press.

Schauer, Pete. (2018). Politicians on Social Media. Greenhaven Publishing.

Schliep, Rebekka. (2017). The implication of the Rentier State Theory Regarding the Major Oil-Producing States of the Middle East. USA: Grin Publishing.

Schroeder, Ralph. (2018). Social Theory After the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization. UCL Press.

Scott, Catherine V. (1996). Gender and Development: Rethinking Modernization and Dependency Theory. UK: Lynne Rienner Publishers

Seidman, Irving. (2013). Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences. New York: Teachers College Press.

Shalaby, Karim. (2008). "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,". Pp.65-85 in, Ibrahim, L. Barbara and Sherif, H. Dina (eds.): From Charity to Social Change. Trends in Arab Philanthropy, Cairo.

Shalaby, Marwa and Moghadam, Valentine M. Eds. (2016). Empowering Women after Arab Spring. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Shams, Mohamed Mahmod. (1984). Oil Conservation and Economic Development in Saudi Arabia. PhD Presented to The University of Texas at Austin

Shaw, John A. and Long, David E. (1982). Saudi Arabian Modernization: The Impact of Change on Stability. Washington: Washington Paper.

Shaw, Susan M; Barbour, Nancy Staton; Patti, Duncan; Freehling-Burton and Nicholas, Jane. Eds. (2018). Women's Lives around the World. ABC-CLIO.

Shirazi, Faegheh. Ed. (2010). Muslim Women in War and Crisis: Representation and Reality. University of Texas Press.

Shirky, Clay. January/February 2011. The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change. Council on Foreign Relation: Foreign Affairs, Vol. 90, No.1, pp. 28-41.

Shishkina, Alisa R. (2017). Egyptian Women in the Arab Spring: Emotions, Political Participation, and the Internet. Pp. 161-171. In Non-Western Social Movements and Participatory Democracy, By Ekim Arbatli and Dina Rosenberg. USA: Springer.

Skocpol, Theda. 1985. "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research." Pp. 3–37 in *Bringing the State Back In* edited by P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Larry and Abouammoh, Abdulrahman. Eds. 2013. Higher Education in Saudi Arabia: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities. New York: Springer.

Smith, Trevor Garrison. (2017). Politicizing Digital Space: Theory, the Internet, and Renewing Democracy. UK: University of Westminster Press.

Smith, Woodruff D. November 2010. Public Universities and the Public Sphere. USA: Palgrave Macmillan.

So, Alvin Y. (1990) Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency and World-System Theories. UK: SAGE**.**

Sohrab, Mohammed. (1999). The Social Transformation in Saudi Arabia since 1970. India: PhD presented to Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Solo, Ashu M. (2014). Handbook of Research on Political Activism in the Information Age. IGI Global.

Sorrells, Kathryn. (2015). Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice. SAGE.

Ssenyonjo, Manisuli. (2009). Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in International Law. USA: Hart Publishing.

State of Social Media 2018. (2018). Overview of Social Media in the Middle East. Crowd Analyzer. (Online). Retrieved on 12 April 2019. https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2391971/SOSM18-report-online-.pdf?__hssc=233546881.6.1523169633703&__hstc=233546881.2ae2df11b4d44a0331936f2771896ff8.1523169633703.1523169633703.1523169633703.1&__hsfp=&hsCtaTracking=fc7284cb-145f-4283-b605-f4a7b9ad4371%7Ca60c8b9b-a7ad-45ac-909f-b4b76dc313be

Steiner, Sarah K. (2012). Strategic Planning for Social Media in Libraries. Chicago: ALA TechSource.

Stenslie, Stig. (2012). Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia, The Challenge of Succession. London: Routledge.

Sternberg, Ira. December 2014. Influence of Social Media in Stages of Democratization. MA, Presented to University of Nevada, Las Vegas Department of Political Science. ProQuest Discovery Guides. http://search.proquest.com.ugrade1.eul.edu.eg:2048/docview/1667091634?accountid=37552

Storck, Madeline. (20 December 2011). The Role of Social Media in Political Mobilisation: a Case Study of the January 2011 Egyptian Uprising. M.A. presented to University of St Andrews, Scotland. Retrieved 15 November 2015. http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/2012-02-bifef/The_Role_of_Social_Media_in_Political_Mobilisation_-_Madeline_Storck.pdf

Storck, Madeline. 20 December 2011. The Role of Social Media in Political Mobilisation: a Case Study of the January 2011 Egyptian Uprising. M.A. presented to University of St Andrews, Scotland. Retrieved 15 November 2015. http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/2012-02-bifef/The_Role_of_Social_Media_in_Political_Mobilisation_-_Madeline_Storck.pdf

Strandberg, Greg. (2015). Social Media Politics, Using the Internet to Get Elected. USA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Strandberg, K. and Carlson, T. (2017). Expanding the online political demos but maintaining the status quo? Internet and social media use by Finnish voters prior to elections, 2003-2015. Scandinavian Political Studies, Issue 40, 82-106.

Strauss, A., and Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Sun, Cho Hee. (2007). Gender Line or Prohibition of Ikhtilat and New Medea in Saudi Society. Korean Journal of Middle East Studies. Volume 28, Issue 1, pp. 265-290.

Sun, Cho Hee; Lee, Won-Sam; Kim, Hyo-Jung; Eum, Ikran. (2007). A Study on New Media and Possibilities of Social Change in the Gulf Region- Focused on the Usage of Internet in the Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman. Korean Journal Database. Volume: 26, Issue: 1, pp. 41-72.

Swank, Duane. 2001. "Political Institutions and Welfare State Restructuring." Pp. 197–237 in *The New Politics of the Welfare State* edited by P. Pierson. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Takran, Nurdan Öncel and Ylmaz, Recep. (2015). Handbook of Research on Effective Advertising Strategies in the Social Media. IGI Global.

Talani, L.S. (2017). Women, Globalization and Civil Society in the MENA Area: Between Marginalization and Radicalization. Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies. V. 19. I. 5. Pp. 499-523.

Tamimi, Iqbal. (2010). Women in the Segregation Society of Saudi Arabia: Using the Internet as a Protesting Tool. MA Presented to University of West of England.

Tammar, Abdurazag. (2017). Assessing Resilient Post-Disaster Recovery of A Flash-Flood-Prone Area: A Study of the City of Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. PhD presented to Wilfrid Laurier University.

Tawfiq, Wijdan. (Spring 2014). Constructing and Presenting the Self through Private Sphere Press, An Interpretative Analysis of the Experiences of Saudi Arabian Women. A thesis presented for the degree of Master, Department of Design and Merchandising, Colorado State University.

Tetreault, Mary Ann; Kapisqewski, Andrzej; Okruhlik, Gwenn. Eds. (2011) Political Change in the Arab Gulf States: Stuck in Transition. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

The World Factbook. *Saudi Arabia*. 21 December 2015. Web site. 5 January 2016.

Thompson, M. (2014). Saudi Arabia and the path to political change: National dialogue and civil society. London: I.B. Tauris.

Tlaiss, Hayfaa A. and Elamin, Abdallah. (2016). Human Resource Management in Saudi Arabia. Pp. 141.160. in Budhawr, Pawan S. and Mellahi, Kamel. Eds. Handbook of Human Resource Management in the Middle East. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Tønnessen, Liv. (2016). Women's Activism in Saudi Arabia, Male Guardianship and Sexual Violence. CM Institute.

Trenwith, C. (2018, December 31). Women appointed to Saudi's Shoura council committees. Retrieved 31 December 2018, from Arabianbusiness.com http://www.arabianbusiness.com/women-appointed-saudi-s-shoura-council-committees-532982.html#.VKzfTtKUeSo

Troeller, Gary. (2015). The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa'ud. London and New York: Routledge.

Tuck, Richard. (1982). Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development. London: Cambridge University Press.

Tullock, Gordon. 1967. "The Welfare Costs of Tariffs, Monopolies, and Theft." *Western Economic Journal* 5:224–32.

Tullock, Gordon. 1971. "The Paradox of Revolution." *Public Choice* 11:89–99.

Tylor, John G. (1979). From Modernization to Modes of Production: A Critique of the Sociologies of Development and Underdevelopment. UK: Palgrave Macmillan

U.S. Energy Information Adminstration. *What Drives Crude Oil Prices?* n.d. Web site. 1 January 2016.

U.S.-Saudi Arabian Business Council. *Saudi Arabia's 2015 Budget Maintains Strong Spending, Diversification Initiatives*.n.d. Reprot. 1 January 2016. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "World Population Prospects: The 2010 revision." Report. 2011. Document.

Uldam, Julie Vestergaard, Anne. (2015). Civic Engagement and Social Media, Political Participation Beyond Protest. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vaccari, C. (2013). Digital politics in Western democracies: A comparative study. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Valby, Karen. (10 August 2015). *How Princess Reema Is Opening Doors ForWomen In Saudi Arabia*. 10 August 2015. 2 January 2016.

Van Wyngarden, Katharine E. (Spring 2012). New Participation, New Perspectives? Young Adults' Political Engagement Using Facebook. M.A. Prsented to Colorado State University: Department of Journalism and Technical Communication.

Vassiliev, Alexei. (2012). King Faisal of Saudi Arabia: Personality, Faith and Times. Beirut: Saqi Books.

Vatanian, Thomas P. (2010). Secondary Data Analysis. UK: Oxford University Press.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady. (1995 a). Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady. (1995 b.). Beyond SES: a resource model of political participation. The American Political Science Review, 89(2), 271–294.

Verba, Sidney. (1987). Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wald, Ellen R. (2018). Saudi, Inc.: The Arabian Kingdom's Pursuit of Profit and Power. New York: Begasus Book.

Walker, Sharia. (2018). Mediation—Between Religion and Culture in the Saudi Context. Pp. 267-302. In d'Estrée, Pearson and Parsons, Ruth J. eds. Cultural Encounters and Emergent Practices in Conflict Resolution Capacity Building, Springer International Publishing.

Wall, Melissa. (2019). Citizen Journalism: Practices, Propaganda, Pedagogy. Routledge.

Wall, Steven and Klosko, George. Eds .(2003). Perfectionism and Neutrality, Essays in Liberal Theory. London: Roman & Littlefield Publishing.

Wallerstein, Immaneul. (2004). World-System Analysis: An Introduction. NC: Duke University Press.

Ware, Alan. 1996. *Political Parties and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. London: Verso Book.

Warren, Bill. (1980). Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism. London: Verso Book.

Welborne, Bozena C. (2011). Between the veil and the vote: Exploring incentives to politically incorporate women in the Arab world. PhD presented to University of Colorado at Boulder.

Wilcke, Christoph. (Aug. 22, 2012). Workplace battle continues for Saudi women , CNN, Retrieved (Feb. 25, 2019).
http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2012/08/22/workplace-battle-continues-for-saudiwomen/

Wilson, Richard A. (1999). Human Rights, Culture and Context: Anthropological Perspectives. Pluto Press.

Wiltfang G, McAdam D. 1991. The costs and risks of social activism: a study of sanctuary movement activists. Social Force. 69:987–1011

Wiseman, Alexander W.; Alromi, Naif; and Alshumrani, Saleh. Eds. (2014). Education for a Knowledge Society in Arabian Gulf Countries. UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

World Fact Book. Trafficking in Persons. n.d. Report. 1 January 2015.

Wray, Sharon and Rae, Rosemary. (2013). Personal and Public Lives Relationships in a Changing Social World. UK: Cambridge Scholar Publishing.

Wynbrandt, James. (2010). A Brief History of Saudi Arabia. 2nd Edition. UK: Checkmark Books.

Yousefi, Fatemeh and Kim, JoongKwan. (2013). A Comparative Analysis on the Contemporary Woman's Social Participation : Multi-cultural Aspects of Middle East. Korean Journa of Middle East Studies. Volume 34, Issue 3, pp. 65-10.

Zafar, Rahila. (2016). Shifting the Gender Paradigm in Saudi Arabia: Southlands of Women Enter the Workforce. Pp. 73-78. In Anid, Nada; Cantileno, Laurie; Morrow, Monique J. and Zafar, Rahila. Eds. The Internet of Women: Accelerating Culture Change. River Publishers Series in Innovation and Change in Education.

Zayani, Mohamed. (2018). Mapping the Digital Middle East: Trends and Disjunctions. Pp. 1-32, in Zayani, Mohamed. Ed. Digital Middle East: State and Society in the Information Age. Oxford University Press.

Zhang, W., & Chia, S. W. (2006). The effects of mass media use and social capital on civic and political participation. *Communication Studies*, 57(3), 277-297.