

# The Role Of Feminist Social Movements In The Political Empowerment Of Palestinian Women

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## Abstract

*The study aimed to assess the extent to which feminist institutions provide organized plans and programs, as well as objectives that meet the needs of women and contribute to their effective participation in political life. The study employed various scientific methodologies, including historical methodology, descriptive methodology, and analytical methodology. The study population consisted of women working in political and legislative institutions in Palestine. The study sample included 73 women randomly selected from political and legislative institutions in the state of Palestine.*

*The study yielded several key findings, among the most significant of which is the challenge faced by feminist frameworks that originated from political organizations striving for women's liberation. These frameworks encountered difficulties when expanding their scope to include political domains dominated by males. Their priority became the interests of political organizations, emphasizing that Palestinian women are not exempt from politics. Social and personal interests of women were not prioritized, and the feminist issue did not receive sufficient importance, despite the acknowledgment of their self-identity. Furthermore, the weakness or absence of women's participation in political development plans can be attributed to the lack of a comprehensive and progressive development plan at the government level and within the feminist movement. The absence of a unified progressive feminist discourse and a single, inclusive reference reflecting women's priorities and concerns contributes to this. Feminist institutions have not unified their ranks through the establishment of a common platform outlining a shared vision and goals.*

**Keywords:** *political empowerment, social movements, feminist movements, Palestinian women.*

## 1. Introduction:

The issue of the political empowerment of Arab women is the attention focus of the people who are concerned and working in the field of development and human rights. The women who make up the ranks of society have remained<sup>1</sup>, for years, the “marginalized and subordinate half” instead of being the “participating and active half” in developing society and choosing the life awareness it aspires to. With increasing awareness of the negative effects of this situation on the development process in its various aspects, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as regional organizations, included the goal of achieving equality between women and men and empowering women on the list of Millennium Development Goals. The Kuwait Declaration issued in January 2009 reaffirmed this goal, as it stated the need to work on: “Empowering women, improving their economic, social and financial conditions, and enhancing their role in public life, in order to achieve the principle of equality and confirm the principles of justice and fairness in society.”

Whereas the academic arena is witnessing a debate about defining the concept of empowerment and what indicators must be adopted to measure it, we find a consensus among theorists and workers in the field of development that it involves ensuring the effective participation of women in making political, economic, and social decisions that are reflected in their daily lives and in their society as a whole. We also find a consensus that the political empowerment of women is a dynamic process that is affected and influenced by their social, political and economic circumstances. In order to ensure the success of this process, basic conditions must be met, the first of which is eradicating ignorance and illiteracy, providing opportunities and options, guaranteeing the right to choose, and establishing awareness of the importance and necessity of exercising this right. The process of political empowerment of society as a whole, especially the empowerment of women, is a link in an interconnected and overlapping series of economic, social, educational, and political processes. Women's institutions are considered one of the parties to the development process in Palestine, and the existence of these institutions expresses the desire of individuals to bring about change within society, as the emergence of some of these institutions was a response to society's need to address life problems. These institutions went beyond the concept of relief by seeking to develop, build and enhance the capabilities of society, and every institution now operates in its own space, according to what it deems appropriate for the surrounding community.

Talking about political empowerment means expanding the circle of democratic practices because of the freedoms it entails that lead to taking initiatives, by integrating vital marginalized groups who do not invest their capabilities in development and do not benefit from a legal standpoint from the fruits of empowerment and development. There are fundamental changes that must be made in the laws, especially the Personal Status Law, for the benefit of women and the family in general, as the fruits of women's participation benefit society in general, as the responsibility for bringing about positive change falls on all segments of society.

Although Palestinian women played an important and effective role in society, they were excluded in the past from official development frameworks, as development efforts often put women in the shadows and were based on the assumption that development that targets men must benefit the rest of society including women. This is a fundamentally a false assumption that carries seeds of discrimination in its core, and it excludes the legacy of discrimination against women.

The problem of the study revolves around the fact that the Palestinian feminist movement focused in its beginnings on the national dimension, but with time and within the objective circumstances that the feminist movement went through, attention and focus has shifted on the social and developmental dimensions of women. Women's participation was and still is largely not framed within the traditional concept of development, which underestimates their contribution to the economy and on all other levels. Women's participation in community development is not matched by material or legal value. Despite their unregulated development participation, they have been excluded from participating in decision-making positions as required.

Palestinian women have contributed and are still contributing to the process of construction and liberation at all stages. They have proven themselves on the political map, yet they have suffered from the fragility of their representation in public life (the Legislative Council, in the ministries, the workforce...). There are objective reasons, the most important of which is patriarchal culture. Customs and traditions that led to a gap between the current status of Palestinian women and their history of struggle. Therefore, the basic problem of the study boils down to answering the main question: What role have feminist social institutions played to empower Palestinian women politically?

Through the main question, the study is aiming to answer many questions, namely:

1. Do women's institutions have organized and thoughtful plans, programs, and goals that meet women's needs and help them participate in political life effectively?

2. Are women's institutions concerned with carrying out their tasks and functions to participate in drawing up policies and strategic plans in a way that provides the necessary requirements for women's political empowerment within Palestinian society?

Accordingly, the study is seeking to achieve the following objectives:

1. Measuring the extent to which women's institutions have organized and thoughtful plans, programs, and goals that meet women's needs and help them participate in political life effectively.

2. Knowing whether women's institutions are concerned with carrying out their tasks and functions to participate in drawing up policies and strategic plans in a way that provides the necessary requirements for women's political empowerment within Palestinian society.

The importance of the study can be summarized in the fact that it contributes to the field of studying the situation of feminist social movements in Palestine, as it links the programs and plans of feminist institutions and the results they have achieved in political participation and political empowerment, which clarifies the vision for feminist institutions to identify weak points and work to remedy them, and points of strength and work to strengthen them. It will also provide a database on women's institutions that can be used in planning, in addition to its contribution to improving and drawing up development policies for women's institutions.

## **2. The Theoretical Framework**

The development of the feminist movement and the establishment of its institutions in Palestine has passed through several historical stages during the past century. The first of these stages is the Nakba of 1948, followed by the period of Jordanian rule, then the setback of 1967, the popular uprising, the rule of the Palestinian National Authority, and subsequently the Al-Aqsa Intifada. "Although these stages brought women into the arena of public life, their participation remained seasonal and fluctuating, subject to the conditions of national work. It rises with the intensity of confrontation and events, and recedes during periods of stagnation. Therefore, women's activism remains tied to the pace of national events" (Kuttab, 2016).

The theoretical framework will address the evolution of the feminist social movement in Palestine as follows:

### **2.1. Women's associations and institutions and their role in political and social work:**

Women quickly formed charitable and humanitarian women's associations and secret women's groups to assist the fighters in Palestinian cities. In Jaffa, several women formed secret women's groups called "Zahret Al-Aqqaan," working in nursing among the ranks of the revolutionaries, providing them with supplies and weapons. Prominent among them were Jihina Khurshid and Arabiya Khurshid. At the same time, Lulu Abu Al-Huda established another association for nursing and first aid in Bethlehem, and the Arab Women's Union was founded, which included many nurses and doctors and established a surgical operating room to treat the wounded. Notable figures overseeing these centers and departments included Hulwa Jaqaman and Birt Maroof (Hamad, 2015).

Regarding the establishment of women's associations and institutions, it is mentioned that the leaders of the Palestinian feminist movement organized the movement by founding associations with a predominantly charitable and social character. The history of the first women's association in Palestine dates back to 1903, known as the Orthodox Charity Association in Acre. In 1910, another women's association was established in Jaffa called the Orthodox Orphanage Association. In 1921, the Women's Union was established in Nablus, indicating that Palestinian women early on sought to understand their reality and recognize the importance of their role in establishing the foundations of Palestinian society. The work of these associations during that period was somewhat limited to charitable relief efforts. However, the Arab Women's Association, established during the same period, was characterized by both political and social work.

The leaders of the feminist movement worked to establish the first Palestinian women's federation at the national level in 1921. This was aimed at expanding the women's base, forming committees, and unifying efforts to develop and organize women's social and political struggles. Among the prominent leaders of this federation were Zleikha Al-Shihabi and Camellia Al-Sikakini.

In 1924, the Women's Renaissance Association was founded in Ramallah, and a team of nurses was formed. The members of this association worked to collect donations to purchase weapons for revolutionary fighters and assist the families of those affected. Following this, the Arab Women's Association was established in Jerusalem in 1928, functioning as a political women's association to participate in the Palestinian man's struggle against British mandate and Zionist colonization. The pioneers and founders of this association included Zleikha Al-Shihabi, Camellia Al-Sikakini, Zahiya Al-Nashashibi, Khadija Al-Husseini, and Tarab Abdul Hadi (Nazzal, 2014).

In Gaza, the first women's association, known as the Women's Renaissance Association, was formed with Mrs. Rashidi Al-Shawa as its leader. Later, in 1929, the Arab Women's Union was established in Jerusalem, and another was formed in Nablus.

In 1942, the Women's Solidarity Associations were established in several Palestinian cities under the leadership of Lulwa Abu Al-Huda. These associations formed teams for nursing and first aid. These teams actively participated alongside freedom fighters and activists in their battles against British soldiers and Jewish settlers. Many women were injured or martyred in these engagements, including Juliet Zaka, Jameela Ahmed, Thaiba Atiya, and Hulwa Zidan, who continued to fight even after her son and husband were martyred, ultimately sacrificing herself on April 9, 1948. On the second day, the teacher Hayat Al-Balbisi also became a martyr during the Deir Yassin massacre while treating and aiding the wounded and revolutionaries (Draghma, 2009).

Observing the formation of these women's institutions and associations, it becomes evident that their role was to meet the needs of Palestinian society and serve the national cause. Pioneering women aspired to play an active role in society by providing services to marginalized groups such as orphans and children and supporting revolutionaries in their continued resistance to serve the national cause. This underscores that their work served as an alternative in some areas to governmental entities that should have fulfilled this role. They focused not only on providing aid to the people but also on assisting revolutionaries by purchasing weapons or accompanying them in nursing and providing first aid. Some associations also played an indirect role in political awareness.

As for the composition of these associations, the leaders were often educated women, with many being from affluent or middle-class families. Their activities were limited to protest actions, lacking formalized programs or meeting places. The meetings of female members were held in homes or in rooms affiliated with monasteries and schools (Saeed, 2019).

The emergence of women's assemblies, especially those with political inclinations, indicates that the national issue had a direct impact on organizing women. However, the idea of women's movement membership in the national movement is a mechanical concept that requires deeper exploration and investigation into the possibility of other, more complex factors (Kuttab, 2016).

In conclusion, some development occurred in the status of Palestinian women compared to the early twentieth century. This relative expansion in their participation during the British Mandate period resulted from an increase in female education and the proliferation of women's associations. Additionally, there was a clearer articulation of the role of the Palestinian national movement in confronting the plan to establish a Jewish national homeland in Palestine (Saeed, 2019).

Against the backdrop of challenging social and political conditions, women managed to organize themselves and participate in official conferences to make their voices heard globally. They took part in the first Palestinian women's conference in Jerusalem in 1929, where 300 women and girls from various Palestinian cities and villages participated. On the same day, the establishment of the first Arab women's union in Palestine was announced in Jerusalem, led by Zleikha Al-Shihabi.

The conference's resolutions aligned with the positions of the Arab Executive Committee, rejecting the Balfour Declaration and Jewish migration. The conference elected a preparatory committee called the "Executive Committee for Women." Three subcommittees emerged from this conference: a committee for the care of martyrs' children, a fundraising committee, and a sewing and rehabilitation committee. During the conference, women called for boycotting Zionist products to support the Palestinian economy. They also decided to sell their jewelry to buy weapons for the fedayeen (freedom fighters) and to purchase land for distribution to the families of martyrs, the wounded, and the detainees (Abdul Hadi, 2014).

Although this step marked the first experience for Palestinian and Arab women in political involvement, they organized themselves and were determined to make their voices heard. They were committed to conveying their message to the British High Commissioner. A group of women was delegated to meet with the British High Commissioner, Sir Chancellor, during which one of the women delivered a speech expressing their political, social, and legal demands. These demands included rejecting the British mandate and Jewish migration.

The conference served as a catalyst for energizing Palestinian women and encouraging them to form women's associations in Palestinian villages and cities. These associations aimed to support the national liberation movement and assist the freedom fighters. Women collected donations and distributed them to the families of revolutionaries, fighters, martyrs, and detainees. They also played a crucial role in transporting weapons, messages, water, and food to the freedom fighters. Additionally, they received training in first aid to attend to the wounded and engaged in sewing and crafting clothes for the fighters (Abdul Hadi, 2014).

The involvement of Palestinian women in national issues extended beyond the Palestinian arena. They actively worked to raise awareness and mobilize Arab women around the Palestinian cause. Palestinian women maintained broad connections with Arab activists in Egypt and various women's organizations in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Several women's conferences were held in the 1930s, including one in Beirut in 1930, another in Damascus, and one in Baghdad in 1932. However, the most significant women's conference during that period was the Conference of Eastern Women in Defense of Palestine, held in Cairo between October 15-18, 1938, under the direction of Huda Shaarawi (Kuttab, 2012).

The activities of women's associations and organizations during this stage reveal their focus on development within the given circumstances. They concentrated on the national and political dimensions, representing the primary focus of the work of these women's associations and organizations.

## **2.2. Social movements and the political process model:**

Analyses of social movements have always suffered from a shortcoming in their lack of interest in the diversity of political systems, to the point that some analyses that did pay attention to this, such as Antonio's division or Burchal's "or Tilly's concept of Polity," seemed frustrating, as the issue of politics was limited to the ability of movements to reach power. As for politics it is rare for anyone to raise it in analysis, as it appears to be a separate world from social movements. The 1980s witnessed an interest in analyzing the political and institutional systems under which social movements emerge, which may lead us to talk about the "political process model."

## **2.3. Structure of political opportunities:**

The concept of the "structure of political opportunities" (SOP) emerged in the early 1970s. In a comparative study on the conditions of mobilization for blacks in 50 American cities, Peter Eisinger tested the hypothesis that in addition to the resources of the mobilized group, "the openness, weaknesses, barriers, and resources of the political system itself must be taken into account." He tried to measure the degree of openness and closedness of local systems in relation to mobilization, such as the presence of a black member or a black

nomination in the discussion of federal programs. The presence of a degree of openness of the system to protest helps in launching it. The question here about the conditions of permeability of political systems to contain protest was addressed by McAdam (1982) in relation to the civil rights movements in the United States of America, and by Sidney Tarrow in the emergence of the May events in Italy. (Tarrow, 1989)

The concept of “Structure of Political Opportunities” (SOP) aims to measure the degree of openness and interactivity of political systems of mobilization movements. Political frameworks increase or limit the chances of success of social movements. These circumstances or coincidences can be summarized, according to Sidney Tarrow, into four:

The first relates to the degree of openness of political systems: in terms of democracy, political culture and governmental orientations, the spread of protest activities is more tolerant. The view of a demonstration in Paris is different from the view of a demonstration taking place in a third world country. It also considers separatist or territorial demands depending on the ruling group. Openness, on the other hand, is measured by the ability of parties to include within their ranks speakers of social movements. (Piven & Cloward, 1977)

The second element is related to the degree of stability of political alliances. The more stable Asian power relations and election results are, the less opportunities social movements have to be heard. Making gains from the game of alliances and the needs of parties. Ferry Adam said that the success of the civil rights movement in America is due to the increasing number of blacks as a result of waves of immigration, who have become a reliable force in voting. In the elections, competition began between the two parties to win the voting power in their favor in the elections.

The third element is the issue of the possible presence of powerful forces in power who adopt some strategic positions in governance, as well as the extent of division within the ruling elite itself. Finally, the availability of political opportunities depends on the ability of the political system to develop public policies and respond to the demands of social movements. The presence of unstable governments and weak executive tools, or stable governments that guarantee their existence and rely on effective administrations. (Tarrow, 1989)

This theoretical model allows us to give procedural content to an important given: that political systems affect adoption.

But if we stop at each question, we will find that it obscures behind it three forms of important questions raised by this modern approach. Unless it carries within it a structural contradiction that carries the meaning of stagnation. How can it generate opportunities that inherently carry the meaning of fluidity? Is this structure clear for the particular groups? Can they modify this structure? Should we go beyond just looking at the holders of political power: introducing new actors into the management of mobilization?

#### **2.4. Conflict dynamics:**

Thinking about the concept of the political opportunity structure gradually enriches with its increasing attention to the logic of tactical exchanges between the movers of the protests through the succession and succession of the stages of mobilization. The rules of the game are determined by the processes of interaction between the movers of the movements:

- Repressive and police forces.

- Creating counter-movements or absorbing them into new channels.

“Rearranging and deconstructing movements and negotiation.” (Meyar & Staggenborg, 1996)

#### **2.5. Social movements and public policies:**

The interest in studying the political dimension is also to consider that rulers are the drivers of public policies and programmes, and have the ability to adjust the management of the files of a particular social sector. Public policies translate and respond to mobilization demands, but they can also dismantle them, create mechanisms to integrate protesters, and create new repertoires for the collective movement. (Filliule, 1993)

Here the question arises about the suitability of any of these theories of social movements to explain the emergence of social movements in the Arab world, and we seek help in this from the words of the French sociologist Eric Nouveau, who delved into the study of the sociology of social movements, trying to show the complexity of this phenomenon, which is not suitable for many simple and conclusive analyzes that... Comments accompany the phenomenon while the phenomenon is occurring. On the other hand, he does not deny the difficulty of accessing social movements, but their analysis will be limited to those who accept analysis based on serious field research and a set of conceptual tools. (Neveu, 2011)

Research in the field of social movements tends toward three directions:

- The number of publications in this field is increasing.
- Shifting to using tools that enhance the value of anthropological observation related to the characteristics of peoples.
- Paying attention to the background track and CVs and opening the black box of personal experiences. All of this will lead to modified and developed versions of the theory of resource mobilization, in terms of giving increased importance to political and institutional data, the model of the political process, and a greater awareness of ideology, emotions, and personal experiences.

But there are two reasons that make us optimistic. Research in the field of social movements predicts positive things:

The first reason is that there are still areas in need of building new knowledge, including the relationship between movements and parties, and the study of movement leaders. Despite some progress, we must explore collective action in illiberal political systems, study social movements that are called “bad”, such as racist and conservative movements, which do not correspond to the political perceptions of a large number of researchers in this regard, and also a practical study of the control of managers and experts over organizations.

As for the second reason, it can be summed up in one word: breaking isolation. Sociologists have been interested in studying developed countries, leaving the task of thinking about the Third World to specialists in studying cultural regions, whether in France, for example, the writings of Jean-François Bayard, JF Bayard, Olivier Roy, or Olivier Filliculet. O, Monia Bennani Charaibi M, and Donnie Constantine Martin DC. In Anglo-Saxon science, for example, the writings of Asif Bayat A, John Scott, and Matthew Gutman MC, these specialists borrowed concepts from each other. These entanglements conflict with the issues raised, such as the relationship of the peoples of the South to politics, such as the uprisings of 2011 showing the desire of the Arab peoples for democracy and the dominance of religion over forms of religion. Packing.

In their 2008 book, *The Politics of Conflict*, 106 Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly proposed a broader framework by including social movements in the spectrum of conflict models: contentious politics, which means the intersection between politics, collective action, and rebellion. In order for the study of social movements to be a central theater of conflict and to link them to revolutions, civil wars, and pressure groups, sociology must, without abandoning this field, be more concerned with giving political meanings to contemporary mobilization. In many Third World countries that lack parties, and neither have the traditions of Western democracy nor the objective social and economic conditions that give meaning, resorting to adoption and social movements remain the strategic factor to bring about change. Studying the role of feminist social movements in the political empowerment of Palestinian women is a clear example of this dynamic.

### **3. Methodology and Procedures**

This chapter discusses the study's methodology, the study population and sample, and provides a description of the study tool along with the implications of its reliability and validity. Additionally, it covers the study variables, procedures, and statistical analyses.

#### **3.1. Study Methodology:**

This study adopts various scientific methodologies in its research, including:

- **Historical Methodology:** This involves tracing the origin and development of these women's institutions, examining the activation of programs and mechanisms, and contributing to the drafting of laws and legislations. This allows us to understand the changes that have helped these institutions empower Palestinian women politically.
- **Descriptive Methodology:** This method describes facts, programs, plans, and interprets them based on available data.
- **Analytical Methodology:** Through the analysis and evaluation of the reality of women's institutions, an attempt is made to link them to the political process and derive some results and recommendations.

The reason for choosing the descriptive-analytical methodology lies in its suitability for the study's subject. It helps us understand the plans, programs, and future vision of women's institutions clearly. It also enables us to obtain realistic and clear results, allowing the formulation of strategies and suggestions to contribute to the development of these institutions.

### **3.2. Study population and sample:**

The study population consists of women working in the political field and legislative institutions in Palestine.

### **3.3. Study sample:**

The study sample comprises 73 women working in the political field and legislative institutions in the state of Palestine. The sample was randomly selected, and the study tool was distributed through the electronic application (Google Forms).

### **3.4. Study tool:**

To achieve the study's objectives, the researcher has developed the study tool by reviewing previous studies. The study tool consists of two parts. The first part covers the demographic data of the study sample, while the second part includes sections to measure the contribution of women's social institutions to the political empowerment of Palestinian women.

### **3.5. Study tool validity:**

The apparent validity of the study tool is ensured by presenting it to a group of referees who are members of the faculty with expertise and experience in Palestinian universities. They were asked to express their opinions and observations on the questionnaire items in terms of their relevance to the field they belong to, the clarity of each item, its linguistic formulation, and its suitability for achieving the intended purpose. Each referee proposed modifications, deletions, or additions as deemed necessary.

After revising the referee-reviewed copies, some questionnaire items were modified or removed based on their suggestions. The questionnaire was then finalized with a total of 32 items. The referees' approval, with a minimum agreement rate set at 80%, was considered as the apparent validity.

### **3.6. Study tool reliability:**

To ensure the reliability of the tool, the internal consistency reliability coefficients were calculated using the Cronbach's alpha method. Table (1) illustrates this process:

**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the tool

<b>Tool Area</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Social Feminist Movements	0.84
Political Empowerment of Palestinian Women	0.89

\*Statistically significant at a significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).



Table (1) shows that the reliability coefficients for both tool areas were high, ranging between 0.84 and 0.89, indicating a high level of stability for the tools.

### **3.7. Statistical treatment methods:**

The researcher employed the following statistical methods to understand the characteristics of the study population, calculate the reliability and validity of the tools, and address the study's research questions:

- Frequencies and Percentages: Used to understand the characteristics of the study sample.
- Mean (Average): Utilized to determine the extent of agreement or disagreement among the study participants regarding each statement of the study variables, along with the main axes. It was also used to rank the statements in terms of response level according to the highest mean.

- Standard Deviation: Applied to identify the extent of deviation in the opinions of the study participants for each statement of the study variables and for each main axis from their arithmetic mean. The standard deviation illustrates the dispersion in the opinions of the study participants for each statement of the study variables and the main axes. The closer its value is to zero, the more focused the opinions and reduced dispersion along the scale. This was also used to rank the statements according to the mean in favor of less dispersion when the mean is equal.

- Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient:

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the study tools. A five-point Likert scale was employed to rate each item of the study tool, assigning one of the three degrees of agreement (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), represented numerically as (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The following statistical criterion was adopted for result analysis:

- The upper limit of the alternatives – The lower limit of the alternatives / Number of levels =  $5-1/5=0.8$

- Range 1 =  $1+0.8=1.8$

- Range 2 =  $1.9+ 0.8= 2.6$

- Range 3 =  $2.61+0.8= 3.41$

Thus, the evaluations became as follows:

1. Less than or equal to (1.8): Indicates a low index.
2. Greater than or equal to (1.9) and less than or equal to (2.6): Indicates a moderate index.
3. Greater than or equal to (2.61): Indicates a high index.

### **3.8. Study variables:**

- Independent Variable:

Political empowerment of Palestinian women.

- Dependent Variable:

Women's social empowerment institutions.

### **3.9. Study procedures:**

To achieve the study objectives, the researcher implemented the following procedures:

1. Reviewed previous studies related to the current study's subject.
2. Prepared the study tool, which is a questionnaire designed to explore the role of women's social empowerment institutions in the political empowerment of Palestinian women.
3. Created an electronic survey using Google Forms.
4. Distributed the surveys to the study sample.
5. Downloaded the study sample estimates from Google Forms as an Excel file and conducted statistical analysis.
6. Interpreted the results.
7. Presented recommendations and appropriate suggestions based on the study findings.

## **4. Study Results**

This chapter presents the results obtained by the current study in accordance with the sequence of its questions. This is achieved through data analysis using the statistical analysis program SPSS, with frequencies used to calculate means and standard deviations, as follows:

#### 4.1. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables:

The following table illustrates the descriptive statistics for the demographic variables of the study sample, including percentages and frequencies. Table 2 shows these variables:

**Table 2.** Description of demographic variables

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Diploma	9	12.32%
Bachelor's Degree	19	26.03%
Master's Degree	31	42.46%
Doctorate	14	19.17%
Total	73	100.0%
<b>Experience (Years)</b>		
Less than 5	14	19.17%
5 to 10	22	30.13%
10 to 15	15	20.54%
More than 15	22	30.13%
Total	73	100.0%

The table indicates that the highest percentage of the study sample holds a "Master's Degree," constituting 42.46% of the total study sample. It also shows that the majority of the study sample has experience ranging from 5 to 10 years and more than 10 years, with both categories accounting for 30.13% of the total study sample.

#### 4.2. Results related to the first axis: the extent of women's organizations having organized plans, programs, and objectives that meet women's needs and facilitate their effective participation in political life.

To address the questions of this axis, mean values and standard deviations were calculated. The table below illustrates this:

**Table 3.** Mean values and standard deviations related to the extent of women's organizations having organized plans, programs, and objectives that meet women's needs and facilitate their effective participation in political life

Rank	Number	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
15	1	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women by strengthening scientific research.	1.589	0.406	Low
8	2	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through women's development.	1.917	0.404	Average
5	3	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through women's and human rights.	1.972	0.489	Average
10	4	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through economic development projects.	1.876	0.628	Low

13	5	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through support for education and training in various cultural fields.	1.821	0.594	Low
11	6	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting social culture.	1.863	0.556	Low
2	7	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through awareness and development of local political communities.	2.465	1.091	Average
4	8	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting youth political programs.	2.123	0.533	Average
6	9	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through enhancing participation in public decision-making.	1.931	0.776	Average
7	10	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting women's right to self-determination.	1.917	0.517	Average
14	11	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting the building of a democratic civil society.	1.643	0.449	Low
12	12	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting the economic capacity development of families.	1.835	0.356	Low
3	13	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting women's access to resources.	2.191	0.648	Average
9	14	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through attempting to achieve equality and justice among society's categories.	1.904	0.634	Average
1	15	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through promoting participation in personal decision-making.	2.513	0.615	Average
		<b>Total Score</b>	<b>1.924</b>	<b>0.552</b>	<b>Average</b>

The results from Table (3) indicate that the study's sample assessments regarding the extent of women's organizations having organized plans, programs, and well-thought-out objectives that meet women's needs and facilitate their effective participation in political life are at a moderate level. The mean score is (1.924), with a standard deviation of (0.552). Regarding the statements, the paragraph stating "Women's social organizations work to politically empower women by promoting participation in personal decision-making" ranked first, with a mean score of (2.513) and a standard deviation of (0.615) at an average

level. On the other hand, the paragraph stating "Women's social organizations work to politically empower women by strengthening scientific research" ranked last, with a mean score of (1.589) and a standard deviation of (0.406) at a low level.

These results can be discussed from the researcher's point of view in terms of political obstacles, as one of the most important obstacles that leave negative effects on the issue of women's empowerment, despite the fact that in most Arab countries, at the theoretical level, there are no constitutional or legal restrictions on women's political participation in parties Parliament, government, and decision-making sites, but there is a gap between the legal articles related to women's participation without distinguishing them from men, and the exercise of authoritarian political power over society, which in turn reflects negatively on women, in addition to the customs and traditions that limit women's political participation. Authority in many Arab countries Customs and traditions hinder women's participation in political work and affect the actual application of the principle of the rule of law.

The dominance of patriarchal (patriarchal) culture, intertwined with the values of domination, superiority, and subjugation, which limited the role of women to social and family functions, has played and continues to play an extremely bad role in the issue of women's empowerment.

In addition to the above, it can be pointed out that the effectiveness of Arab women's organizations is weak, and this can be attributed to the following:

- Lack of financial resources, as the support these organizations receive is very little, and this necessitates building a continuous strategy to provide support and self-financing for these organizations.
- The absence of a comprehensive empowerment strategy, and weak awareness of the importance of empowerment and its true concept among these organizations and their executive bodies and the ability to address all segments of women and the grassroots, especially rural women.
- Weakness in the process of building the capabilities of women's organizations and transforming them into effective institutions with qualified and trained leaders.
- Lack of interaction, communication, and sharing experiences with different parties with expertise and capabilities.
- The presence of laws restricting the activity of associations. Arab legislation restricts to varying degrees the freedom to form associations and subjects them when they are established to various forms of supervision and control, besieging and restricting women's organizations, and the inability of these organizations to obtain legal registration for these organizations in some Arab countries. Updating the laws related to the principle of participation, especially the law on organizations and associations, provides opportunities for women to participate, train and qualify in order to form women community leaders.

#### **4.3. The second axis: assessing whether women's organizations are concerned with performing their tasks and functions to contribute to shaping policies and strategic plans in a manner that provides the necessary requirements for women's political empowerment in Palestinian society.**

To answer the questions related to this axis, mean values and standard deviations were extracted to assess whether women's organizations are concerned with performing their tasks and functions to contribute to shaping policies and strategic plans in a manner that provides the necessary requirements for women's political empowerment within Palestinian society. The table below illustrates these results.

**Table 4.** Mean scores and standard deviations related to assessing whether women's organizations are concerned with performing their tasks and functions to contribute to shaping policies and strategic plans in a manner that provides the necessary requirements for women's political empowerment within Palestinian society

Rank	Item	Statements	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Level
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8	1	Women's social organizations assist women in understanding amendments made to civil laws, especially personal status laws.	1.780	0.527	Low
5	2	Women's social organizations help in formulating these laws.	1.863	0.501	Low
2	3	Legal amendments align with the efforts made by women's organizations.	2.027	0.821	Moderate
6	4	Women's social organizations assist in supporting women's participation in education and health.	1.849	0.730	Low
7	5	Women's social organizations assist in women's participation in drafting laws and legislation.	1.794	0.382	Low
1	6	Women's social organizations support transparency and accountability in political work.	2.109	0.727	Moderate
8	7	Different women's organizations coordinate to organize relationships based on a unified vision and strategy for women's work.	1.780	0.527	Low
10	8	Women's social organizations contribute to social and political awareness.	1.753	0.596	Low
12	9	Women's social organizations help in formulating recommendations for enacting laws to combat violence.	1.410	0.896	Low
11	10	Women's social organizations contribute to enacting laws to combat economic and political violence against women.	1.726	0.445	Low
9	11	Women's social organizations work on raising awareness and educating the community about important issues for women, using all media and community communication means, and stimulating substantive and constructive discussions, to be translated into laws, legislation, and public policies that serve women.	1.767	0.524	Low
3	12	Women's organizations provide various development services (health, education, economic projects, and monitoring social	2.013	0.507	Moderate

		issues) to Palestinians, especially women.			
6	13	Women's organizations work on developing the organizational building strategy for women's centers and developing human resources.	1.849	0.703	Low
4	14	Women's social organizations assist in producing reports, covering a number of surveys on women's and men's statistics, and collecting data through administrative records, to enable planners and decision-makers to benefit from this data in narrowing the gender gap.	1.890	0.762	Low
		<b>Total Grade</b>	<b>1.829</b>	<b>0.617</b>	<b>Low</b>

The results from Table (4) indicate that the study sample's assessments regarding the state of the quality of accounting information were at a low level, with an average score of 1.829 and a standard deviation of 0.617. As for the individual items, the statement "Women's social organizations support transparency and accountability in political work" ranked first with an average score of 2.109 and a standard deviation of 0.727, indicating a moderate level. On the other hand, the statement "Women's social organizations assist in formulating recommendations for enacting laws to combat violence" ranked last with an average score of 1.410 and a standard deviation of 0.896, indicating a low level.

These results can be discussed by asserting that sound legislation is a very important tool for bringing about change in the status of women and achieving targeted development, as the issuance of legislation related to this, carefully studied, provides the appropriate climate and gives women full capacity to uphold their status and legal rights in all areas of legislation. In labor laws, criminal law, personal status laws, and others.

Bridging the gender gap in the field of political participation cannot be done without redoubling the efforts of social movements to confront the challenges mentioned above, because the weak participation of women in political life in most Arab countries is due to many economic, social, cultural and legislative reasons. Working to make the women's political movement part of the societal movement, and involving them in political reform, requires supporting democratic transformations in most Arab countries. There is an almost conviction that the matter is not related to women's participation or lack thereof, as much as what is required is reforming the system of women's political empowerment.

## 5. Discussion

This study has aimed to understand the role of women's social organizations in empowering Palestinian women politically. This is achieved through a field study of the reality of these women's organizations, accompanied by the analysis and evaluation of the collected data and information. This study has focused on the areas, priorities, and strategies of these organizations, examining their relationship with political empowerment based on social gender norms. The goal is to assess these organizations' capacity to link their work with the desired political empowerment reality.

In light of the analysis conducted in the previous chapters, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. There is a very large gap<sup>s</sup> on the ground between international trends and decisions, and the reality of political empowerment of Palestinian women in particular, and Arab women in general. While Arab countries try to meet the requirements of international trends and resolutions in their constitutions, in practice there is a large discrepancy between the

essence and spirit of these trends and the reality of women's political empowerment. Taking into account the different levels among Arab countries. These results agree with the study (Kuttab, 2012), while it differs with the study (Abdul Hadi, 2014). It also agrees with (Tarrow, 1989).

2. There is a close connection between the political empowerment of Arab women and the culture and values of Palestinian society. The political empowerment of women is related to society's culture, customs and values, which must be changed in order to solve this issue. This results are consistent with a study (Kuttab, 2012).

3. There is a clear correlation between the political empowerment of Palestinian women and economic participation. The reality confirms that Palestinian women still lack the economic freedom that can be gained from their involvement in the labor market.

4. Despite the diversity of the fields of work of women's institutions, this diversity in the programs and fields in which they work distances them from the issue of specialization in work and disperses their efforts and human and material capabilities. It keeps them away from focusing and specializing in a specific field, and this comes at the expense of the quality of the programs provided, and the diversity of the fields in which women's institutions work indicates that they have not yet been able to move away from the service role in which they began working. This results are consistent with the study of (Tarrow, 1989).

5. Effective coordination and cooperation between women's institutions are among the things that help them participate in development, especially if these institutions work together and in cooperation with each other within clear goals, vision, and development plans agreed upon by everyone. This result also agrees with (Meyar & Staggenborg, 1996).

6. The weakness or absence of women's participation in political development plans is due to the lack of a comprehensive and progressive development plan, whether at the government level or the feminist movement level, in addition to the lack of a unified progressive feminist discourse, and the lack of a single unifying reference and a real umbrella that reflects women's priorities and concerns. Feminist institutions did not unite their ranks by developing a unified strategy in which all institutions participated, far from factionalism and partisanship. This result is consistent with (Meyar & Staggenborg, 1996) and his theory is consistent with (Piven & Cloward, 1977).

### **Conclusions:**

- Structural change changes the prevailing mentality, the mentality of male superiority. International trends and decisions are not inconsistent with the Arab reality, nor are they strange, because they are sound and correct values. However, they appear problematic because the prevailing values are outdated and contrary to logic and reason, and are based on a wrong understanding of religious texts.

- The necessity of unifying the efforts and energies of feminist social movements under a women's umbrella, bringing together all governmental and non-governmental feminist institutions and various feminist frameworks, based on a unified strategy, a clear feminist vision and a unified feminist discourse, while emphasizing the importance of specialization in the work of these institutions.

- Palestinian women must enter the labor market to a greater extent than at present, and work to combat women's unemployment, and Arab women must contribute effectively and seriously to the production process so that they can be economically liberated and get rid of poverty and have an effective role in building society and then seriously participate in political activities.

- Organizing broad awareness and education campaigns throughout the country to change society's stereotypical view of women's roles and capabilities.

- Continuing pressure and advocacy campaigns to change laws, especially in light of the stage of approving new legislation, so that these legislations remain based on the Declaration of Independence and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- Providing support and training to women's institutions, each according to its specialty, and working to qualify women's cadres and support them to participate in development planning.
- Agreeing on the formulation of a comprehensive development plan, and developing appropriate methods and mechanisms to achieve this plan.
- Activating the relationship between the government and women's institutions, and agreeing on a unified work strategy that achieves solidarity between them.

## **Declarations**

### **Ethical Approval**

No ethical approval was obtained as no ethics or institutional committee in the Palestinian political field and legislative institutions at the time the study was conducted. To increase, I focused more on the Palestinian social movements because of its existing in a complex environment under occupation that lead to the emergence of new social movements, my academic affiliation at the University of Tunisia was outside the framework of this study, and with its complicated academic system it is difficult to take such approval.

The questionnaire was judged by specialists who works at Palestinian Universities; Birzeit University and Al-Quds University. I am not a student at their universities so I could not take an official paper from the scientific research committee or ethics committee there to complete this study. As a result, I have been asked to access the field of study (women working in the political field and legislative institutions in Palestine) using my strong relationship with these institutions and some personal friendship with others working there.

### **Consent to participate**

Verbal and written consent were gained from the participants. At the first stage, the sample was randomly selected, and the study tool was distributed through the electronic application (Google Forms).

Unfortunately, the response rate was beneath the satisfied level and which was difficult to be generalized. To get this problem sorted, the author preferred to distribute the tool face to face as hard copy instead of the electronic one.

Basically, at the beginning of the form, I wrote a pledge not to use their names, personal details and any information that may affect the privacy and confidentiality in an attempt to keep everything in strict confidentiality promising them that all data will be used for academic purposes. Therefore, the participants simply gave an agreement by putting their signature on a brief statement written by the researcher himself in Arabic language. In other words, verbal consent was gained from the participants by obtaining only their signature.

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### **Disclosure statement**

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

### **Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [Omar Bashir] [omarsab1979@gmail.com](mailto:omarsab1979@gmail.com), upon reasonable request.

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## Appendix

### Tables with captions

#### Table 1:

**Table 1.** Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients for the tool

Tool Area	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Feminist Movements	0.84
Political Empowerment of Palestinian Women	0.89

\*Statistically significant at a significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).

#### Table 2:

**Table 2.** Description of demographic variables

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Diploma	9	12.32%
Bachelor's Degree	19	26.03%
Master's Degree	31	42.46%
Doctorate	14	19.17%
Total	73	100.0%
<b>Experience (Years)</b>		
Less than 5	14	19.17%
5 to 10	22	30.13%
10 to 15	15	20.54%
More than 15	22	30.13%
Total	73	100.0%

**Table 3:**

**Table 3.** Mean values and standard deviations related to the extent of women's organizations having organized plans, programs, and objectives that meet women's needs and facilitate their effective participation in political life

Rank	Number	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
15	1	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women by strengthening scientific research.	1.589	0.406	Low
8	2	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through women's development.	1.917	0.404	Average
5	3	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through women's and human rights.	1.972	0.489	Average
10	4	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through economic development projects.	1.876	0.628	Low
13	5	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through support for education and training in various cultural fields.	1.821	0.594	Low
11	6	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting social culture.	1.863	0.556	Low
2	7	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through awareness and development of local political communities.	2.465	1.091	Average
4	8	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting youth political programs.	2.123	0.533	Average
6	9	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women	1.931	0.776	Average

		through enhancing participation in public decision-making.			
7	10	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting women's right to self-determination.	1.917	0.517	Average
14	11	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting the building of a democratic civil society.	1.643	0.449	Low
12	12	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting the economic capacity development of families.	1.835	0.356	Low
3	13	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through supporting women's access to resources.	2.191	0.648	Average
9	14	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through attempting to achieve equality and justice among society's categories.	1.904	0.634	Average
1	15	Women's social organizations work to politically empower women through promoting participation in personal decision-making.	2.513	0.615	Average
		<b>Total Score</b>	<b>1.924</b>	<b>0.552</b>	<b>Average</b>

**Table 4.** Mean scores and standard deviations related to assessing whether women's organizations are concerned with performing their tasks and functions to contribute to shaping policies and strategic plans in a manner that provides the necessary requirements for women's political empowerment within Palestinian society

Rank	Item	Statements	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Level
8	1	Women's social organizations assist women in understanding amendments made to civil laws, especially personal status laws.	1.780	0.527	Low
5	2	Women's social organizations help in formulating these laws.	1.863	0.501	Low
2	3	Legal amendments align with the efforts made by women's organizations.	2.027	0.821	Moderate
6	4	Women's social organizations assist in supporting women's participation in education and health.	1.849	0.730	Low
7	5	Women's social organizations assist in women's participation in drafting laws and legislation.	1.794	0.382	Low

1	6	Women's social organizations support transparency and accountability in political work.	2.109	0.727	Moderate
8	7	Different women's organizations coordinate to organize relationships based on a unified vision and strategy for women's work.	1.780	0.527	Low
10	8	Women's social organizations contribute to social and political awareness.	1.753	0.596	Low
12	9	Women's social organizations help in formulating recommendations for enacting laws to combat violence.	1.410	0.896	Low
11	10	Women's social organizations contribute to enacting laws to combat economic and political violence against women.	1.726	0.445	Low
9	11	Women's social organizations work on raising awareness and educating the community about important issues for women, using all media and community communication means, and stimulating substantive and constructive discussions, to be translated into laws, legislation, and public policies that serve women.	1.767	0.524	Low
3	12	Women's organizations provide various development services (health, education, economic projects, and monitoring social issues) to Palestinians, especially women.	2.013	0.507	Moderate
6	13	Women's organizations work on developing the organizational building strategy for women's centers and developing human resources.	1.849	0.703	Low
4	14	Women's social organizations assist in producing reports, covering a number of surveys on women's and men's statistics, and collecting data through administrative records, to enable planners and decision-makers to benefit from this data in narrowing the gender gap.	1.890	0.762	Low
		<b>Total Grade</b>	<b>1.829</b>	<b>0.617</b>	<b>Low</b>