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ADVANCING ARAB WOMEN'S POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION: EXPERIENCES AND JOURNEYS OF
WOMEN POLITICIANS FROM LEBANON AND SYRIA

by
LAYAN SAMER AL DANI

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PREFACE

This thesis is originated from a deep personal curiosity that I had during my years at AUB and continue to have every time I meet a woman politician. During my studies period, I met and worked with two inspiring women in politics and diplomacy, which are fields I am very passionate about, especially in post-conflict settings. I have always wondered how these women made it to where they are now. This curiosity made me always follow their work and research their professional journey; I read their CVs and published work and listened to interviews and conferences featuring them. However, still, this has not satisfied my curiosity. I felt that if I know the key opportunities they had and learn about their own reflection on their experiences, I will learn from them to take my path to reach similar positions, especially that I am passionate about women in diplomacy, peace, and security to contribute to the political transition of my country Syria. I assume I am not the only curious person, but anyone who witnessed the engagement and efforts exerted by these women would wonder the same. This is because we have always talked and read about barriers to women's participation. Still, rarely, we turn an ear to listen to the experiences of the women who already made it to be among the men-dominated political field.

As a young Syrian woman with a background in political studies and public administration, I deeply understand the situation of women in politics in the MENA region. During my studies, I was extensively exposed to Western literature and perspective about Arab women's participation in politics. Literature always puts culture and patriarchy at the core of women's situation in this field; however, less consideration has been given to perspectives of women who are already in the area. Since they are few, it is always worth listening to the experiences and journey.

I consider my position in this research as an insider who has a deep understanding of how women in such positions are perceived in the community – that they are appointed because of their connections and that men are orchestrating their work decisions. This thesis comes to fill the gap in the literature by telling the stories of these women and presenting the standard tools, trends, traits, experiences that would empower other women to participate in politics. During the interviews, I unintentionally insinuate my interest to be in their shoes in the future. This positively affected the discussion as the participant were more eager to reflect on their journeys and more focused on themselves rather than to explain the general situation of women.

The work targets any woman who is willing to take over a leadership role in politics or any other field to be a change agent. It is for everyone searching for patterns among women's experiences in parliaments and on peace tables. My research is dedicated from women to women, and I am grateful to all women who continue to be inspirational for such curiosity and passion.

<div align="right">

Layan Al Dani
May 2021

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To all women victims of our patriarchal society
To all women fighting every day for a voice and chair
To my beloved country, Syria

ABSTRACT
OF THE THESIS OF

Layan Samer Al Dani   for   Master of Arts
                                       Major: Public Policy and International Affairs

Title: Advancing Arab Women's Participation in Politics: Experiences and Journeys of Women Politicians from Lebanon and Syria

Women in the MENA region are still fighting for their political agency in a patriarchal society which obscures their own right to participate and be politically influential. Women's participation in the public sector and political power positions have not been achieved the desired level, although many measures have been adopted by a majority of MENA countries to enhance the representation of women in decision-making positions. To answer the above questions, we need to understand women's historical pathways to reach such posts from a feminist lens. This lens would lead us to having women as central to data collection and exploring the analysis and identifying key opportunities and factors that would help other women participate in politics. Thus, it is dedicated from women to women. This research will explore women's life journeys and experiences in political positions, mainly focusing on their official roles as a mediator, member of parliament, and in the cabinet. The objective is to study the lived experiences and stories of women currently part of policymaking and conflict resolution.

The thesis will look into two country cases: Lebanon and Syria. Lebanon will be a great case to explore the journeys of women in parliament and the cabinet. Although representation of women is minimal in Lebanon, it presents a wealth of experiences to explore women's inclusion in, or exclusion from, politics. Syria is a country under conflict and recently, women represent less than thirty percent of the constitutional and negotiations committees; hence, it would be worth looking into the journey of these women who made it to the peace table and how they are contributing to conflict-resolution. Putting these experiences as the core of knowledge about women's activism in politics would empower other women in the region to participate in high positions.

The main findings of the research are divided among four dimensions: the self-foundation dimension, the role of structural legacies that impact political practices, the political institutional design dimension, and the roadmap dimension to conceptualize advancing women's participation in politics.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW   Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

ESCWA   Economic and Social Committee for Western Asia

HNC   Higher Negotiations Committee

MENA   Middle East and North Africa

NGOs   Non-governmental Organizations

UN   United Nations

WAB   Women Advisory Board

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In one of the discussions on the Clubhouse app, the majority of Syrian men were giving testimonies about their participation in negotiations between the Syrian National Coalition and the international community, and very few women were present. Moments later, one Syrian woman interfered to say that more women should be given a turn in this discussion. However, none of us, as women, were able to participate. Not because we do not want to, but for the fact that none of us was present during these negotiations to give a testimony, approve what has been said, or simply disagree. This discussion shows that women sometimes are not absent or under-represented by choice but are silenced or absent and that these platforms for negotiations are, most of the time, neither inclusive nor diverse.

Women's presence in peace talks remains unprecedented, over fifteen years since the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calling for the enhancement of protection among men and women from conflict-related sexual abuse and equal representation among women at all levels of conflict prevention and resolution. UN Women contributes to a growing international recognition that this gendered disparity in representation requires rigorous and in-depth research.[1] Facing this gap is essential because peace negotiations will incentivize women to become more involved in politics in post-conflict countries.[2] For example, African countries such as

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[1] UN Women, "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325," 2015.
[2] Miriam J. Anderson, *Windows of Opportunity: How Women Seize Peace Negotiations for Political Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Rwanda have considerably higher rates of the female legislature and a quicker trend of implementing reforms of women's rights than non-member countries in the Continent because women's organizations have taken advantage of the potential for political reforms.[3] In countries with higher levels of gender equality that encourage women's political involvement, lasting peace is generally more likely.[4]

To date, some empirical research has been done that indicates that direct involvement by women has a positive effect on the longevity and quality of stability since the civil war. However, there are conflicting scientific theories about when and how women's engagement positively affects the longevity of peace. Case studies are centered on women's engagement as civil society leaders who urge warring sides to agree and as negotiators who set agendas that also emphasize women's rights and more significant problems relevant to the quality of peace. Any policy manuals remain unhelpfully embedded in essentialist stereotypes regarding women's intrinsically peaceful role to justify their assumed positive effects on peace processes. However, such assumptions obscure our perception of the processes that bind women's engagement to lasting peace.

Up to the present time, quantitative analysis reveals that women's participation in peace negotiations leads both to the possibility of achieving a peace deal and to its successful execution.[5] We all know that women's welfare and the socio-economic and political status of women significantly affect the possibility of (renewed) civil war.[6]

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[3] Aili Mari Tripp, "Political Systems and Gender," *Oxford Handbooks Online*, December 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199751457.013.0020.
[4] Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, "Gender Empowerment and United Nations Peacebuilding," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 4 (2009): pp. 505-523, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343309334576.
[5] Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, "Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes" (International Peace Institute, June 2015), https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking.pdf.
[6] Id.

For that reason, activists worldwide are fighting and advocating for a say in peace processes, political representation, and the rest of women and marginalized groups' rights. To have more women in peace negotiations who can direct post-conflict peacebuilding, we need more women in politics as female political decision-makers, two fundamentals that complement each other.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the Western understanding of Middle Eastern women's political positions remains inconsistent. Divide women in political positions may be tolerated, but Middle East women are generally viewed as passive and silenced. In the 1990s, Hanan al-Ashrawi first emerged in the international sphere as a sophisticated, articulated Palestinian spokesperson. Male leaders from Islamist parties in Algeria, on the other hand, refer to women as subordinates who should not be allowed to work outside the household, let alone engage in politics.[7] This conflicting picture reflects broader Middle East tensions and controversies over culture and women's status. The commutive consequences of this century of intense economic transition and social disruptions produce crises that have become paramount in the past ten years and are responsible for these conflicts. Throughout this process, women became active politicians. They haven't necessarily won their fights, but they have indeed been fighting and organizing for many reasons, one of their own.

How do the states and rulers, social forces, and women themselves see women as political? In the 19th century, Egyptian women were identified by the State as political. Both the British government and the Zionist movement in Palestine, before 1948, were considered agents and objectives of political action by Palestinian women.[8]

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[7] Sarah Graham-Brown. "Women's activism in the Middle East: A historical perspective." *Women and power in the Middle East* (2001): 23-33.
[8] Suad Joseph. "Women and politics in the Middle East." In *Women and power in the Middle East*, pp. 34-40. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

On the other hand, women were free to carry on clandestine political activism during the Algerian war of independence and in the early part of the 1975 Lebanon civil war because the government did not see it as political.[9] Likewise, in Iran, village women have been considered resistant to damage because officials have expected men to be accountable and responsible for the political acts of their women.[10]

Women's engagement in politics helps advance gender equality and impacts both the variety of policy problems that are being considered and the types of proposals that are being proposed. Research suggests that whether the legislature is male or female has a distinct effect on the legislative goals, making it essential for women to be present in politics to serve the interests of women and other disadvantaged constituents and further strengthen policymaking and governance's responsiveness.[11] There is a significant rise in the decision-making that underlines the standard of life and represents the priorities of families, women, cultural and racial minorities as more women are elected to the posts.[12] Women's electoral engagement affects societies, governments, political parties, and people's lives profoundly positively and democratically, helping the community to develop.[13]

According to the latest annual report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2020 is a year of record for women's participation in parliaments worldwide. The percentage of parliamentary seats held by women globally rose to 24.9 percent. This is a very encouraging piece of information for all women across the world. However, how did these women in the 24.9 percent escaped all the barriers to just women's political

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Craig Volden, A. Wiseman, and Dana Wittmer, "The Legislative Effectiveness of Women in Congress: Semantic Scholar," undefined (Manuscrito, The Ohio State University, 2010),
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

representation that literature and recent studies present? How have women who are part of peace negations reached the peace talks table? What is familiar about these women that made them politically represented, whether in parliaments or leading conflict resolution? Knowing this common factor among them, will it advance women's political participation in the Arab world? Wonders that are worth studying and researching, and this what this thesis is considering.

Therefore, women in the MENA region are still fighting for their political agency in a patriarchal society which obscures their own right to participate and be politically influential. Women's participation in the public sector and political power positions have not been achieved the desired level, although many measures have been adopted by a majority of MENA countries to enhance the representation of women in decision-making positions. To answer the above questions, we need to understand women's historical pathways to reach such posts from a feminist lens. This lens would lead us to having women as central to data collection and exploring the analysis and identifying key opportunities and factors that would help other women participate in politics. Thus, it is dedicated from women to women.

A. Main Research Question

The question that begs itself both theoretically relevant and empirically significant is: How can we describe women's experiences in political positions? What can we learn from the experiences of women in politics? What is the road to ascending political positions in post-conflict settings for women? Who ends up being represented? My conceptual framework draws on women's life journeys and compares their experiences to identify and theorize about trends, events around them, and their

perceptions of political life. This framework would visualize the different pathways and avenues open, or closed, to women in the Arab MENA region's political landscape.

B. Research Objective

This research will explore women's life journeys and experiences in political positions, mainly focusing on their official roles as a mediator, member of parliament, and in the cabinet. The objective is to study the lived experiences and stories of women currently part of policymaking and conflict resolution. The inclusion criteria in this research are looking at women politicians who are or were active in high political positions. We want to understand their journey, the meaning they hold for the role, how they would describe their journey. One main focus is to have women as the core of research analysis and knowledge production. The thesis will look into two country cases: Lebanon and Syria. Lebanon will be a great case to explore the journeys of women in parliament and the cabinet. Although representation of women is minimal in Lebanon, it presents a wealth of experiences to explore women's inclusion in, or exclusion from, politics. Syria is a country under conflict and recently, women represent less than thirty percent of the constitutional and negotiations committees; hence, it would be worth looking into the journey of these women who made it to the peace table and how they are contributing to conflict-resolution. Putting these experiences as the core of knowledge about women's activism in politics would empower other women in the region to participate in high positions.

C. Overview of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters; the first chapter is the introduction that includes an overview of women's representation in politics, the research question proposed, and the objective of the work. The second chapter is about the conceptual framework; it explains the adoption of "experience as a source of knowledge" as a concept within the feminist methodology used in this research. The third chapter is the literature review that explains the situation of women's participation in politics in the MENA region and reviews the main challenges for participation for women in Lebanon and Syria. The fourth chapter is the methodology that presents the Gioia method used in data collection and analysis and offers the source of primary data, sample, recruitment, and data collection. The fifth chapter is the data analysis that illustrates the data under four themes: the perspective of self-foundation, structural legacies that underlie the impact of political practices, the political, institutional design, and the roadmap for conceptualizing the advancement of women in politics. The last chapter is the discussion of the findings and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis is adopting a feminist approach to look into the topic of advancing women's participation in the MENA region. I consider experience to be the source of learning and meaning making; this is why I interviewed women about their life journeys into the political landscape. With "experience as a source of knowledge" as the central concept of our data collection, analysis, and findings, I have used a theoretical framework in line with this approach as well as an empirical data-collection methodology focused on the women themselves. This concept is considered a primary principle of feminist methodology valuing women's personal experience in producing theory and knowledge of the actual day-to-day experience of this group. In the 1960s, feminists grew the phrase "the personal is political," which highlights how our personal experiences are shaped by cultural forces, political and economic within the context of culture, history, and institution. This type of knowledge is what feminist theorists so-called 'feminist epistemology' refers to women's way of knowing, experiences, or knowledge.[14] Therefore, the term feminist epistemology integrates women's knowledge and experiences. Duran claims that inherent in the feminist epistemology is the "multiplicity of women's voices."[15] This inheritance is central for feminist research as it implies that researchers do not need to seek a single "truth" but various "truths" to investigate discrimination against women.

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[14] Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, "*Feminist Epistemologies*," in Feminist Epistemologies (New York u.a.: Routledge, 1993), p. 1.

[15] Jane Duran, "*Toward a Feminist Epistemology*," in Toward a Feminist Epistemology (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), p. xiii.

Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland argue that there is no psychological, moral, or other power for feminists to determine what their experience actually is for others.[16] No matter how deeply felt, there is no guarantee that one woman's experience is understandable to someone else or that any human being will always understand each other and themselves completely.[17] Due to these challenges, personal experiences can be appreciated, but the experience can be seen as a crucial link between knowledge and reality and hence strive to base feminist knowledge on women's experiences.[18] Experiences and how these feelings appear are central to gender identity and diversity and the investigation of inequalities, institutionalized power, and injustices. Ramazanoglu and Holland also described the basing knowledge on women's experience would challenge the male-centered expertise, as they mentioned: "Taking account of the reality of women's experience still provides a powerful challenge to male-centered knowledge. Challenging male-centered knowledge brings feminist knowledge up against the complex interrelations of gender with other power relations."[19]

Being that as it may, this research is focusing on studying the lived experiences of women in political decision-making or mediation positions in Syria and Lebanon. Hence, it is fundamental to put their experiences as the core of theory production around advancing women's participation in politics. Feminist scholars see the personal experience as admissible because they do not want to proclaim some experiences better than others - to judge the nature of those experiences qualitatively. Le Guin, a feminist scholar, sums up this view when she says, "how, after all, can one experience deny,

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[16] Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland, "Knowledge, Experience and Reality: Justifying Feminist Connections," in *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 2.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid. p. 19.

negate, disapprove, another experience? Even if I have had a lot more of it, your experience is your truth. How can one be proving another being wrong?"[20] Every participant in this thesis is considered the expert of her own life, so judging that one participant's experiences are superior to others violates her integrity in the world as an active agent.

Although the process of discussion among scholars about the use of personal experience as a source of knowledge and evidence is continuing, it is worth highlighting its benefits. Karen Foss and Sonja Foss (1994) declared two advantages for this concept; the first benefit is having the multiplicity of truths and value of diversity, which is impossible with other kinds of knowledge.[21] Personal accounts give researchers the chance to take several viewers' positions to see the world through the eyes of each participant. As a consequence, they cannot essentialize, categorize and reject differences between participants without difficulty. The ability to gain insight, empathy, and attentive care due to interaction with participants is the second advantage of using personal experience in the study.[22] The details of the personal journey assist the researchers in connecting with participants, who are often separated by vast distances. Consequently, researchers not only hear about what happened to participants, but they can also see their emotions, motivations for action, world views, and self-conceptions.

The concept of "experience as a source of knowledge" is meant to be beneficial to participants and scholars by giving a space for reflexive learning. As feminist research often aims to improve women's lives. It also empowers and helps women devise strategies to make sense of the world they live in and make decisions about it.

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[20] Karen A. Foss and Sonja K. Foss, "Personal Experience as Evidence in Feminist Scholarship," *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 1 (1994): pp. 39
[21] Ibid. p. 41
[22] Ibid.

Foss and Foss describe this benefit for participants that it "contributes to the improvement of participants' lives by encouraging them to discover their own truths…. When individuals tell of their experiences, without listeners inserting anything of their own, they come to discover their own stories and perspectives…."[23] Thus, the use of personal experience as data and exploration is a significant and subversive act for feminist research.

Picking it from there, the data collection focused on documenting the experiences of active women politicians in reaching their positions and their reflections about their journeys. The findings of this data would help readers, specifically women who are ambitious about taking this path to high political positions, to understand the various components of the pathways of each woman, challenges and opportunities faced, and their ways of coopting them. Additionally, it will allow other women to feel empowered about standing for their right to participate in politics and not to fear that they may be wrong or illegitimate to be in such positions. Each woman has a journey full of ups and downs, and no one truth about achieving high in politics.

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[23] Ibid. p.42

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Arab MENA region is one of the most complex and dangerous places to exist as a woman. In the areas of social and economic autonomy, inclusion in the workforce, political representation, and health, women from the Middle East and Northern Africa lag behind much in the world, and men in their country.[24] Another challenge that makes it impossible to properly determine women's role in these countries properly is the lack of correct and reliable national information in these fields.[25] It also impedes local NGOs and women's organizations' capacity to influence and advocate for women successfully for lawmakers and other policymakers.[26]

Access to voice in decision making, measured by the level of women's engagement in public lives and professional organizations, is an essential measure of women's political development. As an activity that aims — or leads — to influence the government's work, a standard definition of political participation is to be either directly affected or implemented by politicians or indirectly to influence the choice of people who adopt these policies.[27] Politics in the Arab world, like many nations in the world, are characterized by the sphere of 'public,' in which men continue to rule.[28]

Scholars have studied the barriers and factors for women's participation in public life. Arab cultural heritage, Islamic thinking and practices, and the waves of

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[24] Rola Abdul-Latif and Lauren Serpe, "The Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa: A Grassroots Research and Advocacy Approach," International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), 2010.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Nancy Burns. "Gender: Public opinion and political action." *Political science: The state of the discipline* (2002): 465.
[28] Rowaida Al Maaitah et al., "Arab Women and Political Development," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 12, no. 3 (March 2011): p. 13.

feminism and social movements influenced the status of women in the Arab world.

Over the colonial years, women played an active role in the growth of national groups

opposed to occupation and colonization, particularly in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Algeria,

and Tunisia, economically, culturally and politically.[29] Before Arab women began to

actively organize themselves into the new forms of women's organization and the

movements which struggle with freedom from foreign occupation, they started to

journey against colonialism within pre-existent national anti-colonial movements.[30]

Maaitah et al. argued that with the beginning of the twentieth century, the political

activity of women in the Arab world became more visible, accompanied by a cultural

and political revival.[31] Lovenduski et al. claimed that after independence, many Arab

countries saw the rise of 'state feminism,' which entailed promoting women's rights

under the governmental authority and leadership like the cases in Egypt, Tunisia, and

Yemen. Indeed, State feminism was established not only under the state's influence but

also instigated by international treaties such as the Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its monitoring provisions.[32]

It is argued that women remain marginalized in public in the Arab world

because they are often portrayed as victims of deeply rooted religious, social, and

cultural norms, but the history of Arab women's engagement and agency in the country

points in the opposite direction. In her work "Bargaining with Patriarchy," Deniz

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[29] Marc Lynch, Vickie Langohr, and Lauren Baker. "The Changing Face of Women's Political Participation in the Middle East." *The Washington Post* (2016).

[30] Fatima Moussawi and Samira Koujok, "The Political Participation of Women in the Arab World: Mapping the Movement, Experiences and Challenges Facing Arab Women from the Beginning of the Twentieth Century Until the Post-Arab Uprisings Era: Expectations, Paths and Outcomes," in *Women, Civil Society and Policy Change in the Arab World*, ed. Nasser Yassin and Robert Hoppe (Cham, Switzerland: palgrave macmillan, 2019), p. 34.

[31] Rowaida Al Maaitah et al., "Arab Women and Political Development," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 12, no. 3 (March 2011): p. 16.

[32] Joni Lovenduski et al., "Conclusions: State Feminism and Political Representation," *State Feminism and Political Representation*, 2005, p. 260, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511490996.014.

Kandiyoti points out that women use various approaches to respond to the rules of 'the game' and to optimize space for maneuver and resistance in a patriarchal and political context of losses and repression.[33] In the various institutions of the Arab world like legal, family, and society, the patriarchal system plays a crucial role and affects common norms, values, and behaviors. Arab countries are situated on the 'patriarchal belt' in the classical patriarchy, as Kandiyoti claims. Men dominate the more prominent family and a smaller family through power in classical Patriarchy, a phenomenon which extends to societies and the State and which requires women to develop their counter-styles to achieve power and influence.[34] On the other hand, another scholar argues that this patriarchal system does not restrict itself to familial dynamics but extends beyond the private residence to the hierarchical public authority of government over persons and organizations.[35]

These obstacles are induced by a variety of causes that occur in multiple interconnected dimensions. In addition to undermining socio-cultural expectations and values, legal sexism deprives many women of the tools to be viewed in their national political context. Adopting quotas is perceived to be one of the essential forms of improving women's electoral participation in certain countries. However, the lack of other substantial steps to overcome significant hurdles impedes the necessary meaningful representation.

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[33] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2, no. 3 (1988): pp. 274-290, https://doi.org/10.1177/089124388002003004.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Fatima Moussawi and Samira Koujok, "The Political Participation of Women in the Arab World: Mapping the Movement, Experiences and Challenges Facing Arab Women from the Beginning of the Twentieth Century Until the Post-Arab Uprisings Era: Expectations, Paths and Outcomes," in *Women, Civil Society and Policy Change in the Arab World*, ed. Nasser Yassin and Robert Hoppe (Cham, Switzerland: palgrave macmillan, 2019), p. 36.

As part of the theorization of political representation, several questions are posed. Mona Lena Krook suggests that who is -and who is not-elected as a candidate plays a crucial role in the form of representation as it has many consequences for the meaning and stage of political representation of a given party.[36] Krook points out that "women are perhaps the most vivid example in this regard: although they make up more than half of the population, they make up only a small minority of all the members of parliament in the world, just over 18 percent."[37] Furthermore, Marc Bühlmann and Lisa Schädel shed light on the argument that the substantial under-representation of women in the vast majority of parliaments and governments around the world not only contradicts the normative concept of equity in terms of political representation it also adversely impacts the equality of political participation in terms of incentive for women to take part in politics.[38] The makeup of the parliament and the government thereby fails to play its role in representing the views and demands of the people portrayed.

Many scholars have discussed the theories behind the gender perspective of politics. One argument by Anne Phillips presents that the "politics of presence theory," on the contrary, does not refer to numbers of women.[39] Furthermore, it contends that the link between women members of parliament and the political representation of women is "half-fastened": the possibility that women are represented increases when women are

[36] Mona Lena Krook, "Beyond Supply and Demand: A Feminist-Institutionalist Theory of Candidate Selection," *Political Research Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (June 17, 2009): pp. 707-720, https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912909336275.
[37] Ibid. p.707
[38] Marc Bühlmann and Lisa Schädel, "Representation Matters: The Impact of Descriptive Women's Representation on the Political Involvement of Women," *Representation* 48, no. 1 (2012): pp. 101-114, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2012.653246.
[39] Anne Phillips, "Democracy and Representation. Or, Why Should It Matter Who Our Representatives Are?," LSE Research Online (Swiss Association for Political Science, 1994); "From a Politics of Ideas to a Politics of Presence?," in *The Politics of Presence: the Political Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Race* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

present.[40] According to Phillips, the link between descriptive and substantive representation is based on women's life experiences.[41] Similarly, Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, moreover, find a relationship between women's descriptive representation and government responsiveness to women's policy concerns.[42] When there are more women elected to government, the legislative process addresses at more great lengths questions of gender equality and social welfare policies that women favor more than men.[43] Additionally, secondary data in literature of political outcomes also reveals that an increased presence of women in elected office is associated with greater equality between women and men when it comes to income levels, employment, and distribution of parental leave, for instance.[44]

   Picking it up from this point, literature has provided substantial background on women's advocacy for political representation and the necessity to challenge these obstacles to win the battle through elections and effective participation. The Arab Spring has provided new opportunities to expand and strengthen women's rights since they participated in protests together with men. Al Awady et al. at UN-ESCWA presented in their report that The Arab uprisings have proven themselves to be a window of chance for women to engage in politics.[45] The scale and quality of their presence during this democratic growth have been remarkable and comprehensive, as it has neither been constrained nor state-sponsored by a single class or age group.[46] In addition, they claimed that women's job wasn't only to take part in demonstrations;

[40] Id.
[41] Id.
[42] Leslie A. Schwindt-Bayer and William Mishler, "PDF," 2002.
[43] Id.
[44] Id.
[45] Mehrinaz El Awady , Amal Basha, and David Krivanek, "Women's Political Representation in the Arab Region," United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2017.
[46] Id.

instead, it involved gathering and reporting data on abuses of human rights, including violence and torture, particularly when women were affected, via different outlets, such as social media or human rights organizations.[47]

The literature explored the obstacles hindering Arab women's political participation and representation; all tend to reinforce each other. The most common barrier is that of the sociocultural obstacles, which originate from the practices and beliefs of pervasive societies that are tremendously defined by patriarchy.[48] The perspective pairs this that politics is a male-dominated space that is insecure for women, conservative religious elucidations that legitimize women's marginalization from the political compass, and the refusal of feminism by many in the MENA region.[49] Moreover, Arab women are seen as less credible candidates than men when they run for elections; this is because they are less able than men to approach and mobilize male-dominated groups and networks and offer clientelist services to their constituents.[50]

For the purpose of this research, an extensive revision of literature about the political representation of women in both Lebanon and Syria has been done. This revision covered barriers of representation, women activism, and advocacy for political participation in both countries, and the participation in peace processes for the Syrian case.

A. Challenges to Women's Political Representation in Lebanon

Different issues relating to the Lebanese political system are to be considered in relation to the case of the participation of women in politics. As a form of political

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[47] Id.
[48] Id.
[49] Id.
[50] Id.

patriarchy, we may face in this case, the typical patriarchy of other Arab countries varies. Lebanon has been ruled as a 'consociational democracy' since the end of the French mandate in 1943, with a system of political power-sharing between eighteen religious sections classed as Christian-Maronites, Catholics, Orthodox, Druze, Sunni, Shia, etc….[51] Maya Mikdashi presented the issue about sectarian quotas that regardless of their personal eligibility and electoral strength, in parliament, government, or in official institutions, candidate nominations, and officials are carried out according to sectarian quotas.[52] This is considered one of the obstacles that hinder women's participation in politics and their involvement in political parties; they have to be continuously involved based on their sect.

Lebanese women historically gained their right to vote in 1953, but women were not allowed to enter parliament until 1963. Indeed, after 1963 most female members of parliament became members of the "political inheritance" of the widows of male political figures, wives, daughters, and sisters; for instance, Nayla Mouawad became a member of parliament after the assassination of her husband, president Renee Mouawad; Settrida Geagea gained a parliamentary seat when her husband, the head of Lebanese Forces was in prison; Bahia Hariri gained her political influence through her brother the late prime minister Rafic Hariri.[53]

All other preliminary research is based chiefly on Lebanese women's role in politics and the barriers to participation. Analyzing these barriers, in a report entitled *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics*, researchers found a profound

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[51] Ohannes Geukjian, "Lebanon after the Syrian Withdrawal," *Taylor and Francis* , October 2016, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315591940.

[52] Maya Mikdashi. "A Legal Guide to Being a Lebanese Woman (Part 1)." *Arab Studies Institute, December* 3 2010.

[53] Doreen Khoury, "Women's Political Participation in Lebanon: Heinrich Böll Stiftung," Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, July 25, 2013.

correlation between women's low levels of political representation and the country's sectarian-based system of politics. According to Kingston, two structural aspects of Lebanon's political order perpetuate gender inequality in political parties: patriarchy and path-dependency.[54] Kingston explains that women's inability to move beyond the private sphere of home and family and into the public sphere of politics is a result of the gendered, patriarchal, and paternalistic nature of Lebanon's political order where all courts base their legal decisions on the dictate that the male is the head of the household.[55] The author continues to define patriarchy within the Lebanese context as "the privileging of males and seniors and the legitimizing of the privileges in the morality and idiom of kinship."[56] Later, he argues that Lebanon's political order is path-dependent and is continuously reinforced by the country's confessionalism system of government in which political representation is proportionately divided among religious communities.[57] He asserts that the impact of these two structural aspects is a political order that perpetuates a male-dominated, clan-based system of clientelism that not only discriminates against women but creates a sense of citizenship based on one's communal and religious identity as opposed to individual rights. [58]

Sofia Saadeh found in her research that this is clear from the 15 different personal status laws in Lebanon delegated to religious courts that discriminate against women in key aspects of their lives across sects[59]. The study by Marguerite Helou indicates that the system of personal status dominated by men strengthens patriarchy in

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[54] Paul Kingston, "Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience," in *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics* (International Alert, 2011), pp. 10-13.
[55] Id.
[56] Id. pp. 11
[57] Id. pp. 12
[58] Ibid.
[59] Sofia Saadeh, "Women in Lebanese Politics: Underlying Causes of Women's Lack of Representation in Lebanese Politics," in *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics* (International Alert, 2011), pp. 14-15.

Lebanese society (including women and men) by reinforcing the patriarchal idea that

women are subject to men – which is, of course, politics.[60] As a result, scholars argue

that the abolition of the sectarian system is the only way that Lebanese women can

attain equality between women and men and thus improve their political participation.

Turning the lens to women's own participation, Gabriella Nassif argues in her

report that the broader discussions on 'the empowerment of women' are part of the

existing meanings of women's political empowerment and political participation.[61] For

practitioners of development, women's political empowerment and economic and social

empowerment are critical indicators of gender equality.[62] However, the principle of

women's political empowerment is often used interchangeably with the participation of

women in politics, and in particular with the formal participation of women.[63] The

presumed interchangeability of these two notions has resulted in the primary indicator

of women's empowerment in formal policy processes and positions.

On the other hand, some argue that the political empowerment of Lebanese

women has been a myth hindering women from officially participating. Carmen Geha

argues in her research that it is a myth to continue to empower women in this political

system.[64] The programs and stories about women's political empowerment that are

sponsored by donors and introduced locally blame women themselves.[65] The main

reason behind these attempts is that females are not sufficiently competent and trained

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[60] Marguerite Helou, "Lebanese Women and Political Parties: History, Issues and Options for Reform," in *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics* (International Alert, 2011), pp. 16-17.
[61] Gabriella Nassif, "Women's Political Participation in Lebanon and the Limits of Aid-Driven Empowerment," March 2020, https://doi.org/10.28943/cskc.003.00041.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Carmen Geha, "The Myth of Women's Political Empowerment within Lebanon's Sectarian Power-Sharing System," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 40, no. 4 (October 2019): pp. 498-521.
[65] Ibid.

to be in politics. In fact, she claims that the political system is not inclusive or democratic enough to allow women's representation and voices to participate in the election process.[66]

Turning an eye to the civil war that started in 1975 in Lebanon, the country is considered a post-conflict state. Myriam Sfeir discussed in her paper the role of Lebanese women during the war; women have risen as heroines and have been pushed into new positions in the home, in the society, and public domain.[67] The delicate social structure that was ripped and broken by massacres, rapes, terrorists, automobile bombs, bombing, and displacements was continually reworked and reset.[68] Women were heads of the families, caregivers, counselors, equipment distributors, brokers, and peace initiators as the men fled – were they soldiers, imprisoned, exiled or banished, or killed.[69] Lebanese women successfully sought to resolve war furor by non-violent peace movements, including protests, hunger strikes, sit-ins, social service, rituals of reconciliation, and prayer meetings. They volunteered and served in domestic and foreign organizations, in Lebanon and overseas, where they arranged holiday camps for young people with a disability and severe wounds and were sent abroad to care; in addition to organizing refugee and family relief actions by distributing food, clothing, medical care and shelters.[70] On the other hand, women took the streets to protest for the kidnapped and disappeared persons from their families; this was led by Wadad Halawani, who established the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Myriam Sfeir, "The Role of Lebanese Women in Consolidating Peace during the Civil War," *The Peace Building in Lebanon,* no. 22 (August 2019): pp. 1-1.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

Disappeared.[71] Kari Karamé, moreover, presented the representation of women in post-conflict; the war on Lebanon ended ten years ago in 1990, ten years before the views and responsibilities of women during the war, as provided for by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, are considered a reliable source for peacebuilding process.[72] While the UN and countries like the United States backed the Taëf Agreement – which ended a civil war with the arms disarmament of all but one of the paramilitary groups, and a 50/50 division among Christians and Muslims of all political positions - women had not been invited to the table of talks and were given their proper place in the reconciliation process.[73] Reconstruction plans centered on the reconstruction of physical structures while less priority was paid to social infrastructure.[74] Since women in politics have concentrated on social and infrastructure-related problems, including health, education, housing, and environmental protection, greater participation of women in the Lebanese Parliament and a larger number of women government ministers would have probably resulted in a more active focus in Lebanon on these issues.

B. Challenges to Women's Political Representation in Syria

The profoundly patriarchal character of Syrian culture and its effect on the capacity of women to engage in the public domain both before and during the revolution was well supported in the literature. According to IPU, Women in Syria occupied 12.5 percent of the legislative in the Syrian regime until the event of the

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Kari H. Karamé, "Women's Participation in Political Decision-Making and Recovery Processes in Post-Conflict Lebanon," in *Defying Victimhood: Women and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* (Tokyo: UNUP, 2012), pp. 286-308.

[73] Id.

[74] Id.

Syrian revolution in March 2011.[75] This percentage has declined with the unfolding of the conflict in Syria. The Syrian Constitution of 1973, which continued to be effective until 2012, stipulates that all people are equal in their rights and duties and that the state guarantees the principle that citizens enjoy equal opportunities.[76] Article 45 also notes that "the state guarantees women the full participation of women in national, educational, cultural and economic life in all its possibilities.[77] The government removes the prohibitions which prohibit women from developing and engaging in the construction of the socialist Arab society.[78]

However, the reality about women's political participation was not as exalted as the Constitution's terms. In 2003 Syria joined CEDAW, but with a range of significant concerns about commitments deemed to be core to the intent of the Convention.[79] In its review of Syria's report in 2007, the CEDAW Committee noted that in the 9th and 10th Five Year Plan, the State Party's objective of thirty percent women in decision-making levels is recognized but stated its concern about 'the lack of measures adopted to achieve this objective and the continuing low levels of women's representation in public and political matters and in decision-making.[80] Though all types of education, platform, and articles on the Constitution have encouraged women to contribute to Syria's progress, women have been restricted by the strength of consolidated perceptions and normative methods that govern their behavior and way of thought.

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[75] "Women in Parliaments: World Classification," International Parliamentary Union, January 31, 2011, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif280211.htm.

[76] "الدستور السوري - 1973-2012 carnegie//:https ,.n.d ,Center East Middle Carnegie "," mec.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50270.

[77] Id.

[78] Ibid.

[79] UNICEF, "Syria: MENA Gender Equality Profile - UNICEF," October 2011, https://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Syria-Gender-Eqality-Profile-2011.pdf.

[80] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Concluding Comments, Syrian Arab Republic," Refworld, June 11, 2007, https://www.refworld.org/docid/468b5bf02.html.

Here allow me to dig deep in the literature about these perceptions and normative obstacles that hinders Syrian women's political participation. Fiona Hill claimed in her research in 1997 about Syrian women and the feminist agenda, that "Syrian families and communities of all ethnic and confessional backgrounds are acutely patriarchal."[81] Nearly 20 years later, another report by CCSDS and PCi similarly claimed that women historically considered a repository for the honors of their households, the primary function of which is not in society but in the private domain. In particular, the members of their group, both females and males, frequently see women engaged in public life with suspiciousness.[82] Jessica Huber, conducted a survey by late 2015 for her research about seeking male allies for leadership equality and to learn how to promote the creation of women's and men's coalitions to promote more democratic political systems, ties patriarchy and conflicts to women.[83] Huber explains that problems historically challenging women are intensified by violence and liberated regions are occupied by more conservative militants.[84] She argues, however, that growing conservativism is not limited to 'jihadists' but is present in wider Syrian society.[85]

Another challenge is the absence of assumption to gender equality. Kapur shed the light on the argument made by Habel who claimed that politics is built into social culture as a risky, filthy enterprise that ensures that women are held away from political

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[81] Fiona Hill. "The gender of tradition: Syrian women and the feminist agenda." *Remaking the Middle East* 1997.
[82] Centre for Civil Society and Democracy in Syria CCSDS and Peaceful Change Initiative PCi, "Building Peace within Syrian Communities," March 2014, http://ccsdsyria.org/files/peace_resouces_report_en.pdf.
[83] Jessica Hubber, "Crisis in Syria: Now Is the Time to Seek Male Allies for Leadership Equality," International Foundation for Electoral Systems, December 2015, https://www.ifes.org/publications/crisis-syria-now-time-seek-male-allies-leadership-equality.
[84] Id.
[85] Id.

education.[86] Decades of Syrian patriarchal dictatorships have created limitations on the civil society.[87] The absence of cultural policy makes cooperation at the political level impossible for various communities, but women find it much more challenging to get involved in it.[88]

While democratic demonstrations initially allowed women in street protests and other mobilizations to play a critical active role, the resulting militarization of the conflict pushed women out of the streets and out of the cameras. With the worsening of the situation of Syrian women during the war, their increased exposure to violence, and their increasing marginalization; It was imperative for Syrian women to exert their efforts in order to provide protection for them, their families and their surroundings, and work to end the war that has exhausted the country and its people, which means making additional efforts on a local scale on one side and internationally on the other hand.

Some authors suggest also that the revolution was never a revolution for women's rights; it was a revolution designed to overturn the status quo and, as a consequence, women's rights did not play a prominent role in revolutionary views of change.[89] But the revolution brought about the development of a wave of young Syrian feminists. Now, attempts made by certain Syrians to engage in all spectra of politics are being thwarted by men – not only by 'jihadis' – but also by relatives, friends, the elders in the group, who draw the 'qualification' and "protection" cards to keep women from participating.[90]

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[86] Bela Kapur, "Participation of Syrian Women in Political Processes 2012–2016 Literature Review" (Kvinna Till Kvinna Foundation, 2017), https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1-Syrian-women-in-political-processes.pdf.
[87] Id.
[88] Id
[89] Id.
[90] Id.

The ongoing conflict has created barriers that limit women's access to opportunities to participate in public affairs and decision-making processes.[91] These barriers are the result of physical violence, displacement, and humanitarian needs. However, the conflict is not the only provocative element for limiting women's political participation in Syria. Other scholars, such as Lama Kannout, argue that four elements have led to blocking women's involvement in politics.[92] Most importantly is democracy; the absence of democracy and rights discourse over decades led to the marginalization of Syrian women.[93] The prevalence of favoritism circles and gangs and regional and sectarian distributions have heavily contributed to the lack of programs that support women's rights.[94] The rest of the elements are associated with the current perception of women in politics drawing analysis from recent political participation of women in opposition and regime side.[95] This shows the gap in research about factors hindering Syrian women's political participation in history. Although it may seem for some that the main element is a dictatorship (as commons sense reason), extensive research in the historical roots that dimmed the rise of participation of women in politics during the 1950s in which they were permitted to vote.

This thesis will expand the research on gendered conflict resolution by sharing insights from Syrian women. It is essential to unfold the gender mainstream during conflict resolution, in other terms, how peace talks can be more inclusive where women can play an influential role in negotiations and mediations. This applies to women's role

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[91] Mehrinaz El Awady , Amal Basha, and David Krivanek, "Women's Political Representation in the Arab Region," United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2017.
[92] Lama Kannout, *In the Core or on the Margin: Syrian Women's Political Participation* (The Syrian Feminist Lobby, 2016).
[93] Id.
[94] Id.
[95] Id.

in post-conflict in the Arab region, where they can be or continue to be an impactful player to mediate and achieve peace. Be that as it may, this thesis will line up the concepts that would explore gendered conflict resolution theory in light of considerable political representation.

C. Conclusion

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may conclude that in both countries Lebanon and Syria, the patriarchal system is a fundamental barrier for women's participation in politics. In addition, scholars described the quota, in Lebanon as result of the power-sharing system between all sects, to be hindering women access to parliament and cabinet. The absence of this quota as well is blocking Syrian women's full and effective participation in peace processes leading to marginalizing their role. Considering all this evidence and reviews, it seems that there is consideration in literature to the voices and experiences of women who have fought their way to be in political positions in Lebanon and Syria. As much as the literature has explained about the social and political barriers to women's participation, there are more minor contributions about the role of these women and narrative of their journeys, this is where this thesis will contribute to. The thesis is focusing on describing the journeys of women politicians and their experiences under an over-populated men political environment.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Methodology

This chapter presents the research approach that it is adopted by this thesis. In this analysis, qualitative methods are mainly inductive and are of exploratory type. Before we discuss the approach further, let us say a few words when introducing and emphasizing the idea of qualitative study. Merriam and Tisdell state that researchers are involved in qualitative studies and, in considering the context people have built, that is to say, how people have a sense of their life and the interactions in the world they have.[96]

The research involves an inductive, in-depth empirical study. The focus on women's political participation, after exploring the societal and political barriers with it, is somehow rooted in a social sense of an individual who is knowledgeable and has been affected by beliefs and social constructionism. However, this thesis selected Gioia methodology based on the article by Gioia, Corely, and Hamilton entitled: *Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology*.

The reasons for selecting this methodology are for two crucial points: first, the importance of using a tool that compiles fully with the demands for the quality data analysis; second, it is considered a way to systematically refinish the raw data without sacrificing its consistency and authenticity. That being said, the Gioia methodology seems the correct path to adopt for the data analysis for this study. Based on the authors the primary purpose of the Gioia methodology is to introduce a "systematic approach to new concept development and grounded theory articulation that is designed to bring

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[96] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, "Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation," in Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation (Vancouver, B.C.: Langara College, 2016), pp. 15-15.

"qualitative rigor" to the conduct and presentation of inductive research."[97] This

qualitative rigor is achieved when Gioia Methodology is adopted which aim to

"encourages the presentation of the research findings in a way that demonstrates the

connections among data, the emerging concepts, and the resulting grounded theory."[98]

Also, the methodology aimed for "devising of an approach that allowed for a systematic

presentation of both a "1st-order" analysis (i.e., an analysis using informant-centric

terms and codes) and a "2nd- order" analysis (i.e., one using researcher-centric concepts,

themes, and dimensions; for the inspiration for the 1st- and 2nd-order labeling, see Van

Maanen, 1979). Taken together, the tandem reporting of both voices—informant and

researcher—allowed not only a qualitatively rigorous demonstration of the links

between the data and the induction of this new concept, sense giving, but also allowed

for the kind of insight that is the defining hallmark of high-quality qualitative research."
[99]

B. Source of Primary Data

Relying on interviews was an essential element. Interviews were conducted with

women participants from Syria and Lebanon who are active politicians in both

countries. As for the secondary data, desk review was conducted focusing on

researching the history of political representation across the Arab world, looking into

academic journals, books and conference proceedings in which women representation

and peace inclusivity were highly discussed.

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[97] Dennis A. Gioia, Kevin G. Corley, and Aimee L. Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research," *Organizational Research Methods* 16, no. 1 (2012): pp. 15-31, https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151.
[98] Id. pp. 17
[99] Id. pp. 18-19

With respect to the interviews, they were held online due to COVID-19 lockdown, on an open-source platform which provided secured and safe call. They were conducted and recorded in both languages Arabic and English depending on the preference and after the approval of the participants. The recordings were used later in transcription to proceed with the data analysis on later stages of the research. The recordings were transcribed using smart verbatim transcription method through which the answers were divided in sections according to what had been discussed. For the Arabic recordings, the translation was done simultaneously while transcribing them. For this reason, an interview protocol has been prepared (see App. A) with an interview thread and questions to politicians. The protocol included eight questions in English with translation to Arabic.

C. Sample

The sample for this research included thirteen women politicians from Syrian and Lebanon. Criteria for inclusion to interview participants is that they be women active in political parties, peace processes, elections, and/or formally represented in national institutions such as parliament. For the confidentiality of the research, stating the different groups recruited with number in each group would identify the participants. Therefore, it is best to note in general the working environment of these women; it involved members of the cabinet and parliament and former active politicians in political parties in Lebanon. For Syria, women were recruited from the Women Advisory Board (WAB), the Higher Commission for Negotiations (HNC), and the Constitutional Committee.

D. Recruitment

To reach out to these politicians, I contacted them through their institutional offices and publicly available email contacts, some has provided a permission through someone for me to contact them in the event of snowball recruitment. Later, an official email was sent inviting them to take part in the research after providing them with clear explanation of the research objectives and an oral and printed statement explaining that their participation in the study is voluntary and that the research assures confidentiality of all records.

Only until the research is finalized will the results of this research be shared with all participants upon request; and some of them already expressed interest to read the paper once done.

E. Data Collection

As stated previously, thirteen interviews were conducted, however, for confidentiality and since the interviews have personal reflections on their journeys, it is best not to share the transcriptions at the end of the paper. The purpose of the interviews was to investigate the journeys of these women reaching the positions they are currently occupying. One challenge faced during the data collection is that there are two participants who have a very high political position, however because the women in such positions are very few, stating their position would reveal their identities. There was a shed light on the opportunities they benefited from and the challenges faced and how they dealt with them. In addition, the essence of interview was embedded in the end of its thread in the question about how they describe the roadmap for other women

to ascend such political positions. The data analysis chapter will present the results of

the interviews and explain about the data collected.

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS

A. Introduction

To undertake qualitative data analysis, I used Gioia's approach which provides us with a systemic order for the processing of raw data in our methodology chapter. The data (coding) was performed using raw data and a (complete compendium) based on raw data, called the 1st order review, was developed. Moreover, a systemic approach should be followed in the second order (themes) by the 1st order data processing (comprehensive compendial). After doing the desk review and collecting the data needed from the interviews conducted, we came to the analysis part. The data analysis will be focusing on analyzing the data produced from the interviews based on the Gioia methodology. This consisted of creating 1st order codes from the transcripts, these codes are generated as general concepts based on how the interviewee reflected on her journey. Following Gioia et al. I continually revisited the data, engaged in drawing similarities across it all, and researching possible themes that would shadow these codes. Succeeding this step, the codes were organized on a table to cross the similarities and name each group of codes under a theme, applying the idea of Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information that can be used as part of qualitative methodologies.

Similarities and contrasts across the data were recognized during the interviews phase, I could not but trace the common events and reflections claimed by interviewees. Engaging with the data by just reading them, was ambiguous; I needed a straightforward method to visualize the tracing and group the codes. Thus, I used

"cutting and sorting" method – yes, kindergarten style – this allowed me to understand how the analysis will be presented and what topics to be researched for based on the groups resulted. The approach is based on reading the transcripts and identifying powerful statements that contributes to answering the research question. Later, these statements are cut out and pasted on small index card, and on the back of the card I write the reference of the quote (who said it and where does it appear on the transcript). Then I lay the card randomly on the table and start piling them based on the similarity of the concepts in each quote. Next, I gave each pile a group name which are the themes. This technique helped me to describe how these themes are distributed across interviewees systematically. The table below summarizes the results of this method and presents the themes produced.

1st Order Concepts   2nd Order Themes   Aggregate Dimensions

- Identity within the family development
- Role of family on personal
- Self-perception
→ **Impact of Family on Personal Identity** →

- History of family involvement in politics
- Reaction to Family Environment
- Witnessing political events, wars, and conflicts
→ **Motivation to be in Politics** →

- Professional Development
- Family Support
- Men Recognition
→ **Opportunities for Women to be in Politics** →

The Perspective of Self-foundation

- Patriarchal mindset with the society
- Discouraging Surrounding
- Stereotype around her participation role
→ **Societal Barriers** →

- Affiliation to Political Parties
- Activism initiated by an event
- Feminist Activism
- Persecution as cost of activism
→ **Structure of Women Activism** →

Structural Legacies that Underlie the Impact of Political Practices

- Quota for Participation
- Women's affairs as priority
- Political party as an umbrella
- One-man decision
- Political Inheritance
- Unwelcoming institutions
- Perception of women work in politics
- Issue of representation
→ **Political Institutional Barriers** →

- Experience of working with men
- Sensing support from men
- Marginalization of women
- Depreciation of Women's role and knowledge
- Acts of verbal harassment
→ **All-men Environment** →

- Sense of Frustration
- Relation with Women colleagues
- Political Attitude
→ **The Psychological Burden** →

Political Institutional Design

- Political Background
- Women are educated enough
→ **Experience and Knowledge** →

- Soft personal skills
- Sense of Commitment
→ **Personal Skills** →

- Being politically affiliated
- Sense of entitlement
- Advocacy for Quota
- Networking
- Forward-looking Plan
→ **Expanding the Spaces of Activism** →

Roadmap for Conceptualizing and Advancing Women's Participation in Politics
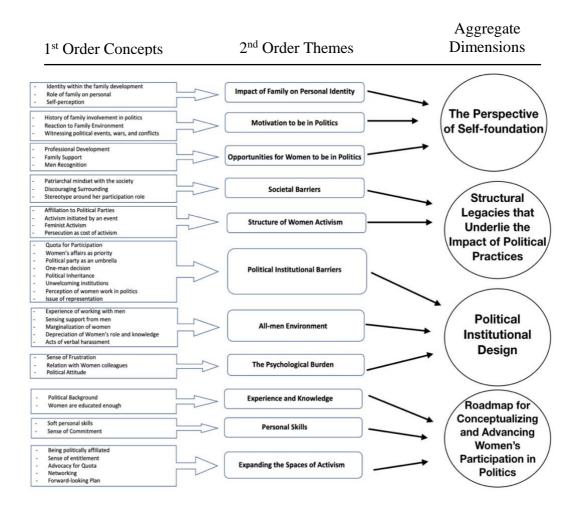
Figure 1 Summary of the Thematic Analysis

This chapter provides an extensive examination of the results concluded and presented in figure 1 above. The results proved four aggregated dimensions for perspectives of women participation in politics. First is the dimension of human development that the interviewees expressed indirectly through talking about their passions, motivations, and opportunities that they invested in to reach their positions. Next, the expected results described the role of historical legacies and events that contributed to the shaping the political identity of the interviewees. In addition, we have the political institutional design that presents that political barriers and experience of

men-dominant environment. At the end, we have the interviewees reflections of the roadmap for women in the MENA region to ascend political positions.

B. The Perspective of Self-foundation

1. Impact of Family on Personal Identity

This theme represents the reflection of interviewees on their personal development. It showcases their personalities, childhood passion, and interests, and how these developed over the course of their political and social activism. Most of the interviewees started their self-reflection with describing the role of their families. The family was the very first element that the interviewees explained about, talking about its status, class, and the environment they were raised in, "I am from a non-political family, but of course I am from a family in which there are people who are activists, whether they were in student demonstrations or even our people were at certain times like the Arabists and many positions – LI1," "We [family] do not belong to political parties or movements, but we follow public affairs a lot – SI3," "My passion in life was the right of deciding my faith within the family that imposes on you its demands and views – SI2," "On the family level, I didn't feel discriminated, nor have any problem to be working on women issues because I was originally into politics and had my network – SI1," "I am from a middle family and my parents shared so we could live- LI2," "I am girl in a family you can say average, from the middle class – SI7." The family as the first social institution the individual experience play a key role in shaping their identities, as we saw, most of the interviewees started by identifying their families' social environment and class.

The interviewees reflected on several elements that contributed to the development of their personalities, to mention family as principal element; "He [father] is a person that believes in the status of girl in the family and doesn't have discrimination between male or female, I was the oldest, the support I found from the social environment contributed to the development of my personality, especially my father – SI7," "I am a person who loves the public space, I am not a person who like do any activity if not public, I like public appearances on stages or radio, in my school, I was raised in the gulf, there was wide student activism so I used always to choose the part related to addressing the people – SI3," "my passion has always been to take a profession in which there is communication with people – LI1," "my family was big we are eight children, so I decided to go to the Teachers House, as resident so that I can have my own privacy and independency – SI6."

These roles that contributed to their self-development allowed them to identify themselves uniquely, "since I was young, I used to introduce myself as someone who hates injustice – SI6," "I was a person who had my voice everywhere – SI3," "I am a human being first, then I am a doctor and a citizen of this country – LI2," "I consider myself since I was a child a feminist and rebellious person against the modularity of this society and this what made me unique – SI2." Reading was another element contributing to thought development of the participants, "Since I was young I was obsessed with reading, I was impacted by many foreign authors with the views that challenged every familiarity in this society – SI6," "I used to read books and with that I felt that I want to become a striver – SI8," "I started reading about the Soviet Union, and many more including Nawal Al Saaddoui, I read for her when I was in the 8th grade, she shocked me at that time. My father was a traditional intellectual, but I was the

opposite, I had extensive readings – SI2," "When I was young kid, I was a shy child, but I used to read a lot – SI7."

2. Motivations to be in Politics

With respect for their motivation to be in politics, history of their families was a key among their reasons to participate in politics. Some put the restrictive environment of their families as reaction to their political attitude and activism today, and others put it in the context of inheriting political passion from their families, "My father was in the Lebanese army. We lived through the war. That's why from the beginning I was interested in politics especially because of my dad – LI4," "And we were a lot involved in society by helping people– LI1," "It was almost natural because my father was a diplomat and himself a very politically aware and active person and so our house was always full of politicians, political activists from all over the upper world this is important so it was really across the outer world from Mashreq to Maghreb to the whole region and the conversations were all political so I think I was fed politics from my childhood – SI4," "I had my position on the state from my father – SI9."

On the other hand, participation in politics, for one, was a reaction for the atmosphere of her family; "I had a problem to decide on my preferences with my family that is embodied with the patriarchal system. I faced a lot of objections until I took the decision to leave the house and enroll in university – SI2." Another saw that the consequences of their families' involvement in politics demotivated them, "When I was a young kid my father was arrested, because of this I told myself that I will not be involved in politics or public affairs since it is too dangerous in Syria – SI5." One had another consequence as motivation for her be in politics "My father was laid off without

any justification…because he refused to be in Al Baath party… in my deep inside, I intended to take back my father's right, because I see that my father's right is the right of all Syrians – SI9."

Other motives that pushed most of the participants to start growing a sense of political activism are wars, conflicts, and political events they witnessed since childhood; some were influenced by the Arab Unity era under Jamal Abdul Nasser, "I used to hear with my family Abdul Nasser talking so it was exciting for me – SI8," "I lived the ear of Arab union, I used to participate in military marches as young kid, and … there are issues that I call national liberation, there is a sort of optimism. I remember the feelings of people toward the union era, with and against, when the separation happened, I was comfortable about it – SI6;" Other participants were influenced by the Israeli occupation to Palestine, "I was interested in the Palestinian conflict – SI8," "I am girl from the South that suffered from the Israeli occupation and continued attacks – LI2." Moreover, another was impacted by the consequences of the Lebanese civil war, "I was born during the civil war… I was against the Syrian occupation of Lebanon; this was my drive to be in politics – LI4." The Arab Spring especially the uprising in Syria has the most significant section of the motives pie for other participants, "I think when the Syrian uprising started I think I instantly left and gave it top priority – SI4," "When the revolution started in 2011, I use the term revolution, we, as feminists, found that this is a golden opportunity for us to put issue and rights of women as priority during the political system change – SI1," "When the revolution started...I started watching the situation unfolding, I couldn't help myself, so I started documenting violations and more involved – SI5," "When the revolution started, the pushing factor was humanitarian, but there was an inner ambition for change, we all lived through a certain

reality in challenges, we all knew that these challenges have political references, so here the ambition was the story change that today you are one of the tools change – SI3."

3. Opportunities for Women to be in Politics

The personal journeys of women were influenced by different opportunities they benefited from. They invested in such opportunities to enhance their chances and expand entry points for being in politics. Many expressed their social and political activism as a critical opportunity that enabled them to be in the political spaces, this activism will be more explained in the next section. In this regard, the opportunities mentioned where more focused on their professional development, "Attending such international meetings and this exposure to high level encounters was an opportunity – SI7," " The opportunity was myself, I benefited from all my experiences in writing, politics and intellect, I took the filter of the filter, everything I read and learned – SI9," "I was very happy on the Syrian level on the regional level but also on the international level in the last 10 years like more exposure or like the field of woman in peace and security – SI5," "My role as lawyer in defending the rights of the people, and the organization taught me how the hierarchy is, and that nothing limits you today whether man or woman to ascend high positions in the company you are in – LI1." Three participants claimed that the family was an opportunity for her "Supportive family for girl's education – SI1," "My marriage was an opportunity, my husband was very understanding and supportive and I supported him as well… my upbringing was an opportunity…I lived in 4 areas in Syria…my father and his rebellious personality was an opportunity, this upbringing that made me feel that I am an important entity – SI6," "Opportunities for me I had big actually support from my family so it was very good I

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had like support from colleagues and friends – SI5." Furthermore, another participant spoke that women usually in her community are not supportive to other women having opportunities, "Women here are like when we see a woman capable of being something, we cut her head, and push her away of the field immediately because she will risk my interest, and this you would it see a lot among women who speak about women empowerment – SI3," she continues saying that who supported her in life mainly were men not women, "Who gave me the opportunity today is man not woman, and who opened the door for more are men not one but many, honestly, they are people who believed that I am from an environment which I must have a political voice – SI3."

C. Structural Legacies that Underlie the Impact of Political Practices

1. Societal Barriers

The results presented in this section showcases structural barriers faced by these women in their societies that challenged their participation in politic, from thinking about their activism and education until they are present within the political space, these include but not limited to the discouragement of their families to be in politics, the stereotype around women politicians, and the patriarchal system that dominates the political scheme not paving the way for women. Of course, there are many other challenges, but these were the significant ones among the journeys of the participants.

To start with the most common barrier which is the patriarchal system, "When you go out for a revolution, the first system we should revolt against is the patriarchal system. This that control all my life as a female ranging from choices to choices of education major, the major is imposed on you, the type of sports is imposed on you, I love basketball and bikes, but I was prohibited of practicing both – SI2," "There is no

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doubt, in general, the patriarchal society that we cannot overcome, we all know how much the masculine society is dominating, and woman today should work double the efforts to appear – LI1," " There is a rejection for different justifications, from men and women with patriarchal mindsets to women who tend to reach high positions – SI1," "There was a challenge for the patriarchal mindset present inside the party and the society – SI6," "The society is not encouraging – SI3," "In our society, people do not accept much the woman who speaks about politics, even man who speaks politics they think he is a parrot repeating the news – SI7," "They [men] consider politics a monopoly for them, so a woman coming to work they deal with her in way they sympathize her and not trying to understand her – SI9."

Other participants felt a sense of discouragement from their surroundings, "The mindset that nothing will change, and the regime is staying no matter what, there wasn't any political will to have a civic activism – SI1," "Any word tells you that you think you can change something, you cannot change, you cannot – SI7;" other two interviewees experienced discouragement from their families as prohibiting their activism or even not allowing them to pursue the major they want, "I was prohibited from doing journalism, I was violated by my dad not allowing me to go and do my interview. My dad was worried about me – SI2," "My family was against me writing about politics – SI9," "I think my parents did not have the desire to have anyone involved in politics – SI3."

Another significant barrier for women to be politically active is the stereotype around her participation role, "There is a picture that is not enthusiastic, because most women in the society did not give the positive picture that encourages you to be in the public space, there is always a picture that if you want to be in this field [politics] you

have to compromise a lot and you will be attacked and subject to stabbing and mutilation thus there would be a worry about you – SI3," "Some started saying that women's role is like "مزهريات" "but" "فشرو" we are not – SI2," "Major challenge for women in the public sphere in general and that transpires in when women appear in the media that women who have had some public profile have suffered a lot of attacks as you know and that I think it had a chilling effect on many women who are reluctant to step forward and when the opportunity was there…they shied away and somehow it's just disappointing – SI4," "We cannot stop at [comments such as] she's a woman, and she's wearing this dress or that jacket, The situation in the country is very critical, and we cannot pay attention to such comments. It even got to the point that once we were announced as six female ministers, there were comments about what we were wearing from tip to toe. They were trying to [entertain], but we are dealing with different, serious topics – LI3." Another interviewee commented on the perception of woman as a mother in the society that for her is very disturbing, "When I started getting focusing on the feminist and women affairs, the idea of woman as mother disturbed me a lot, this idea that we put the woman on the mother base and forget at one time that this woman had rights, even when men tell us "you are our mothers and sisters" I stopped him, we are neither your wives nor your sisters, we are your colleagues – SI6."

2. Structure of Women Activism

With all the societal barriers these interviewees faced, they continued their activism on different levels. Some had their activism shaped by being affiliated with political parties; others were more present on the ground advocating for women and social rights. Some participants did not have a historical journey of activism across the

phases of their lives, but it was stimulated upon an event and from there they started to be more involved. To begin with the first group respectively, few participants saw that some parties share their thoughts, "I have some political tendencies without commitment, which roams around the political thought of President Aoun, even before he established the party or leave for France, I was personally in this thought, yet I am not affiliated – LI3," "My father was and still supporter to Aoun and member of FPM. It started with all the demonstrations supporting Aoun and calling against the Syrian intervention in Lebanon. Then when I joined the university, I started to have more sympathy to the Lebanese Forces – LI4," "Until the revolution started, I was more involved with the communist party, I was one of the public bases, I was just an activist and writer of their issues – SI2," "During my university years, I got affiliated with the Communist Action league – SI8," "I got affiliated with the communist party…The Communist Party challenged a lot of the traditions that I hate, and the challenge it had was very interesting – SI6," "I was in the communist party – SI1."

For other participants, this kind of activism was initiated with the particular phases of their lives witnessing the Syrian uprising or being more active upon joining the university, "I started watching the situation unfolding, I couldn't help myself, so I started documenting violations and more involved…At the beginning, documenting violations, was by myself and then I co-founded X center – SI5," "At the beginning of the revolution, I was active on the ground, then on Facebook there was a group of activist discussing issues related to change, so I used to express my thoughts, and I was known for my views although I used to write under an anonymous name, later I was invited to one of the workshops about international affairs and the trainer was fascinated by my personality and reading to the political scene and then I started to be invited more

to such workshops and here I started get more involved in politics – SI3." One participant started her activism upon enrolling in university as student activism sort of engagement, "Of course, I practiced politics through student movements – LI2," "I think when the Syrian uprising started I think I instantly left and gave it top priority, I took leave from my organization…and got involved very quickly with the opposition – SI5."

Some of the participants had a history of feminist activism that we cannot but recognize these extensive efforts. This kind of activism enriched their professional experience. This feminist identity has grown from the roots of the societal barriers they faced, "The Communist party in Syria had an association for women called association for motherhood and childhood. However, in the 70s we decided as feminist women that it is not acceptable to stereotype us women for motherhood and childhood and we decided to change the name of the association and named it the Association for Syrian Women and changed its mission. The feminist activism continued its work through developing several campaigns about right for nationality for women and worked about women's rights and CEDAW – SI1," "I was invited by a friend of mine to attend a meeting for an organization working on women's affairs, I felt attracted to these issues – SI8," "My mission in this party was to help women reach decision-making positions inside the party, there were struggles, issues didn't go as easy – SI6," "Since I was a child a feminist and rebellious person…I was living in a village and didn't have a space to participate with feminist groups until I left to university – SI2."

This political activism did not go as any democratic practice in developed countries, but a cost has to be paid in our tyrannical country, for some this cost was later paid either in persecution or calls for interrogations, five of the politicians interviewed

were either detained for a period of time or called for interrogation, "I was persecuted when I was in the 11th grade [because of participating in a protest]…I was detained in 2011 in a protest in the middle of Damascus…when I was traveling to Geneva to attend this meeting [Geneva 1 meeting] I was arrested for the third time – SI2," "We [association of Syrian women] tried in 2005 to register [the association] and have a license yet we found out that we needed an approval from the Baath party and security clearance. Later we were called for interrogation at the security branches about the purpose of obtaining a license – SI1" "I didn't stop and my enthusiasm for these issues did not stop and as result I was in prison away from my three-years old baby – SI8." The other two interviewees were also called for interrogations but stating the purpose will reveal their identity in this researcher, so we keep it confidential.

D. Political Institutional Design

1. Political Institutional Barriers

Nearly all interviewers pointed out that political barriers such as quota is their main obstacle that hinders their participation either in peace processes or parliaments and cabinets, "From my positions as woman that has reached this position always work on quota for women in politics and always encourage it – LI3," " I remember we had a big fight with the group sitting in one meeting and said we want absolutely to have 30 percent women and remember the Saudi group told us, it is fine 24-25, but let's make sure we have those 25-26 percent, we never had them, we never had this just on paper so we managed to push that on paper but never implemented -SI4," "Since 2011, I have been talking about 50 percent quota for women and I found it hard to have ears from men and women as well but what I found very difficult was meeting of 10 men and that

it is seen as fine to exclude women, this doesn't ring a bell for men and even women who doesn't see an issue – SI5," "It is through the efforts of WAB which worked hard to include 30 percent women represented on the table – SI1," "We were advocating for having women on the table by at least 30 percent presence we were the only we were among the first to demand this quota and to have a road map as the UN Security Council resolution 1325 – SI2." One participant expressed that quota is not always a priority on the political agenda, "one women would come and demand 30 percent quota, ok that's good, but do not make you central argument, the country is gone and we are still talking about gender, there are priorities, there is war, conflict, people are dying…keep the women fil among other files but not the only one…Today what is important for me about is women representation, right to vote and how I can guarantee having them in decision making positions via the electoral laws…there is lack of arrangement of priorities and not understanding the societies – SI3." On the other side, one participant condemned the opposition parties for not putting women affairs as a priority, "until today there is no one opposition party in Syria that would put women rights as priority on their agendas. There are some political parties who disapprove prioritizing women rights – SI1."

Another major barrier that women face is affiliation or working under the umbrella of a party to reach political positions especially with in light of the electoral law that imposes a partial competition, "Also, if there were no party support, women would not have reached, unfortunately today, the electoral system in Lebanon also requires that there be party competition, and therefore you must be supported by the party in order to be able to enter in political life – LI1," "one thing I learned which is very important I was independent, so I had no political party behind me no group that

was supporting me I didn't have political weight I had yes knowledge, presentable yes but if they wanted to sideline me if they wanted to marginalize me it was easy because I had no one to defend me. I learned that you do not succeed on your own you cannot even if you belong to a body that body will try to marginalize – SI4."

Some participants were selected to take over certain positions as MPs and ministers, by the head of the party who is a man. There is a selective process that men control to choose the woman they want to represent them, "when. The head of X party wanted to lead the electoral battle, we all know that he supports women and always call for more representation in parties and parliament, so he want women candidates from outside the party, from well-known families and have experience in legislation, he did not choose me for political affiliation, I came from outside the party – LI1," "X man named me for this ministry…I was the first to reach a decision-making position through a political affiliation journey to this party – LI2," "X man thought that I am more qualified to be in Z position in the party [he appointed her then], X man didn't appoint woman because there was a pressure from the civil society to have more women in politics, he appointed me because he believed that I am the one who can do the job. If he had found a man who is more experienced than me, he wouldn't have appointed me – LI4."

To add to the above, one last barrier mentioned by the participants was the perception of woman in politics through a political lens; in other words, not concentrating on the social perception but on the political context in which some women came in. Some politicians were inherited the position from family members, "And in previous periods, whoever entered political life entered through the door of political inheritance, meaning a widow or from a political family, meaning there were

no women who entered from civil society – LI1." One woman sees that the state institutions are not welcoming individuals who hold political thought and capacity, "There is [in Syria] a gap between the people and the political decision-making space like the parliament is empty, associations are empty, we do not have this developed political mind or spaces that would assimilate the individuals who likes to have a role – SI7."

These barriers didn't stop here, the mindset of the people and how they perceive women in politics is beyond the typical stereotype around her. Some expressed that women may be blamed for having personal ambitions for certain positions or a private agenda, "Sometimes you are blamed that you have certain ambitions for certain positions – SI7," " [In one internal elections in HNC] I got the highest votes, simple because they said any project that [participant name] doesn't hold any personal agenda towards the projects she works on, and this what I am like, I am considered one of the bravest revolutionists without funding - SI2." There is also this perception of the women ending up represented that they are the elitist, which is referred to in a negative context, one participant spoke about the issue of representation, "The challenges I faced are mainly from women, we have the problem of who ends up being represented, we were criticized in WAB that we do not represent women because we are unveiled and secular. Second, we are criticized that we are elite, they say it in negative connotation, but I take it positively, that we have to be elite to be able to participate in writing the constitution and participating on higher levels – SI1."

2. All-Men Environment

The dominant representation in the public and political domains of men is not only a symptom of male domination but is also a sign of the disproportionate control that man has within these environments and the forms this is sustained, legitimized, and naturalized. Politics in both Lebanon and Syria is a man's club and men act as the gatekeepers and guardians for this club. Participants saw that institutions are designed based on all-men environment which is challenging and at the same time requires extra efforts prove themselves. The participants described this environment of working among men-dominated setting each from her own experience, "I once told someone that there is a big historical mistake happened during my birth that I did not come as a male, I would have done much more with the same experience and capacities I have – SI9," "The measures in which women are introduced inside the party or the state do not have anything to do with that for men, always the sieve for women is very tight. Always the woman that they [men] should select among them has to be obedient as if they are choosing a wife not a colleague – SI6," "It was a very tough experience in the Syrian National Council very tough because it was all men really I was in the top executive bureau which was composed of 11 in the beginning nine and then 10- eleven members and I was the only woman, and I really had to fight my way every single day in every meeting they just did not see me – SI4." Other interviewees witnessed support and respect from men within their professional environment, "I think in they have been very supportive, and I think 50 percent of the men I worked with were supportive, my main challenge that I found since 2011 that the language that the women are using is not really understood by Syrian men – SI5," "When I entered the parliamentarian life inside the parliament, I had all the respect from all colleagues from all sects – LI1."

Since men are over-represented in politic, men on several occasions tried to sideline women within the same party and the same political line. Many interviewees reflected on this marginalization despite the woman's contributions, "I did not know what happened with me, I got elected for the central committee [inside her party] during the first conference and the next conference they [men] brought me down because they do not like to be challenged – SI6," "Now one thing is important they always valued and respected my knowledge because they felt that I had relevant knowledge in different subjects and they were very happy to benefit from that so you know if I wrote a note for them I wrote a speech for someone and but I should not appear I should not have a voice I should not have a presence yeah so it was a tough experience – SI4," "Once I was elected to represent one of the most important committees, but my committee disapproved because it wanted a man, when I was elected as [x position] of HNC, my committee disapproved it as well wanted a man. When I was called to be among an international delegation, my committee disapproved because they wanted a man, the issue is not mistrust of me, but they want to please other parties that when they are represented by man the situation is different – SI2."

Furthermore, women perceived that there were attitudes by men that showed depreciation of women's role in politics and certain acts which prove that women are not welcomed around them on the table, "Men usually are disturbed by the presence of women with them because in this case they have to switch their tongues and watch their language, so they do not appear retarded and make obscene mistake like talks and mockery about women – SI6," "They [men] resented my knowledge and my contacts because of my profession I had lots of contacts many diplomats and decision makers across the world simply because I had worked in international relations…I was always

very sad because they didn't even want to benefit from my network they was always trying to marginalize me – SI4." Other types of sidelining included underestimating women's efforts or contributions but rather focusing on mocking her speech or concentrate on her dress, "All the international meetings I participated I used to give feminist view enclosed with all the international conventions and treaties, until they [men] started to feel annoyed and started mocking me and calling me "جندرجية" – SI2," "There are some [men], on purpose or not, who try to destroy you, that who you are and what makes be like me – SI6." One participant explained that jealousy of men is an element she experienced, "I didn't feel this kind of gender discrimination at any point, sure, I faced challenges especially killing jealousy but not because I am a woman, because I am a successful woman. Any man in my place doing the work I am responsible of doing and taking tough decisions, he would have been attacked – LI4," "I used to see some disturbed looks on their faces that I am woman talking especially when it comes to discussing intellectual issues – SI6."

In terms of focusing on the dress code of women, one explained that this element made being around all-men environment very difficult and uncomfortable and that women have to compromise their way of dressing just not to put themselves in difficult situations with men, "I remember I was young adult wearing a skirt, in one meeting I was standing and one colleague came and held the side of my skirt and pulled it down a bit, saying "make your skirt longer"…later we wore pants and never took them off it was more comfortable because you tend to see their eyes on your body…we still have problem to work in space with men – SI6."

3. The Psychological Burden

Political practice of women in their environments summarizes part of their struggles within this journey, some had a positive approach to deal with all situations such as marginalization, others felt a sense of frustration from men and women as well who had an attitude, they challenged the role other women, "There is big frustration, but all the work I have been effective in I used to fight my way in, and I started leading meetings and imposing perspectives. I cried a lot, and I said many times I want to quit but every time my colleague and I say we have to stay and impose and prove ourselves in way or another, and sometimes they take alone the decisions – SI2," "One time, a person liked my intervention in the meeting and they asked my husband who is she, when they [men] noticed I am his wife, they said, that is why, her husband helped her…there are moments I felt a compulsion to the treatment of some [men] – SI6."

Another participant reflected on the relation of women politicians with each other which is creating another perspective of women, "There is something dangerous in the structure of women, the woman is against woman, the competition of woman with another is not healthy but double, it includes the ego and jealousy, however with men there is no jealousy but competition over the position – SI9." In this regard, some women spoke about their attitudes in work which made them standout, "I am known to be harsh a little bit and demanding because I want to have the best people in the best positions, and I am not someone who makes compromises, I am looking for productivity and success so this is the price you would pay – LI4," "I was crude with all discussions I used to come up with feminist perspectives…I was always critic to these people, I was crude, I was bad, my voice was loud I didn't want a microphone, I was able to draw policies with them – SI2." This attitude was encouraged by one of the

interviewees that it is the only way to heard and recognized on the table from men, "So we need to be very organized we need to have a very strong voice we need women who are very assertive really assertive and not just confident and assertive but also really strong and annoying sometimes for the men that is the only way we're going to be more difficult to dismiss – SI4."

E. Roadmap for Conceptualizing and Advancing Women's Participation in Politics

This section is the essence of our research, the research question and objective revolve around the way or steps for advancing women's participation in politics in the MENA region. The question was asked to all participants, some shared common factors and other expressed a different perspective for what advances the role of women in politics. It is essential to say that the journey of every woman to reach the same position is different and unique. The concluded roadmap consists of three different parts: experience, personal skills, and type of activism. For sure, this is not an imposed roadmap for all women in the region, and that if they follow it, they will get to where they aim in politics, instead this roadmap is the description by women who already made it there and how they would encourage others; one interviewee said it very well, "the journey of women is not a road full of flowers but thistle and ups and downs – SI6." Hence, this thesis has identified the ups and downs in the journeys of women politicians and now they gave us and all women who will read this section, specific perspectives on what downs and thistle to avoid or consider when taking this path in the political field.

1. Experience and Knowledge

Some participants expressed that one key element of this roadmap is the background of women in politics, they believe it is very essential for her to have an experience and knowledge about the political subjects; it is either through education or experience, "I think there needs to be some political experience so the women who have been part of some political parties behave differently – SI4," "Having strong background in its various and the background is like really a woman right and also politics it won't happen in one month two months etc. this is like your life you need to have like specific time for your knowledge improvement and this is considered as part of your career is part of your personal empowerment but also part of work achievement – SI5," "Reading, to know about previous experiences in mediation and peacebuilding – SI1," "She has to be aware that politics is public service not just position – SI9." One participant believe that women are educated and empowered enough to be in the public space, and one cannot impose education or knowledge as a condition for her presence in politics, "the woman in capable, we cannot come and tell her you should learn more or be in political major because woman is educated and capable to be – LI."

2. Personal Skills

Interviewees listed some of the skills that they essential for anyone who want to occupy a decision-making position; these skills are not only limited to women but also to men. Some focused on soft skills like leadership, transparency, and courage; and others concentrated on the technical skills, "Strengthening their inter-personal and leadership skills – SI1," "Do not ignore focusing on the technical skills also because this is now, we do not see that but like it could change in the future like we do not have

it – SI5," "Ownership of skills and tools and support yourself with movement – SI2," "One should abandon fear, should have the courage to represent the will of the people, should have the strength, courage, and representation – SI9." Other participants dig deep into the personality of the person to give a more detailed description of what elements contribute to increasing political participation, "The person should be an initiator, fearless, and courageous to experience different phases – SI7," self-control is one of the key aspects, "Never sound angry never to lose oneself control because that is fatal the men use it in such a way against the women it is unbelievable so I learned that maybe instinctively I was I was more in some control than others, but I like anybody I do not always controlled myself, and I realized that this is a major aspect, SI4," "Any woman wants to work in politics she should sacrifice her social life, family life and be fully committed because you have to prove yourself not because you are a woman because it is a big responsibility. not only internal politics that you have to deal with but external one and to be aware of what is happening. So hardworking and commitment – LI4." One participant gave a different perspective on what women should do in her opinion to be present in the public space, this perspective is about love, loving the people around you, "Love the people, they will see you, and trust you, so they will push you forward and nominate you, spread love around you – SI6."

3. Expanding the Spaces of Activism

Women participants believe that activism, whether politically related or any other field, contributes to the stance of women in general; from this different theme, elements emerged to put together the picture of activism in which women may fit themselves in; one element is political affiliations, one believes that independency is not

in favor of women in politics, they need to have support, "Independency is very bad, it is very necessary, without a party or movement you cannot succeed and proving your capabilities – SI2." Another element is the sense of entitlement and legitimacy, one participant explained that women should see that they are legitimate to be in this political position and have a sense of entitlement over their roles, "Women should develop a sense of entitlement they legitimate in the political space, and that is not something we have, still do not have it, women think that they have to be allowed to place they have to be offered in place where is the man come to this place with a sense of entitlement…you are there because you are entitled to occupy that position and do not be grateful for occupying the position – SI4." The Third element is advocating for the quota which is the door for all women into political institutions, "The major component is advocating for putting quota for women starting from local elections to parliamentarian elections…so we first put this law that would allow her to take her opportunity – LI1." Another factor that participants see as high benefit is the component of networking, they believe that networking is a fundamental practice to keep expanding the activism of women to advocate for their issues, "Do not underestimate the networking the networking is very important and special – SI5," "One should be introduced to other people, expand the network which is one of the skills we need in everything – SI7." One final factor that one participant spoke about is the vision and look forward to women's issues and activism. She believes that in order to have effective advocacy and activism, there should be a plan and an agenda framing all the aspects of activism, "We need to have a forward-looking what happens if we enter a transition phase when laws are changing the constitution is changing the economy is rebuilding the society is rebuilding education system all of that is if we don't have a

program now just like any political party as a program we should have our platform

political platform I mean in the sense not of the organization but with the actual

program agenda we have to have an agenda and that agenda has all these dimensions

political legal economic social cultural and educational we develop a real vision on

those issues – SI4."

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In reviewing the literature earlier, one can draw out from the findings the different challenges identified by several scholars. As patriarchy was a primary factor affecting the participation of the interviewees in politics, Kandiyoti claims that Arab countries are on the patriarchal belt as she describes it, having men dominating family as the first social institution for the individual, pushing women to fight their ways to have influence and power.[100] On the other hand, we can conclude from the participants' input that their participation has been path-dependent on various elements in the society, to name: the type of political system, the margin of activism, and the structure of political parties. These elements have been impacting the opportunities for personal and professional development for these women. Kingstone presented this argument that patriarchy and path-dependency are two components influencing gender equality among political parties.[101] All these factors are contributing to the marginalization of women in peace processes; issue participants reflected on heavily when working within an all-men environment.

Understanding through literature the factors and barriers hindering women's participation is crucial; however, very little was found about the stories of women in politics. Experiences and journeys of women in their positions were less discussed, causing scholarly work in this field to be constantly repeating the challenges to reach men's political club and benefits of having women present in the society and

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[100] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2, no. 3 (1988): pp. 274-290, https://doi.org/10.1177/089124388002003004.

[101] Paul Kingston, "Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience," in *Emerging Voices: Young Women in Lebanese Politics* (International Alert, 2011), pp. 10-13.

development, without studying the perspective of women from within the club. Unfortunately, because they are few, it is always worth exploring their experiences and the journey they took to reach there. This where my thesis is contributing to the literature about women in politics by filling the gap of women experiences and getting to know closely their views, struggles or opportunities, and efforts they are having and exerting.

Attention to experiences in politics is a fundamental aspect of knowing the challenges and core issues faced by women within the political scheme. "The personal is political" a concept that should be adopted beyond the margins of academia or official reports; it should be considered as a mindset to think through every time we hear or talk about women's issues. This concept summarizes the main objective of this research. The meaning of this slogan that the personal experience of women is rooted in their political situation and gender inequality. Through the experiences of our participants, we understood that their experience of marginalization and sidelining comes from the societal oppression of women, which is a leading factor contributing to this. That is why we should always encourage this mindset in society to put women's experience as an essence. The participants were reluctant at the beginning to participate or thought that the topic is evolving about empowerment and importance of women in politics, short enough that they learned later from the interview that the study is merely about their experiences in which it can be conceptualized to see the broader picture about women in politics; here where they became eager and enthusiastic to talk. The rest of the data is very rich and can be used in coordination with the participants especially that this methodology allows us to collect the voices, emotions, and views of women.

I remember I was in Doha attending a workshop about humanitarian action in the MENA region; I had to participate in the first panel about this subject; however, surprisingly, the panel was manel, which means all-men panel. This triggered me to stand up and ask loudly why women are absent from such an important subject. I remember after the panel had ended, one of the panelists asked me to give him a name of a woman who is capable of being here. This acute perception of the capabilities of women is still present in our Arab world, sidelining women for false perceptions and simple men's arrogance over the experience of women. It is our duty to counter this perception by continuously sharing the experiences, knowledge, and activism of women around the Arab world. This can be done through a strong network of women politicians from over the MENA region, where they can come together on a particular platform and reflect on their different experiences and exchange ways of dealing with their somehow similar challenges.

Nevertheless, how can one guarantee that these spaces will not be hijacked by men who think that their experience is more worth telling when it comes to politics? This is precisely what is happening at Clubhouse. Media research reported that the Clubhouse app had been an opportunity for women to grow presence and involvement in discussions.[102] The fact that there are no such features like private messages or 'like' buttons, along with a live audience as opposed to a gang of supporters, suggests that women are much more ready on Clubhouse to take part in public debates on social and policy issues.[103] However, women on this app are still struggling to find their spaces and reflect on their experiences or simply be heard primarily in rooms talking about

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[102] Hossein Derakhshan, "Clubhouse - the Social Media App Keeping Iranians up All Night," alaraby (The New Arab, April 22, 2021), https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2021/4/22/whats-keeping-iranians-on-clubhouse-all-night-long.
[103] Ibid.

politics or peace and conflict. This is the everyday struggle of women I met who strive to have their experience and knowledge recognized and appreciated as a result of their fight for a voice and chair.

APPENDIX A

Thesis | Advancing Arab Women in Politics
Interview Protocol

A. Research question:

How is the journey of women in political positions? What can we learn from the experiences of women in politics? What is the road to ascending political positions in post-conflict settings for women? Who ends up being represented?

B. Interview Thread with Politicians

1. Passion
2. Surrounding support
3. Experience
    1. How did this experience start?
    2. Relation to any political party
    3. Political Network
    4. Existence of certain ideology
4. Motivations
5. Current experience
6. Picturing the future in politics
7. Importance of your role
8. Social encouragement
9. Political entourage encouragement
10. Political contributions

C. Interview Questions

1. Describe your journey to reaching this position?
2. How would you reflect on the challenges or opportunities faced to ascend this position?
3. During which era you were most active? (asking about the period in which they were politically active, during a particular war, post-conflict, specific crisis…etc.
4. How has your feminist activism played a role in reaching where you are now?
5. What is your perception of power equality in politics?
6. How are your political colleagues acting about your role? Are men competing with you over an element in your work? For example, in decisions, in negotiation involvement? Are they supporting you?
7. What is the path for women to reach where you are now?

Translation to Arabic:

1. صفِ رحلتك للوصول إلى هذا المنصب.

2. كيف تعلقين على التحديات أو الفرص التي واجهتيها لصعود إلى هذا المنصب؟

3. خلال أي حقبة كنت نشط/ة في الغالب؟ (السؤال عن الفترة التي كانوا نشطين فيها سياسياً، خلال حرب معينة، ما بعد صراع، أزمة معينة... الخ.

4. كيف لعب نشاطك النسوي دوراً في الوصول إلى ما وصلتِ إليه الآن؟

5. ما هو تصورك حول المساواة في السلطة في السياسة؟

6. كيف يتصرف الزملاء السياسيون معك في دورك؟ هل يتنافس الرجال معك على عنصر في عملك؟ لأمثلة في القرارات، في المشاركة في التفاوض؟ هل يدعمونك؟

7. ما هو الطريق الذي يمكن للمرأة أن تصل إلى من أنت فيه الآن؟

Thematic Analysis Table

Quotes	Codes	Themes	Aggregated Dimensions
"I am from a non-political family, but of course I am from a family in which there are people who are activists, whether they were in student demonstrations or even our people were at certain times like the Arabists and many positions – LI1,"	Identity within the family	Impact of Family on Personal Identity	The Perspective of Self-foundation
"We [family] do not belong to political parties or movements, but we follow public affairs a lot – SI3,"			
"My passion in life was the right of deciding my faith within the family that imposes on you its demands and views – SI2,			
"On the family level, I didn't feel discriminated, nor have any problem to be working on women issues because I was originally into politics and had my network – SI1,"			
"I am from a middle family and my parents shared so we could live- LI2,"			
"I am girl in a family you can say average, from the middle class – SI7."			
"He [father] is a person that believes in the status of girl in the family and doesn't have discrimination between male or female, I was the oldest, the support I found from the social environment contributed to the development of my personality, especially my father – SI7,"	Role of family on personal development		
"I am a person who loves the public space, I am not a person who like do any activity if not public, I like public appearances on stages or radio, in my school, I was raised in the gulf, there was wide student activism so I used always to choose the part related to addressing the people – SI3,"			
"my passion has always been to take a profession in which there is communication with people – LI1,"			
"my family was big we are eight children, so I decided to go to the Teachers House, as			

resident so that I can have my own privacy and independency – SI6.”			
“since I was young, I used to introduce myself as someone who hates injustice – SI6,”	Self-perception		
“I was a person who had my voice everywhere – SI3,”			
“I am a human being first, then I am a doctor and a citizen of this country – LI2,”			
“I consider myself since I was a child a feminist and rebellious person against the modularity of this society and this what made me unique – SI2.”			
“Since I was young, I was obsessed with reading, I was impacted by many foreign authors with the views that challenged every familiarity in this society – SI6,”			
“I used to read books and with that I felt that I want to become a striver – SI8,”			
“I started reading about the Soviet Union, and many more including Nawal Al Saaddoui, I read for her when I was in the 8th grade, she shocked me at that time. My father was a traditional intellectual, but I was the opposite, I had extensive readings – SI2,”			
“When I was young kid, I was a shy child, but I used to read a lot – SI7.”			
“My father was in the Lebanese army. We lived through the war. That’s why from the beginning I was interested in politics especially because of my dad – LI4,”	History of family involvement in politics	**Motivation to be in Politics**	
“And we were a lot involved in society by helping people– LI1,”			
“It was almost natural because my father was a diplomat and himself a very politically aware and active person and so our house was always full of politicians, political activists from all over the upper world this is important so it was really across the outer world from Mashreq to Maghreb to the whole region and the conversations were all political so I think I was fed politics from my childhood – SI4,”			
“I had my position on the state from my father – SI9.”			
“I had a problem to decide on my preferences with my family that is embodied with the patriarchal system. I faced a lot of objections	React ion to Famil		

until I took the decision to leave the house and enroll in university – SI2."			
"When I was a young kid my father was arrested, because of this I told myself that I will not be involved in politics or public affairs since it is too dangerous in Syria – SI5."			
"My father was laid off without any justification…because he refused to be in Al Baath party… in my deep inside, I intended to take back my father's right, because I see that my father's right is the right of all Syrians – SI9."			
"I used to hear with my family Abdul Nasser talking so it was exciting for me – SI8,"	Witnessing political events, wars, and conflicts		
"I lived the ear of Arab union, I used to participate in military marches as young kid, and … there are issues that I call national liberation, there is a sort of optimism. I remember the feelings of people toward the union era, with and against, when the separation happened, I was comfortable about it – SI6;"			
"I was interested in the Palestinian conflict – SI8,"			
"I am girl from the South that suffered from the Israeli occupation and continued attacks – LI2."			
I was born during the civil war… I was against the Syrian occupation of Lebanon; this was my drive to be in politics – LI4."			
"I think when the Syrian uprising started I think I instantly left and gave it top priority – SI4,"			
"When the revolution started in 2011, I use the term revolution, we, as feminists, found that this is a golden opportunity for us to put issue and rights of women as priority during the political system change – SI1,"			
"When the revolution started...I started watching the situation unfolding, I couldn't help myself, so I started documenting violations and more involved – SI5,"			
"When the revolution started, the pushing factor was humanitarian, but there was an inner ambition for change, we all lived through a certain reality in challenges, we all knew that these challenges have political			

references, so here the ambition was the story change that today you are one of the tools for change – SI3."			
"Attending such international meetings and this exposure to high level encounters was an opportunity – SI7,"	Professional Development	Opportunities for Women to be in Politics	
"The opportunity was myself, I benefited from all my experiences in writing, politics and intellect, I took the filter of the filter, everything I read and learned – SI9,"			
"I was very happy on the Syrian level on the regional level but also on the international level in the last 10 years like more exposure or like the field of woman in peace and security – SI5,"			
"My role as lawyer in defending the rights of the people, and the organization taught me how the hierarchy is, and that nothing limits you today whether man or woman to ascend high positions in the company you are in – LI1."			
"Supportive family for girl's education – SI1,"	Family Support		
"My marriage was an opportunity, my husband was very understanding and supportive and I supported him as well… my upbringing was an opportunity…I lived in 4 areas in Syria…my father and his rebellious personality was an opportunity, this upbringing that made me feel that I am an important entity – SI6."			
""Opportunities for me I had big actually support from my family, so it was very good I had like support from colleagues and friends – SI5."			
"Who gave me the opportunity today is man not woman, and who opened the door for more are men not one but many, honestly, they are people who believed that I am from an environment which I must have a political voice – SI3."	Men recognition		
"When you go out for a revolution, the first system we should revolt against is the patriarchal system. This that control all my life as a female ranging from choices to choices of education major, the major is imposed on you, the type of sports is imposed	Patriarchal mindset with the society	**Societal Barriers**	**Structural Legacies that Underlie**

on you, I love basketball and bikes, but I was prohibited of practicing both – SI2,"			
"There is no doubt, in general, the patriarchal society that we cannot overcome, we all know how much the masculine society is dominating, and woman today should work double the efforts to appear – LI1,"			
"There is a rejection for different justifications, from men and women with patriarchal mindsets to women who tend to reach high positions – SI1,"			
"There was a challenge for the patriarchal mindset present inside the party and the society – SI6,"			
"The society is not encouraging – SI3,"			
"In our society, people do not accept much the woman who speaks about politics, even man who speaks politics they think he is a parrot repeating the news – SI7,"			
"They [men] consider politics a monopoly for them, so a woman coming to work they deal with her in way they sympathize her and not trying to understand her – SI9."			
"The mindset that nothing will change, and the regime is staying no matter what, there wasn't any political will to have a civic activism – SI1,"	Discouraging Surrounding		
"Any word tells you that you think you can change something, you cannot change, you cannot – SI7;"			
"I was prohibited from doing journalism, I was violated by my dad not allowing me to go and do my interview. My dad was worried about me – SI2,"			
"My family was against me writing about politics – SI9," "I think my parents did not have the desire to have anyone involved in politics – SI3."			
"There is a picture that is not enthusiastic, because most women in the society did not give the positive picture that encourages you to be in the public space, there is always a picture that if you want to be in this field [politics] you have to compromise a lot and you will be attacked and subject to stabbing and mutilation thus there would be a worry about you – SI3,"	Stereotype around her participation role		

"Some started saying that women's role is like "مزهريات" "but "فشرو" we are not – SI2,"			
"Major challenge for women in the public sphere in general and that transpires in when women appear in the media that women who have had some public profiles have suffered a lot of attacks as you know and that I think it had a chilling effect on many women who are reluctant to step forward and when the opportunity was there…they shied away and somehow it's just disappointing – SI4,"			
"We cannot stop at [comments such as] she's a woman, and she's wearing this dress or that jacket, the situation in the country is very critical, and we cannot pay attention to such comments. It even got to the point that once we were announced as six female ministers, there were comments about what we were wearing from tip to toe. They were trying to [entertain], but we are dealing with different, serious topics – LI3."			
"When I started getting to focus on the feminist and women affairs, the idea of woman as mother disturbed me a lot, this idea that we put the woman on the mother base and forget at one time that this woman had rights, even when men tell us "you are our mothers and sisters" I stopped him, we are neither your wives nor your sisters, we are your colleagues – SI6."			
"I have some political tendencies without commitment, which roams around the political thought of President Aoun, even before he established the party or leave for France, I was personally in this thought, yet I am not affiliated – LI3,"	Affiliations to Political Parties	**Structure of Women Activism**	
"My father was and still supporter to Aoun and member of FPM. It started with all the demonstrations supporting Aoun and calling against the Syrian intervention in Lebanon. Then when I joined the university, I started to have more sympathy to the Lebanese Forces – LI4,"			
"Until the revolution started, I was more involved with the communist party, I was one of the public bases, I was just an activist and writer of their issues – SI2"			

"During my university years, I got affiliated with the Communist Action league – SI8,"			
"I got affiliated with the communist party…The Communist Party challenged a lot of the traditions that I hate, and the challenge it had was very interesting – SI6,"			
"I was in the communist party – SI1."			
"I started watching the situation unfolding, I couldn't help myself, so I started documenting violations and more involved…At the beginning, documenting violations, was by myself and then I co-founded X center – SI5,"	Activism initiated by an event		
"At the beginning of the revolution, I was active on the ground, then on Facebook there was a group of activist discussing issues related to change, so I used to express my thoughts, and I was known for my views although I used to write under an anonymous name, later I was invited to one of the workshops about international affairs and the trainer was fascinated by my personality and reading to the political scene and then I started to be invited more to such workshops and here I started get more involved in politics – SI3."			
"Of course, I practiced politics through student movements – LI2."			
"I think when the Syrian uprising started I think I instantly left and gave it top priority, I took leave from my organization…and got involved very quickly with the opposition – SI5."			
"The Communist party in Syria had an association for women called association for motherhood and childhood. However, in the 70s we decided as feminist women that it is not acceptable to stereotype us women for motherhood and childhood and we decided to change the name of the association and named it the Association for Syrian Women and changed its mission. The feminist activism continued its work through developing several campaigns about right for nationality for women and worked about women's rights and CEDAW – SI1,"	Feminist Activism		
"I was invited by a friend of mine to attend a meeting for an organization working on			

Quotes	Sub-theme	Sub-category	Theme
women's affairs, I felt attracted to these issues – SI8,"			
"My mission in this party was to help women reach decision-making positions inside the party, there were struggles, issues didn't go as easy – SI6,"			
"Since I was a child a feminist and rebellious person…I was living in a village and didn't have a space to participate with feminist groups until I left to university – SI2."			
"I was persecuted when I was in the 11th grade [because of participating in a protest]…I was detained in 2011 in a protest in the middle of Damascus…when I was traveling to Geneva to attend this meeting [Geneva 1 meeting] I was arrested for the third time – SI2,"	Persecution as cost of activism		
"We [association of Syrian women] tried in 2005 to register [the association] and have a license yet we found out that we needed an approval from the Baath party and security clearance. Later we were called for interrogation at the security branches about the purpose of obtaining a license – SI1"			
"I didn't stop and my enthusiasm for these issues did not stop and as result I was in prison away from my three-years old baby – SI8."			
"From my positions as woman that has reached this position always work on quota for women in politics and always encourage it – LI3,"			
" I remember we had a big fight with the group sitting in one meeting and said we want absolutely to have 30 percent women and remember the Saudi group told us, it is fine 24-25, but let's make sure we have those 25-26 percent, we never had them, we never had this just on paper so we managed to push that on paper but never implemented -SI4,"	Quota for Participation	Political Institutional Barriers	Political Institutional Design
"Since 2011, I have been talking about 50 percent quota for women and I found it hard to have ears from men and women as well but what I found very difficult was meeting of 10 men and that it is seen as fine to exclude women, this doesn't ring a bell for men and even women who doesn't see an issue – SI5,"			

"It is through the efforts of WAB which worked hard to include 30 percent women represented on the table – SI1,"			
"We were advocating for having women on the table by at least 30 percent presence we were the only we were among the first to demand this quota and to have a road map as the UN Security Council resolution 1325 – SI2."			
"one women would come and demand 30 percent quota, ok that's good, but do not make you central argument, the country is gone and we are still talking about gender, there are priorities, there is war, conflict, people are dying…keep the women fil among other files but not the only one…Today what is important for me about is women representation, right to vote and how I can guarantee having them in decision making positions via the electoral laws…there is lack of arrangement of priorities and not understanding the societies – SI3."	Quota as not priority		
"until today there is no one opposition party in Syria that would put women rights as priority on their agendas. There are some political parties who disapprove prioritizing women rights – SI1."	Women's affairs as priority		
"Also, if there were no party support, women would not have reached, unfortunately today, the electoral system in Lebanon also requires that there be party competition, and therefore you must be supported by the party in order to be able to enter in political life – LI1,"	Political party as an umbrella		
"one thing I learned which is very important I was independent, so I had no political party behind me no group that was supporting me I didn't have political weight I had yes knowledge, presentable yes but if they wanted to sideline me if they wanted to marginalize me it was easy because I had no one to defend me. I learned that you do not succeed on your own you cannot even if you belong to a body that body will try to marginalize – SI4."			

"when. The head of X party wanted to lead the electoral battle, we all know that he supports women and always call for more representation in parties and parliament, so he want women candidates from outside the party, from well-known families and have experience in legislation, he did not choose me for political affiliation, I came from outside the party – LI1,"	One-man decision		
"X man named me for this ministry…I was the first to reach a decision-making position through a political affiliation journey to this party – LI2,"			
"X man thought that I am more qualified to be in Z position in the party [he appointed her then], X man didn't appoint woman because there was a pressure from the civil society to have more women in politics, he appointed me because he believed that I am the one who can do the job. If he had found a man who is more experienced than me, he wouldn't have appointed me – LI4."			
"And in previous periods, whoever entered political life entered through the door of political inheritance, meaning a widow or from a political family, meaning there were no women who entered from civil society – LI1."	Political Inheritance		
, "There is [in Syria] a gap between the people and the political decision-making space like the parliament is empty, associations are empty, we do not have this developed political mind or spaces that would assimilate the individuals who likes to have a role – SI7."	Unwelcoming institutions		
"Sometimes you are blamed that you have certain ambitions for certain positions – SI7,"	Perception of women work in politics		
" [In one internal elections in HNC] I got the highest votes, simple because they said any project that [participant name] doesn't hold any personal agenda towards the projects she works on, and this what I am like, I am considered one of the bravest revolutionists without funding - SI2."			

"The challenges I faced are mainly from women, we have the problem of who ends up being represented, we were criticized in WAB that we do not represent women because we are unveiled and secular. Second, we are criticized that we are elite, they say it in negative connotation, but I take it positively, that we have to be elite to be able to participate in writing the constitution and participating on higher levels – SI1."	Issue of representation		
"I once told someone that there is a big historical mistake happened during my birth that I did not come as a male, I would have done much more with the same experience and capacities I have – SI9,"	Experience of working with men	All-men Environment	
"The measures in which women are introduced inside the party or the state do not have anything to do with that for men, always the sieve for women is very tight. Always the woman that they [men] should select among them has to be obedient as if they are choosing a wife not a colleague – SI6,"			
"It was a very tough experience in the Syrian National Council very tough because it was all men really, I was in the top executive bureau which was composed of 11 in the beginning nine and then 10- eleven members and I was the only woman, and I really had to fight my way every single day in every meeting they just did not see me – SI4."			
"I think in they have been very supportive, and I think 50 percent of the men I worked with were supportive, my main challenge that I found since 2011 that the language that the women are using is not really understood by Syrian men – SI5,"	Sensing support from men		
"When I entered the parliamentarian life inside the parliament, I had all the respect from all colleagues from all sects – LI1."			
"I did not know what happened with me, I got elected for the central committee [inside her party] during the first conference and the next conference they [men] brought me down because they do not like to be challenged – SI6,"	Marginalization of women		
"Now one thing is important they always valued and respected my knowledge because			

they felt that I had relevant knowledge in different subjects and they were very happy to benefit from that so you know if I wrote a note for them I wrote a speech for someone and but I should not appear I should not have a voice I should not have a presence yeah so it was a tough experience – SI4,"			
"Once I was elected to represent one of the most important committees, but my committee disapproved because it wanted a man, when I was elected as [x position] of HNC, my committee disapproved it as well wanted a man. When I was called to be among an international delegation, my committee disapproved because they wanted a man, the issue is not mistrust of me, but they want to please other parties that when they are represented by man the situation is different – SI2."			
"Men usually are disturbed by the presence of women with them because in this case they have to switch their tongues and watch their language, so they do not appear retarded and make obscene mistake like talks and mockery about women – SI6,"	Depreciation of Women's role and knowledge		
"They [men] resented my knowledge and my contacts because of my profession I had lots of contacts many diplomats and decision makers across the world simply because I had worked in international relations…I was always very sad because they didn't even want to benefit from my network they was always trying to marginalize me – SI4."			
"All the international meetings I participated I used to give feminist view enclosed with all the international conventions and treaties, until they [men] started to feel annoyed and started mocking me and calling me "جندرجية" – SI2,"			
"There are some [men], on purpose or not, who try to destroy you, that who you are and what makes be like me – SI6."			
"I didn't feel this kind of gender discrimination at any point, sure, I faced challenges especially killing jealousy but not because I am a woman, because I am a successful woman. Any man in my place doing the work I am responsible of doing and			

taking tough decisions, he would have been attacked – LI4,"		
"I used to see some disturbed looks on their faces that I am woman talking especially when it comes to discussing intellectual issues – SI6."		
"I remember I was young adult wearing a skirt, in one meeting I was standing and one colleague came and held the side of my skirt and pulled it down a bit, saying "make your skirt longer"…later we wore pants and never took them off it was more comfortable because you tend to see their eyes on your body…we still have problem to work in space with men – SI6."	Acts of verbal harassment	
"There is big frustration, but all the work I have been effective in I used to fight my way in, and I started leading meetings and imposing perspectives. I cried a lot, and I said many times I want to quit but every time my colleague and I say we have to stay and impose and prove ourselves in way or another, and sometimes they take alone the decisions – SI2,"	Sense of Frustration	**The Psychological Burden**
"One time, a person liked my intervention in the meeting and they asked my husband who is she, when they [men] noticed I am his wife, they said, that is why, her husband helped her…there are moments I felt a compulsion to the treatment of some [men] – SI6."		
"There is something dangerous in the structure of women, the woman is against woman, the competition of woman with another is not healthy but double, it includes the ego and jealousy, however with men there is no jealousy but competition over the position – SI9."	Relation with Women colleagues	
"I am known to be harsh a little bit and demanding because I want to have the best people in the best positions, and I am not someone who makes compromises, I am looking for productivity and success so this is the price you would pay – LI4,"	Political Attitude	
"I was crude with all discussions I used to come up with feminist perspectives…I was always critic to these people, I was crude, I was bad, my voice was loud I didn't want a		

microphone, I was able to draw policies with them – SI2."			
"So we need to be very organized we need to have a very strong voice we need women who are very assertive really assertive and not just confident and assertive but also really strong and annoying sometimes for the men that is the only way we're going to be more difficult to dismiss – SI4."			
"I think there needs to be some political experience so the women who have been part of some political parties behave differently – SI4,"	Political Background	Experience and Knowledge	Roadmap for Conceptualizing and Advancing Women's Participation in Politics
"Having strong background in its various and the background is like really a woman right and also politics it won't happen in one month two months etc. this is like your life you need to have like specific time for your knowledge improvement and this is considered as part of your career is part of your personal empowerment but also part of work achievement – SI5,"			
"Reading, to know about previous experiences in mediation and peacebuilding – SI1,"			
"She has to be aware that politics is public service not just position – SI9."			
"the woman in capable, we cannot come and tell her you should learn more or be in political major because woman is educated and capable to be – LI."	Women are educated		
"Strengthening their inter-personal and leadership skills – SI1,"	Soft personal skills	Personal Skills	
"Do not ignore focusing on the technical skills also because this is now, we do not see that but like it could change in the future like we do not have it – SI5,"			
"Ownership of skills and tools and support yourself with movement – SI2,"			
"One should abandon fear, should have the courage to represent the will of the people, should have the strength, courage, and representation – SI9."			
"The person should be an initiator, fearless, and courageous to experience different phases – SI7,"			

"Never sound angry never to lose oneself control because that is fatal the men use it in such a way against the women it is unbelievable, so I learned that maybe instinctively I was I was more in some control than others, but I like anybody I do not always controlled myself, and I realized that this is a major aspect, SI4,"			
"Any woman wants to work in politics she should sacrifice her social life, family life and be fully committed because you have to prove yourself not because you are a woman because it is a big responsibility. not only internal politics that you have to deal with but external one and to be aware of what is happening. So hardworking and commitment – LI4."	Sense of Commitment		
"Independency is very bad, it is very necessary, without a party or movement you cannot succeed and proving your capabilities – SI2."	Being politically affiliated		
"Women should develop a sense of entitlement they legitimate in the political space, and that is not something we have, still do not have it, women think that they have to be allowed to place they have to be offered in place where is the man come to this place with a sense of entitlement…you are there because you are entitled to occupy that position and do not be grateful for occupying the position – SI4."	Sense of entitlement	Expanding the Spaces of Activism	
"The major component is advocating for putting quota for women starting from local elections to parliamentarian elections…so we first put this law that would allow her to take her opportunity – LI1."	Advocacy for quota		
"Do not underestimate the networking the networking is very important and special – SI5,"	Networking		
"One should be introduced to other people, expand the network which is one of the skills we need in everything – SI7."			
"We need to have a forward-looking what happens if we enter a transition phase when	Forward		

laws are changing the constitution is changing the economy is rebuilding the society is rebuilding education system all of that is if we don't have a program now just like any political party as a program we should have our platform political platform I mean in the sense not of the organization but with the actual program agenda we have to have an agenda and that agenda has all these dimensions political legal economic social cultural and educational we develop a real vision on those issues – SI4."			

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