



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

WE4L
Women Empowered for Leadership

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The Effectiveness
of Social Media
as a Tool for Opening
Spaces for
Women
Leaders

Women Empowered for Leadership (WE4L)

Written by: Mira Abumoghli
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Executive summary

This research assesses the effectiveness of social media as a tool for opening spaces for women leaders and promoting their full participation in public spaces and decision making on the social and political levels. The research contributes to the available literature by adding the perspectives of women leaders and their experiences, and including the voices of Jordanian women leaders through integrating their stories as case studies. It also examines if and how social media has been effective in enhancing the roles and positions of women in politics or those in development and social change. The literature review revealed that there is a lack of research focusing on gender sensitive approaches to utilizing social media and its impact on supporting women leaders and breaking harmful stereotypes that only portray women's traditional roles.

This report is based on a mixed research methods approach. It utilizes an extensive literature review of international and national studies and policy documents, and quantitative primary data generated from a survey that included 18 women and qualitative data generated from individual interviews with 6 Jordanian women leaders.

Selected main findings

**The findings of this research fall under five themes:
Access, use, experience, influence and impact of social media.**

1 Survey data analysis

Access: All participants confirmed that they face no challenges accessing various social media platforms. However, **76 %** indicated that they encounter challenges in conveying their messages to their target groups. Some of these challenges are: 1. Lack of knowledge amongst the target groups, especially women and elderly, in using social media platforms. 2. Men do not believe in women's capability in accomplishing their tasks. This is due to widespread stereotypes and the traditional roles in their society, as well as the nature of work that forces women to the code of ethics that obliges employee not to publish anything related to their work or any legal opinions or political issues or any critical views.

Use: About 53 % of respondents indicated that they have no reservations around the use of social media, while 47 % of respondents indicated that they have at least one reservation. The reservations are related to younger generations using social media in a manner that goes against what are considered to be traditions and social norms, and using social media to spread disinformation and misinformation, as well as far more gruesome phenomena such as sexual exploitation.

Experience: The analysis shows that women have a good experience related to the use of media and community outreach; this allows them to develop a large fan base/followers. 69% of women leaders promote their accomplishments by using social media, as this also helps to develop a large fan base that supports their leadership and efforts within their social movement(s). This approach of self-promotion depends on the personality of the individual.

Influence and impact: The analysis shows that social media influences and impacts the position and work of women leaders on two levels: 1) Personality: Increases skills, knowledge, and self-development for women at all levels, and develops women's confidence by building their presence online in a way that mainstream and traditional media outlets are falling behind on. However, there are negative aspects, particularly in terms of exposure to unrealistic expectations of society and culture of unattainable beauty standards and expensive fashion (consumerist culture). Many women are influenced by the glamour and tend to want to live it. Also, 2) increasing the circle of social relations, social interaction and communication between members of society, which gives women more access to an audience. However, presence on social media exposes users to losing a part of their privacy and gives the right for other users to intervene into what traditionally may have been private matters.

2 Case studies

Interviewees shared that women's strong knowledge, character and passion are the main tools for their success. Social media comes to support these elements to be presented through the virtual sphere and expand exposure. The analysis of the six case studies highlighted some indicators and findings related to the potential effectiveness of social media as a tool to open up spaces for women leaders, particularly:

- 1. The importance of empowering women through improving their technical skills and knowledge.**
- 2. Jordanian women are still not aware of the "Cybercrimes law" which can protect them from threats such as abuse and harassment.**
- 3. The necessity to debunk traditional patriarchal messages that are still used and portrayed through social media platforms to bolster the traditional role of Arab women.**

The problem of social media in Jordan in dealing with women participation in the public and virtual spheres is the "gender gap" in all life domains, which in Jordan is manifested - more sharply and complexly than expected - in terms of women's presence in all types of media. In addition, tools that are still used by women themselves and by media organizations in aim to improve the picture of women in the Jordan context do not facilitate nor promote the efforts to spread awareness of gender equality concepts through the social media and its importance whether politically, economically or socially. On the contrary, the chronic absence of women issues has become part of the problem and not the solution.

Regarding this, one main point that the six leaders agreed on and stressed upon was that there are barriers created by the dominant culture that hinder women's ability to access social media and utilize it as a tool to engage socially and politically. Also, they noted that content creation on social media needs to be gender sensitive to eradicate harmful stereotypes and create safe spaces for women to be able to participate, as the absence of gender sensitivity in social media platforms makes it difficult to empower female politicians. This sometimes leads to smearing women leaders' images on different social media platforms and enhances the wrong perception about women and females around the world. Therefore, improving gender representation is a critical component of influencing and changing attitudes towards women leaders who are just developing a sense of their non-traditional role in society¹, especially in the media.

In general, until today, women leaders in Jordan are accepted in certain sectors such as social justice, gender equality, social development and education. But the judicial role for example, is still seen as that of men, based on considerations related to social and religious culture in the Jordanian context.² However, many Jordanian women have reached high levels in leadership positions, including those interviewed for this research.



1 Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Strengthening Development Cooperation, United Nations - Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010

2 Her Excellency, Fedaa' Al-Hmoud, The president of Legislation and Opinion Bureau, 2020

Opportunities for women and the reality of social media in Jordan



One clear example where women were visible and impactful on social media - which translated into action - is the repeal of Article 308 of the Jordanian penal code, which allowed rapists to escape their punishments if they marry their victims. Women activists from all walks of life in Jordan came together to and worked tirelessly through garnering public support, advocating with Members of Parliament, and communicating with the international community, to repeal this article.³

Women face the same patriarchal and traditional gender stereotypes on social media as much as in real life, if not more in some cases. This is especially evident in the general public's response on sensitive topics on social media such as "honor killings" where there is a significant number of commenters, most of which are men, agreeing with if not praising the perpetrator of violence against women. Additionally, many women get harassed on social media, which led to the creation of the Cybercrimes Law that women, or any person who have been victims of online bullying, exploitation, or blackmail can pursue justice through legal channels and courts of law.⁴

Key recommendations



It is important to have clear guidelines and official national frameworks to create partnerships between women, the media and the government to raise the gender sensitivity approach within social media, and emphasize that woman participation in the public spheres is a prerequisite for development, democratic reform and for achieving the values of citizenship and justice. The research presented that the absent or limited role of women on social media platforms and public spheres will maintain the gender inequality gap. Women need to be more represented in the public sphere as well particularly in politics and policy making which will lead to overcoming the traditional stereotypes of women's roles and will transcend the male culture that prevails in all types of media.

3 <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/activists-hail-abolition-article308->

4 <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/womens-rights-activists%E-99%80%2slogans-draw-ire-social-media>



Introduction

“ There are lost political, economic and social opportunities when a country doesn’t invest in women’s capacities and qualifications ”.⁵

In the majority of Arabic speaking countries, the lack of press freedom means people are unable to receive information, let alone analytical and interpretative functionalism of mass media.

In 2002, Beirut (Lebanon) hosted an expert group meeting on “participation and access to the media and the impact of media use for the advancement and empowerment of women.” Referring to the meeting, Obeidat (2002) favors an increase in access to power and decision making within media organizations where women’s influence is hardly existent. Obeidat is quick to accept the reality that women face obstacles in exploiting the advantages presented by information technology.

However, this seems to have slightly changed with the path traveled by activists in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, plus movements in Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia where women utilized unconventional media to combat discrimination and inequality imbedded in their societies during the Arab spring revolutions in 2011⁶ and the second wave of rebellion in 2018, which included Lebanese, Sudanese, Iraqi and Palestinian women on a smaller scale through their ‘Tal3at’ movement. Women activists used Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to transmit messages to empower others and change societal and cultural norms that are patriarchal and deadly in many cases.

Although women leaders achieved so many victories to get high leadership positions equally with men in parliaments and political spheres since the beginning of history, countries worldwide and mainly Arab countries have different norms and legislations that hinder women’s progression in the public sphere. Some of these hindrances are: stereotypes around women’s reproductive roles that do not accept women’s participation in specific domains outside of the household, limiting their work within maternal and pastoral responsibilities. In spite of that, women from different countries still fight back and are able to achieve higher education, build their capacities and find some supportive base from their families and/or friends to enhance their passions and self-reliance. These support systems are key to fight and overcome cultural barriers, societal norms and most importantly legislative restrictions. While there are various global conventions and safeguards that enhance and encourage women participation in the public sphere, international law seems to have no teeth and



is limited in its operational tools. Localized norms and legislations trump most global initiatives to advance women’s participation and public presence. In light of the challenges women face globally, it is clear that no country can achieve full democracy, sustainable development and good governance without equal engagement of women and men. This requires a transformative approach from individual or feminist advocacy on a national level first. This is possible when women themselves believe that their full participation is not a luxury or optional, but is rather a commitment toward their country’s future.

From here, and as mentioned earlier, the research aims to highlight the gendered ways through which social media is being used in enhancing the effectiveness of women participation in the public sphere from a gender lens through focusing on various experiences of women leaders in the Arab World and in Jordan specifically. This will include some examples and information that is highlighted in the literature review and voices of Jordanian women leaders through integrating their stories as case studies in the rest of the research sections.

Finally, through critical analysis and direct representation of real life experiences, this research sheds light on the status of participation of women leaders in social media and the impact of this participation on their status and also politically and socially - under the mentioned two main research questions, what supported in addressing the main key findings, and recommendations to be taken into consideration for improving social media to become a stronger and more effective tool in opening up spaces for women leaders on both the personal and professional levels in the Jordanian context.

In addition, this research tackles the role of social media as a possible nontraditional tool that attracts Jordanian women leaders to enhance their public participation, reach and impact; and examines how effectively have social media supported women in amplifying their voices to change harmful stereotypes in Jordan.



Methodology

This study is based on a mixed methods research approach. A survey was sent to 18 participants who have 25-15 years of experience in the public sphere. The ages of the study sample ranged between 50-30 years old with BA, MA and PhD academic backgrounds and different fields of experience, such as: community engagement, media, health, politics, and law. These surveys generated the quantitative data.

Qualitative data is in the form of case studies based on interviews focusing on the experiences of six Jordanian women leaders in the fields of community engagement, technology, social work and legislation.

This research highlights five themes under which the data analysis has been done and the findings categorized. The themes are :

Access, use, experiences, influence and impact of social media.

Also, it is important to note that the analysis has also generated other sub-themes, mainly:

1. The role of social media use in making or breaking women leaders' careers.

2. The direct and indirect effects of social media use on women leaders' career progression.

3. The impact of social media in promoting the 50/50 gender representation agenda.

4. The effectiveness of using social media as a tool for activism by women leaders.

5. The impact of online gender-based violence (harassment, intimidation & abuse) on women leaders.



Data collection

This report is based on mixed research methods. Interviews (qualitative research) were conducted with six women leaders and the data was used to build case studies. Surveys (quantitative research) were distributed to 18 participants.

Data entry and analysis procedures

After collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, a multi-level analysis of collected data was conducted. The questionnaire results were analyzed and cleaned through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Ethical safeguard

All responses of interviewees were obtained on voluntary bases. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, and data collected was used solely for the purposes of this research.



Research questions

Through critical analysis and direct representation of real life experiences, this research sheds light on the status of participation of women leaders in social media and the impact of this participation on their status as well as politically and socially. The research is based on two research questions:

What influence does social media have in impeding or promoting women leaders?

To what extent is social media effective as a tool for activism amongst women leaders?



Desk review/literature review

Worldwide, women always seek to play a fundamental role in different fields to become effective members of their communities on all levels. Throughout time, women have proven their ability in all fields. They have shown great skills and abilities with and without the use and availability of technology, and well before social media came to light.

Although social media seems to be widely used in our current days, it is important to highlight that when it was first created, social media was limited to those with access, money and power. According to Miège 1989,⁷ it was limited to the educated bourgeoisie class. This was followed by access to the middle class. Marginalized groups were the last to be able to access social media as there were many barriers: literacy and education levels, language used accessibility to the internet and infrastructure such as electricity, and the availability of laptops or smart phones. Accessibility and use of social media is also gendered. While globally, the most recent gender breakdown of social media usage (if we take Facebook, as an example) reflects that the number of male and female Facebook users is roughly equal⁸, this trend does not hold in the Arab region, where only a third of Facebook users are women⁹. Still, the availability of social media created an alternative space for Arab women, particularly to expand and assert their political roles - especially in relation to change. The broad participation and leadership in the two waves of revolutions in the Arabic speaking countries in 2011 and 2018 proved that women are breaking boundaries and patriarchal expectations of their traditional roles. Women participating in the revolutions shocked authoritarian regimes, which had expected that women would remain cautious and would not take part in popular demonstrations that could pose serious risks to their lives. Women's wide and effective participation in the 2011 and 2018 protests confounded dictatorships and intelligence services, as it showed the full extent of the popular rejection of such entities and contributed to the quick downfall of several oppressive regimes. It also revealed the important role that women could play in challenging the resistance to change, the lack of any meaningful political reform, and authoritarian regimes rife with nepotism, corruption and bribery. Political and cultural elites did not anticipate that women would take part in popular uprisings.¹⁰

From here, Arab women have been active on social media sites across the region throughout the mass protests in their countries and across the region. Starting from 2011, social media has been increasingly viewed as an important tool for women's empowerment in the Arab region and allowed women to take on a new form of leadership focusing on utilizing connections and networks. Moreover, Arab women were not merely cyber activists, but were documented as active participants on the ground, taking part in, organizing, and leading protests. Whether this activism will lead to broader inclusion of women in civic and political engagement down the line, or will merely see women being relegated to the sidelines, remains to be seen¹¹. It is important to note here that with the COVID19- pandemic and the deteriorating economic, social and political situation in many countries in the region, the rates of violent attacks against women and girls are increasing, and this includes systematic sexual violence and killings. Women in the region have organized campaigns using social media to raise awareness about this spike of violence against women; however the impact is limited particularly in change in policy, law and regulations.

Still, studies say that there is no denying that social media has influenced the empowerment of women in the Arab World. What is equally important is to ensure that the gains made are not only maintained, but also propelled through continuously utilizing social media. In addition, this is a clarion call to activists and women's rights advocates interconnected by cyberspace technology.¹²

5 CEO of The Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries to Combat Violence against Women, Lawyer Wafa'a Bani Mustafa

6 Global Media Journal Spring 2013 – Odine

7 Bernard Miège, *La société conquise par l'information*, PUF, Grenoble, 1989, pages 111-105

8 www.facebook.com, accessed Dec. 2011

9 Arab Social Media Report, Vol. 1, Issue 2011 ,2, Governance and Innovation Program, Dubai School of Government – www.ArabSocialMediaReport.com

10 <https://www.un.org/ar/chronicle/article/20072>

11 <http://www.economist.com/node/21532256>

12 <http://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/role-of-social-media-in-the-empowerment-of-arab-women.pdf>



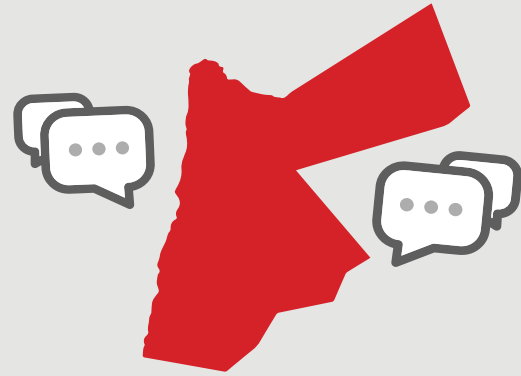
Social media in the Jordanian context

(86.4 %) of Jordanian citizens have access to the internet, and they produce more than half of the digital content available online in the Arabic language.¹³ As Jordanians navigate together through an ongoing humanitarian, economic and political crisis, the mainstream social media platforms to which they are active contributors, such as Twitter and Facebook (with the latter being the top app in the country) are turning into interactive spaces critical for public debate and socio-political transformation.¹⁴ Jordanians have more than four million accounts on Facebook, more than 300,000 account on Twitter and 950,000 on Instagram. One of the reports showed that the average age of Facebook users in Jordan - with over four million users - are from 24–18, followed by 34–25 years old.¹⁵

A study by UNESCO found that the gender balance gap that characterizes various life spheres in Jordan manifests acutely and sharply at the level of media, in private and public sectors, print, broadcast and online. This is revealed in numbers demonstrating that the percentage of women's appearance in such media is not exceeding (9%), while the appearance of men ¹⁶reaches (91 %).

During the last decade, media organizations in Jordan started playing an influential role in achieving transformation and change in society through social media, by the means of dissemination and circulation of information. Although they reflect the forms and patterns of prevailing values in society, they can still participate in positive change - in addition to their role in rejecting or fostering gender stereotypes. Stereotyping is present in the writings of some daily newspaper journalists, especially conservative ones. For example, journalist Yasser Zaatra described advocacies of women's rights as "mannish", in an article on sexual harassment in Ad Dustour Newspaper on 29th of November 2017. Stereotyping is also evident in some articles written by women journalists on news sites, such as the article titled, "Inna Kaydahunna Azim" (or Their Cunning is Great), written by Ismat Huso and published on 29th of May 2017 on Khaberni site. Usually articles - whether in newspapers or news sites - are the ones loaded with the utmost stereotyping of gender roles. This could be attributed to the absence of clear [gender sensitive] editing policies of published articles.¹⁷

Same study mentioned and related to the gender gap within journalism and social media fields are that, the common problem shared between all media reappears once again represented in their dependence on the outcome of media colleges in Jordan. Colleges do not pay much attention to gender issues in the courses given to their



graduates, in addition to insufficient training in work frame, which is supposed to impact on the already weak awareness of gender equality issues among a large sector of media workers in journalist institutes and social media experts and influencers.

Adding to that is the absence or limited role of women in leading positions in management and planning of news content due to the hegemony of chief editors (a position occupied by men) bearing in mind that women are more qualified to understand the challenges facing other women in society and in all life domains.

Women in Jordan want access to information. They want to be social media managers. Actually, they want to be in the business of message development and dissemination as they have recognized how social media has had a huge impact in changing minds and influenced people to support advocating for women rights through the virtual sphere.

Jordan's Queen Rania has recognized the impact of social media. In 2008, as she sat behind her office desk, three cameras kept rolling during the recording of a regularly transmitted YouTube appearance. As Jones (2008) recollects, Queen Rania had posted seven video segments on the international virtual medium by March 2008. Queen Rania encouraged interaction with viewers, asking them to forward stereotypes about Arab women, promising to set the record straight.

In general, most sites suffer from weak profession standards, in addition to their dependence on short quick news lacking follow up and investigation. The gender gap in all life domains in Jordan is manifested - more sharply and complexly than expected - in terms of women's presence in all types of media. In addition, tools that are still used by women themselves and by media organizations in aim to improve the picture of women in the Jordan context do not facilitate nor promote the efforts to spread awareness of gender equality concepts through the social media and its importance whether politically, economically or socially. On the contrary, the chronic absence of women issues has become part of the problem and not the solution.

13 <https://www.internetworldstats.com/me/jo.htm>

14 <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/jordan>

15 <https://eis.hu.edu.jo/deanshipfiles/pub10918102468.pdf>

16 Gender portrayal in the Jordanian Media Content, June, 2018

17 http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/Gender_in_Media_EN_25062018.pdf



My story

In this research, six interviews were conducted with Jordanian women leaders from different fields of work. Their stories are presented as case studies aiming to show real examples of women who were able to overcome several challenges, achieve their goals and became prominent leaders and decision-makers who make an impact through advocating for women's rights using social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.



The following case studies are for women leaders who have a strong experience in the political, social, legal and human rights fields and have a fundamental role in applying their experiences to serve, protect and advocate for women's rights using traditional tools (high level meetings, participating in demonstrations related to women and human rights issues, working on changing rules and laws to protect women and decreasing the gender gap to benefit the gender equality approach in the public sphere). They also adopted non-traditional tools, such as using social media in raising awareness regarding political and legal matters and focusing on the importance of changing the traditional gender roles, women empowerment in leadership positions, encouraging women to reach the parliament and to break the cultural barriers that prevent them from advocating for their basic rights.

This section highlights a number of main findings based on the interviews with the six women leaders:

- 1.** The importance of empowering women through improving their technical skills and knowledge.
- 2.** The lack of awareness of Jordanian women of the "Cybercrimes law" which can protect them from threats such as abuse and harassment.
- 3.** The necessity to debunk the traditional patriarchal messages that are still used and portrayed through social media platforms to enhance the traditional role of Arab women.
- 4.** The lack of specialized code of conducts related to virtual spheres that should aim to foster the rights system and the gender sensitivity approach and criminalize all kinds of media discrimination.
- 5.** The absence of women decision makers in social media platforms is enhancing the stereotype of women political participation.
- 6.** The legislation environment is still discriminatory in the benefit of masculinity.

One main point that the six leaders agreed on and stressed upon was that there are barriers created by the dominant culture that hinder women's ability to access social media and utilize it as a tool to engage socially and politically. Also, they noted that content creation on social media needs to be gender sensitive to eradicate harmful stereotypes and create safe spaces for women to be able to participate.

Case study #1



Dr. Maisoon Al-Atoom

Assistant Professor,
Center for Women's Studies,
The University of Jordan



Who I am

My story is the reason that made me rebel. I lived in Souf "a small village" in Jordan. I come from a very conservative community. My parents treated their daughters and sons differently. Especially my mother, she was the one to deny her daughters rights.

My rebellion and my refusal of how the community is treating women and girls, as well as my inability to accept my mother's attitude towards her daughters started when I was 12 years old. At that young age, I stood against my brothers and claimed my rights.

I decided to start reading and think more about my identity, especially when my family moved to Jerash, a city that has diversity in the types of people with different identities, colors, religions, and thoughts.

This diversity changed my mind and made me refuse the entire traditional stereotypes and the negative perspective towards women. I became an avid reader, I read about different topics that talk about Marxism and Islam, and about religions and how each of them dealt with women over time.

The conflict between my beliefs and the prevailing practices made a difference even in my personal choices.

My journey was so long and full of challenges, but I was able to get over the challenges and now I am here as an assistant professor at the Center for Women's Studies at the University of Jordan.



Did social media affect my life journey?

As a woman leader I believe that there are some tools that could support and enhance women's leadership roles in the community. Social media is one of these tools. But even through social media, women need political support to succeed and to create their own discourse, other than that women will not be able to make a change. I am not a social media user, but I can tell that this tool is very dangerous and can affect people in different ways if they are not ready to use it or if they use it inappropriately.

It could lead to revolutions worldwide and could lead to major change in people's opinions.

As a woman leader I can say that women need to be confident and have strong knowledge to face all the virtual challenges within social media.

I am not active on social media as I said, but I can emphasize that it is still holding patriarchal discourses, concepts and ideologies against women's rights and still trying to restrict their reproductive roles in the public and virtual spheres. Social media didn't affect my professional journey in any way, but it could if I decided to rely on it as a fundamental tool to support my work to influence dominant ideas around gender issues, power dynamics and gender relations. I am an academic, my audience is my students, the new generation who I can work with face to face to change their mentalities in a way that can support them to see the world in a humane way away from discrimination or extremism.



Call for action

I call all Jordanian women not to fight men on social media but use words that hold an equal character. Our fight now is not with men, the fight is between "injustice and justice", "equality and inequality", "the self and the subject". This fight is the strong tool that will support and enhance the effective role of women leaders in the virtual sphere.

Women leaders need the skills and the knowledge to enrich social media with non-traditional topics and contents, and to work hard on raising awareness on adapting a culture that aims to protect women's rights and advocate for that. This approach should be implemented by marketing different discourses through the social media and to find support systems (financial resources, political parties) to achieve this approach.

From here I can say that the skills and knowledge that women possess are the main tools to support social media for being an effective sphere and a safe place for their improvement.

Case study #2



Ms. Abla Al-Hajaya

Municipal Council
Member-Southern Badia

? Who I am

I am a girl from the Southern Badia/Al-Hasa District, living in a patriarchal community. My community considers females as marginal; their roles are limited to reproduction and domestic work. Education in our community is just for learning how to read and write. There is no need for girls to complete their education after reaching 14 or 15 years old.

Fortunately, my parents were very supportive and didn't mind to let me and my sisters complete our secondary education and college, knowing that my dad abandoned his brother. My father's family was against our passion for education and accused us of being rebellious.

I decided to complete my journey in advocating for women's rights at the university and as a volunteer in different community-based organizations within the Southern Badia. I was elected from the local community who believed in my capacities and became the youngest Municipal Council member in my area.



Did social media affect my life journey?

I would like to thank the international organizations who highlighted me as one of 100 influencers worldwide through media and different social media platforms. This exposure increased my network with influential organizations that supported me to implement many youth and community projects to improve and cover some of my community needs. This support system encouraged many girls and women from my community to advocate for their rights and to become involved in the political sphere.

I started using social media after I got involved in the political sphere. I found social media a tool to increase my exposure and make me known, even on the global level. I became one of the 100 influencers that can affect other women, support them and stand in solidarity with independent women, who will become influential and decision makers in the future. Social media changed my personality and my future vision. I found new ways to influence other girls who have dreams and passions but are facing problems related to the stereotypes and imposed traditional roles and responsibilities. Those girls find it difficult to achieve their dreams while living in conservative communities like mine. I can now highlight the main achievements that I implemented, and which served my community. I post on social media platforms many gender sensitive issues related to education, early marriage and women reproductive roles. These issues are sensitive, and in many cases taboo.

Last but not least, social media is a two-edged sword, depending on the user's goals and objectives. But in both ways, social media affects people psychologically. In my opinion, confrontation is the only solution.



Call for action

Women leaders should be persistent and become the inspiration of women who do not have the opportunity to talk and lack the awareness and skills to raise their voices and advocate for their rights.

Each woman must address her issues in a very transparency way because she will influence other women who are following her on social media platforms and will enhance their role and capacities to be an effective member in the community.

Fostering women's role in the social media to highlight their points can be done by supportive organizations or interested individuals, taking into consideration that men can be part of this.

Women still need to improve their discourse skills through social media to advocate for their issues and reach their goals by having the full capacity to face and respond to the critical comments of any kind.

Case study #3



H.E. Dr. Abeer Dababne

Member of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent Election Commission



Who I am

I am a Jordanian woman from Al-Salt, lived within a humble and supportive family who loves and belongs to their country. My sisters and I had the full opportunity to access education and the labor market, same as my brothers. I completed my BA and MA in Law at the University of Jordan and then got a scholarship from the university to complete my PhD in gender from a legal perspective.

Based on my academic and professional experience, I believe that each woman must have the social, emotional and political intelligence to gain the "win-win" equation. And this is my philosophy: women have a responsibility towards ourselves and our country. We can succeed if we want to be effective public figures in the public sphere. Challenges are everywhere; women should have the capacity to make a balance between being a mother and to have a faith and a strong personality and passion to be a well-known leader, without being excluded from any of these roles. I think, the choice is a challenge for women.



Did social media affect my life journey?

Social media is a virtual world and an unlimited platform that obliged us to become proficient in dealing with it if we have a target or a vision to reach through it. It can be the servant or the master in changing women's lives on all levels and an influencer to change people's minds and break the traditional boxes and the negative stereotypes toward women reproductive roles mainly.

To use social media as a positive tool to open up spaces for women leaders we should have a teacher, a language of discourse to dare and fight critics.

I am not an active user of social media but I believe that technology is a strong tool to open up spaces for women to talk about their issues and engage during various occasions and national events and campaigns. For me the recent situation of COVID19- and the lockdown are a perfect time for women to start thinking differently in presenting their roles, actual situations, the current power relations with the family members. Women can highlight their challenges, struggles and successes instead of feeding the stereotypes by only sharing and creating content on cooking, fashion and beauty advice. This tool can contribute in re-distributing gender roles on real and virtual spheres to a certain extent.

Social media was not part of my journey but I started to support the issues that I am advocating for on the political and humanitarian levels. During COVID19-, all the conferences I participated in, decision making processes and communicating with stakeholders took place through social media. It became the virtual and the reality at the same time.

Social media is a tool for change. I taught my students over the years the whole humanitarian concepts regarding gender component and women rights' issue. I now trust their belief and capabilities to deliver what they learnt to their communities using different methods and tools, one of them is "social media".



Call for action

Nowadays, we are experiencing the fourth revolution (Technological revolution) which puts us as women in a challenging situation. We need to keep up with technology and turn challenge into opportunities.

We don't need a support system when using social media; our support system is our knowledge which gives women the power to overcome all challenges. Social media is a supportive tool that can help in reaching more people and expand our target group based on the issues we discuss and present.

Case study #4



H.E., Feda'a Al-Hmoud

President of the Legislation and Opinion Bureau



Who I am

I am a very humble person from a simple family. I have a passion and a strong personality. These characteristics supported me to reach my position as president of the Legislation and Opinion Bureau.

It is not easy to be a leader in this position, which was only for men. If I make a mistake, it will be counted as two just because I am a woman living in a conservative country. Most of Jordanian men do not believe in women's capacities or their equal position as leaders.

I do not have issues with men, but I believe that each one of us has the full capacity to address himself/herself positively in all aspects of life.



Did social media affect my life journey?

There are some tools that can support women and enhance their role as good leaders. Social media can support women in serving their communities if used effectively.

Social media is a tool that can be used to communicate with my relatives and to check news updates. With the COVID19- situation, social media facilitates attending meetings of the council of ministers, which I participate in.

In my opinion, social media is an excellent tool to communicate with different types of people and know their needs in a very short time no matter their physical location. It is considered as a good and positive tool if we use it effectively to serve our community. However, it is not a fundamental tool to create a leader. As a woman, I can impact the community and represent many Jordanian women through my professional skills, my experience, my passion, and by believing in myself and being close to people who are looking to improve legislation from a gender perspective. I am able to push for these agendas during my time in the Bureau, through conducting field visits to universities, meeting with local council female members in different governorates, in addition to my role in creating a gender unit at the Bureau to make a change in the institutional vision and make it more gender sensitive. Social media didn't affect me personally, but as a public figure in Jordan, I have received several comments on some of my posts, some of them supportive and others critical. I always understand people's perspectives towards my posts and try to respond in a very diplomatic way while delivering my arguments. However, people around me, like my children, are the ones affected by the critical posts. Sometimes they get angry and try to defend me in order to protect me. I always tell them that passionate people who have a goal in life and reach a leadership position become exposed to critics, especially on social media. We must be ready for that both mentally and psychologically.

So, if women in a leadership position have a passion and a real strong vision, they can do anything they want and reach their planned goals. Social media can be a supportive tool to enhance their leadership.



Call for action

I would like to say to all Jordanian women: we have to deal with social media with caution when we decide to post any kind of content or a picture. We need to be ready for any criticism from an outsider. If we cannot react positively and respond to any criticism, we are the one who will lose.

If we want to be leaders, we should first believe in ourselves and our concepts then translate that to values that can facilitate using any kind of social media platforms. Please be aware that social media is a virtual sphere and most of what we see is not real, so don't let a virtual tool affect your life and personality, you can be you without using any tool.

Case study #5



H.E., Dr. Abla Amawi
Secretary General of the
Higher Population Council

? Who I am

I am a woman who has worked in many conflict zones for many years, mainly in Sudan-Darfur, Palestine-the Gaza Strip, Egypt, and Pakistan. I was managing projects related to the rule of law, gender and juvenile justice. Our work within these domains was very important to me and made some shifts in my life by overcoming many challenges. Through all this, I always believed in myself as a human who has the capacity to reach my goals, a qualified human who can work in such fields, although evacuated from two countries for security reasons as my life was at risk, as I exposed some sensitive information as part of my job: I exposed information related to anti-corruption, violations of human rights and women's rights. This was not welcomed by those responsible for such acts and my life was threatened.

I have three criteria that support me in overcoming all my life challenges: I consider myself a human (I don't accept to put myself in gender boxes), second criteria: human rights and justice are the concepts that lead me in both my personal and professional life, third criteria: I am a mother and a leader with humanitarian concepts and values. These two mentioned points allowed me to invest them in nurturing my child in a way that she can see and deal with life in the future under the same concepts and values.

Did social media affect my life journey?

There are always effective tools we use in our life to support our roles as women leaders in the public spheres. I consider the emergence of social media platforms recently as a miracle in terms of its impact on individuals positively or negatively: it is "the virtual galaxy", the main tool to reach all societies on different levels.

I like this tool and consider it as an effective platform to reach more people about various issues related to community needs. It is the best tool if we use it for high level goals to achieve social justice on political, social, economic and personal levels worldwide. I am an active user of social media both personally and professionally. For example, I worked on a program called "Al-Fakhoura", to target the most qualified and poorest students to grant them scholarships. We used social media to reach them. It was a very successful method to reach the project's goals. Another example I worked on was a project to highlight the situation that young people in Gaza live in. We connected them with the outside world, by creating a "virtual council" to communicate with other students from Pennsylvania University to discuss various topics of common interest. This approach led to building the capacity of both groups of students, specially the females who were given the opportunity to exchange experiences and gain support to enhance their roles to implements social and political initiatives within their communities, which will make them leaders with human values in the future and reach the decision makers to convince them about their concerns and make the change.

Call for action

I can start with what "Zan Rosso" said: "Freedom without responsibility is certainly tempting and responsibility without freedom is stressful".

When we want to use social media as a tool, we have to know as women with whom we are talking, what is the context in which we talk and express opinions, who is our audience, and the language of the discussion. The elite's speech is not everyone's concern. Social media is very useful if women use it to make a difference in people's lives, they should have complete knowledge about the topics they want to advocate for and be responsible for each word they are using. If we choose to use social media effectively to enhance our role as women leaders, we should be always direct, have a professional background and a good experience to influence other women. Most importantly, we should have the integrity in self and speech.

Case study #6



Ms. Reema Diab

Founder/CEO,
Galaxy Organization

? Who I am

I am a very independent Jordanian woman; I believed in my capabilities from an early age. I have a bachelor degree in finance but all my professional experience is in the field of technology. I am so proud of myself; I am proud as I was able to reach the position of General Manager in a French telecommunications company when I was just 25 years old. I am the only young woman who reached this position at such an age. This led me to become a role model for other women and young girls in the tech world. I faced many challenges but I was able to reach my recent position as the CEO of Galaxy. During my career, I was hoping that Jordanian companies will believe in my qualifications and capacities. Unfortunately, they were just considering me as a young woman in Hijab who will not be able to hold a managerial position. Of course, this is in addition to the social stereotyping of women and partly the position of my family. Although my family is supportive, my brothers tend to restrict my freedom, especially when my job requires travel outside of the country regularly. From here I can say that my story is similar to any Jordanian woman's story, always restricted on account of traditions, restrictive stereotypes and male dominance.

💬 Did social media affect my life journey?

My core work is mainly about telecommunications and social media. The aim of my organization is to empower women in technology especially after they complete their education and are ready to access the labor market. We utilize social media to connect women and introduce them to jobs and employers based on their skills. Social media is a very effective tool if we use it in a smart way and apply it to serve women's objectives.

📣 Call for action

I call for improving the "Good Digital Citizen" through creating suitable legislations and policies that can raise awareness. It is important to raise the awareness of women about the cybercrime law and encourage them to report when needed.

Women leaders should be aware that critic and bullying are everywhere in the virtual world. We should be ready to respond and have the self-confidence to stop this harmful behavior. "We wore the technology dress but yet our minds still are un-aware of how to deal with it".

Last but not least, women leaders should always highlight themselves as role models through their achievements in changing minds, changing gender roles, working on social justice, their positions in the political spheres. Women leaders need to by-pass the shallowness of those who use social media spaces, either men or women, to further entrench gender stereotypes.



Quantitative data analysis – The survey

This section presents a summary of the findings from information collected by 18 women leaders who filled four parts of a questionnaire under four themes: access, use, experiences, influence and impact of social media. These results provide an overview of the current situation related to using social media as an effective tool to open up spaces for women leaders and the effects of social media on women leaders' career progression or regression. Also, this analysis will measure digital techniques they use to promote themselves and the nature of reactions they attract from the general public.



The analysis results summarize data collected from the questionnaire, which was designed specifically for this study, as well as that from phone interviews that were held with the target groups of this study. The sample size was 18 women leaders from different governorates and in different positions, such as: Local council members, judges, journalists, initiative makers and parliament members.

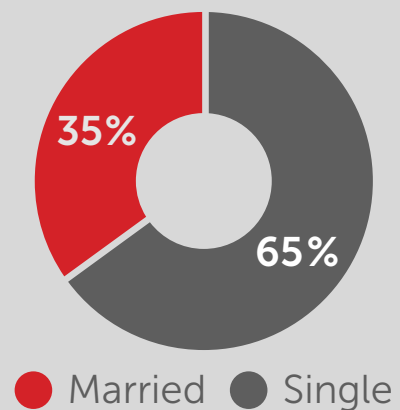
Below, you will see the variables examined for the individual levels of analysis. In addition, the analysis was based not just on the individual responses to the behavior on social media in general but also on their relationships between shared perceptions among some platforms and their personal opinions about the virtual sphere if it is a real and effective tool to support their positions in the community or not.



Sample description :

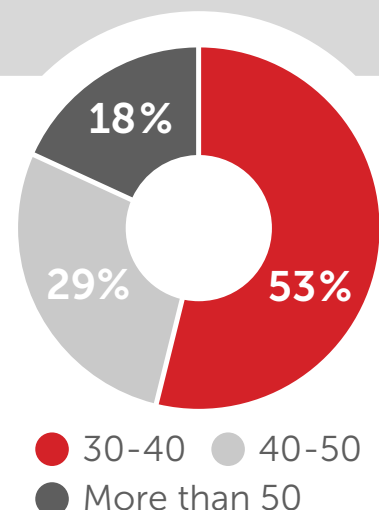
1 Marital status

Marital status	Frequency	%
Single	11	65%
Married	6	35%



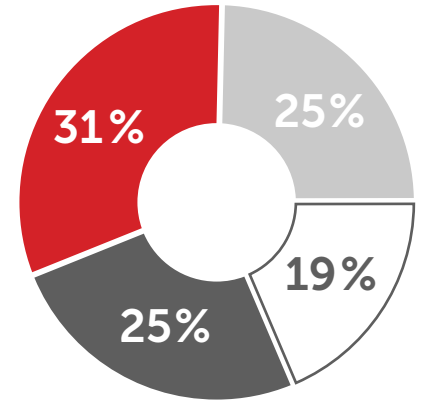
2 Age

Age	Frequency	%
30-40	9	53%
40-50	5	29%
More than 50	3	18%



3 Years of experience :

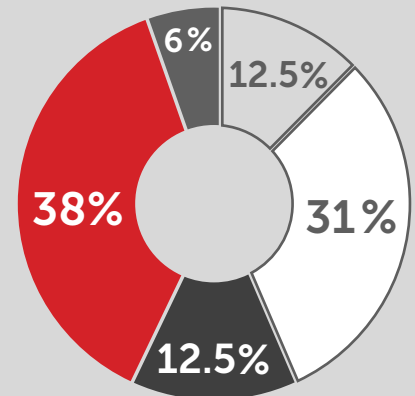
Age	Frequency	%
1-5	0	0%
6-10	4	25%
11-15	3	19%
16-20	4	25%
More than 20	5	31%



● 1-5 ● 6-10 ○ 11-15
● 16-20 ● More than 20

4 Qualification :

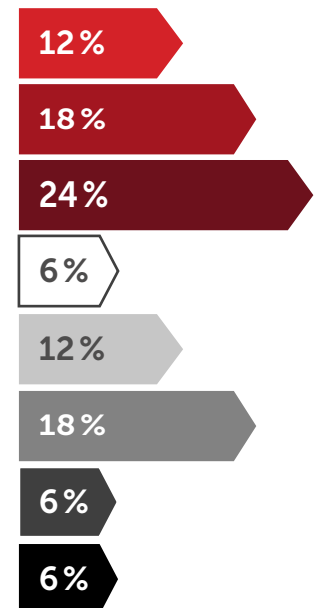
Qualification	Frequency	%
Diploma	2	12.5%
B.Sc	5	31%
High Diploma	2	12.5%
M.Sc	6	38%
PHD	1	6%



○ Diploma ○ B.Sc ● PHD
● High Diploma ● M.Sc

5 Jobs

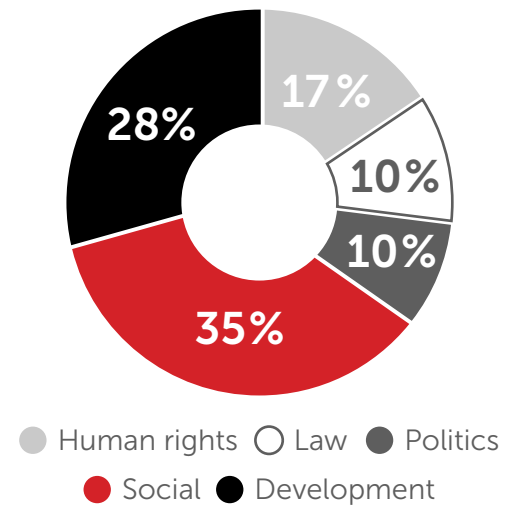
Jobs	Frequency	%
INGO	2	12%
Labor Union member	3	18%
Municipal Council	4	24%
Activist	1	6%
Media Activist	2	12%
Volunteer	3	18%
Former Parliamentarian	1	6%
Judge	1	6%



● INGO ● Labor Union member ● Municipal Council ○ Activist
● Media Activist ● Volunteer ● Former Parliamentarian ● Judge

6 Area of expertise:

Area of expertise	Frequency	%
Human rights	5	17%
Law	3	10%
Politics	3	10%
Social	10	35%
Development	8	28%



B. Part 2: Access

Q1: How easy do they access social media?

All the study sample (100 %) confirmed that they have simple access to all means of social media due to several reasons:

- The availability of Internet, at home and at work.
- The type of work carried out by these women, which requires the use of social media on regular basis. For example one of the interviewees in the municipal council confirmed that she uses social media to inform the local community of her work and the services that are provided.

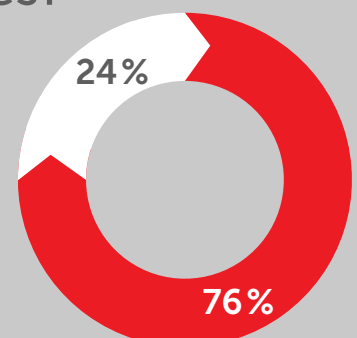


Q2: Are there any challenges you face in reaching your target group when posting your messages?

76% of the study sample indicated that there are challenges faced sometimes when publishing their messages to the stakeholders and targeted audiences, while 24% believe that they have no challenges.

Challenges

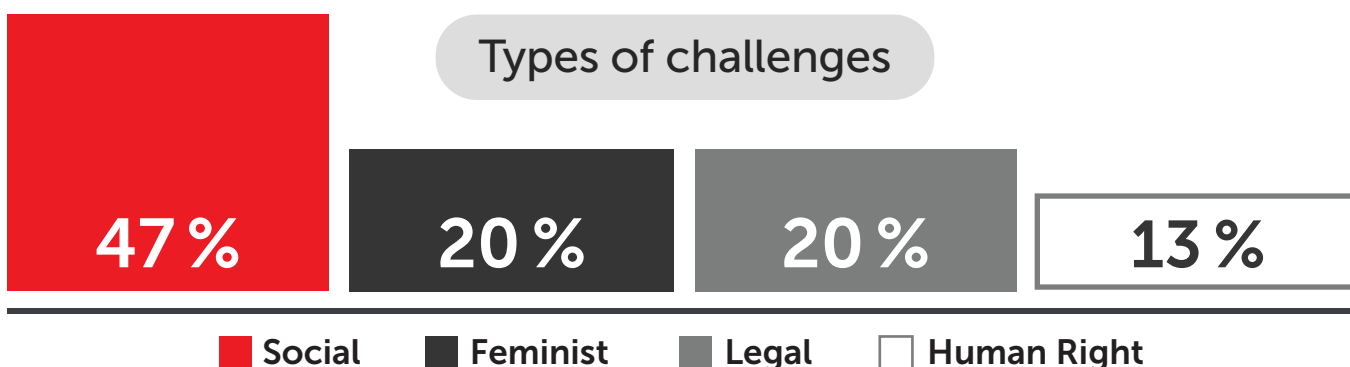
- Challenges
- No challenges



Q3: Follow up question: If there are challenges, what are those challenges?

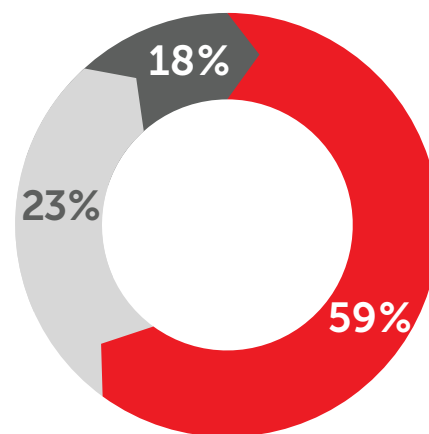
The study sample showed that the most important challenges facing women are :

No.	Challenge	Percentage	Explanation
1.	Social	47%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge amongst the targeted groups, especially women and the elderly, in using means of social media. • Weak belief amongst target groups of the importance of social media in intellectual awareness, due to their interest in financial support as priority. • The difficulty of the local community and the target group to access the Internet because of their location or living situation. • The machist society who does not believe in women's right and gender equality. They are not exposed to violence and also believe that women's roles are limited to certain societal functions. Furthermore, they believe that women have to accept their family's decision in all their matters. • It is not very easy to access all the platforms that are most popular in Jordan (for example Jordanians are unable to use WhatsApp for voice/video calls).
2.	Feminist	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men do not believe in women's capability in accomplishing their tasks, this is due to stereotypes and the traditional roles in their society. • Lack of women's knowledge on how to express themselves and asking for their rights by using social media.
3.	legal	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes, women are governed by laws that regulate freedom of opinion and expression, such as: publications and publishing, electronic crimes. • The nature of work that forces women to abide by the code of ethics that obliges employees not to publish anything related to their work or any legal opinions or political issues or any views that conflict their work.
4.	Human right	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness from various officials and popular bodies of the importance of promoting human rights.



Q4: What are your goals/motives for your use of social media?

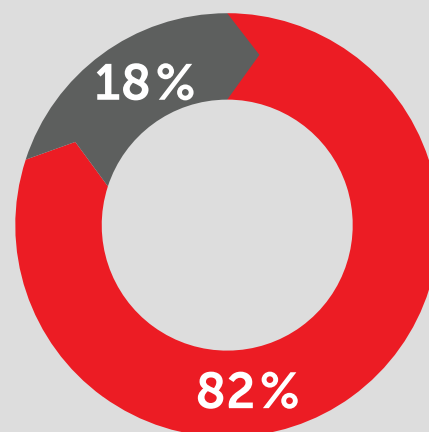
The results of the study indicated that 59 % of respondents use social media for personal use as well as working, while 18 % use social media for personal purposes only, and 23 % use social media for work purposes solely. The majority of respondents mentioned that they use social media for personal purposes in order to communicate with family and friends, and sometimes for shopping. They also use social media for work purposes in order to spread awareness amongst women and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, as well as to communicate with women and invite them to attend various workshops that help building their capacities.



- Personal use only
- Work purpose only
- Personal use and working together

Q5: As a working leader woman, do you use social media to promote your business / specific cause?

The results of the study indicated that 82 % of respondents use social media to promote their work and awareness around issues of concern. This helps for advocacy, support, and networking with other activists who are working in the same field in order to reach the desired change. Some respondents consider social media as the fastest means of spreading and reaching people, as well as the most effective way as it assists women leaders significantly in promoting their accomplished work. On the other hand, 18 % of respondents do not use social media to promote their work and accomplishments because of the sensitive nature of their work, which restricts and prevents them from expressing and publishing their point of views on certain issues publically.



- Using social media to promote their work
- Not using social media to promote their work

Q6: Does a woman leader need to set her own protocols / determinants when using social media, as a reference for accountability later?

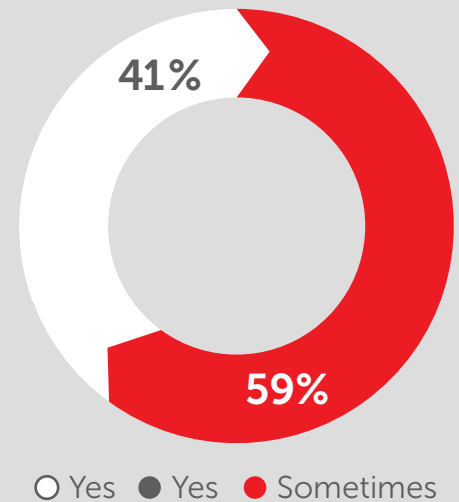
All respondents (100 %) stressed the importance of having protocols (special determinants) when using social media to cover the separation between expressing personal and professional point of views and positions.

Some respondents highlighted the importance of taking customs, religion, traditions and the local culture into consideration when publishing, especially sensitive matters related to politics and cosity. "Everything is counted for you". One of the women added, "At the beginning, I didn't pay any attention to any specific parameters or protocols, so I used social media to express my opinion freely and without any restriction, but later I found that I should appear with the image and content that fit my cultural background". Another woman added "Women in leadership positions are well known to society; they cannot express and raise any issues from their personal perspective compared to anonymous women who have more freedom to express their opinion.

Women who occupy prominent and sensitive positions face limitations to their ability to write freely on topics that may affect their reputation or position. " Another participant stated that sometimes, she can't express her opinion freely due to societal restriction and regulation especially in religious, political and sexual matters.

Q7: Does the use of social media help women access leadership positions faster?

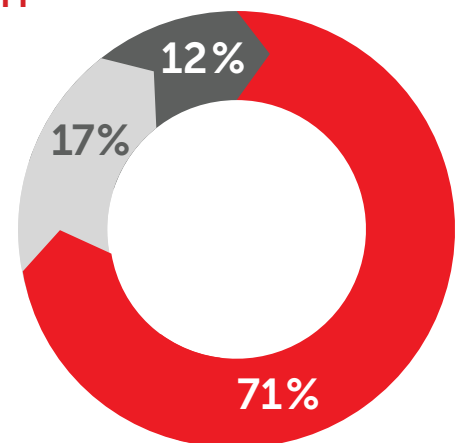
About 41% percent of respondents believe that social media helps women reach leadership position if they are able to promote their achievements. This enables women to reach or gain more followers. On the other hand, about 59% of respondents mentioned that social media can be helpful sometimes helpful for women in reaching leadership positions as they consider social media as a tool but not an essential element for reaching leadership position. Some women justify that social media assists women in reaching leadership because our society and culture relies heavily on relations and sometimes personal relations, word of mouth, and social gatherings.



○ Yes ● Yes ● Sometimes

Q8: Will women leaders' access to social media have a role in accelerating the promotion of gender issues? Achieving a 50/50 gender representation

About 71 % of respondents believe that women's access to leadership positions influences the promotion of gender related issues, while 18% of the sample believes that women's access to leadership has no influence on promoting gender issues. 12% of the sample believes that it might have a role in promoting gender issues.



● Yes ● No ● Sometimes

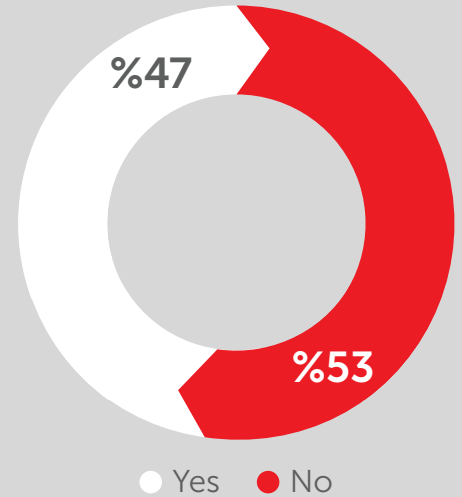


C.Part 2: Use

Q1: Do you have any reservations about using social media?

About 53% of respondents indicated that they have no reservations on the use of social media, while 47% indicated that they have a reservation on the use of social media for a number of reasons, including:

- Misuse by young men and women.
- Openness to topics that could negatively affect them and lead them to deeds that are rejected by society.
- Spreading rumors, problematic publications or using social media to spread hate among members of the society and use it for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

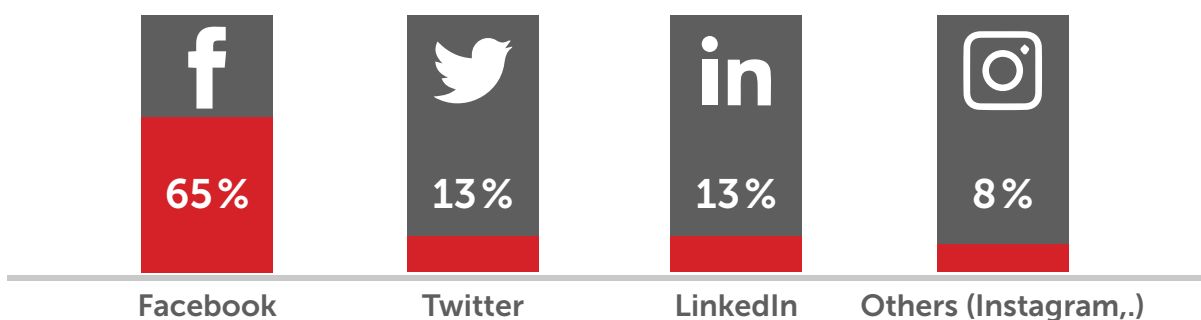


Q2: What is the most social media mean used by you to reach the target audience?

The result of the study showed that Facebook is the most popular social media platform used amongst the correspondents, with the percentage of %65, followed by Twitter and LinkedIn

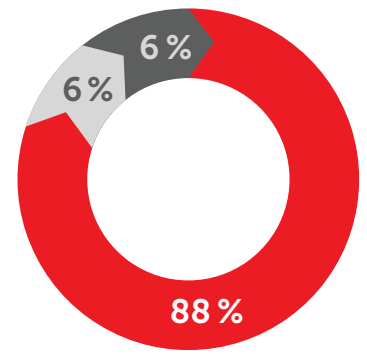
No.	Social media mean	% Usage ratio
1	Facebook	65%
2	Twitter	13%
3	LinkedIn	13%
4	Others (Instagram,.)	8%

Social Media means



Q3: How many hours do you spend on social media?

No.	The number of hours spent on social media	%
1	Less than one hour per day	6%
2	More than one hour and less than 5 hours per day	88%
3	More than 5 hours per day	6%



- More than 5 hours per day
- Less than one hour per day
- More than one hour and less than 5 hours per day

Q4: How does the audience see you as a leader in social media?

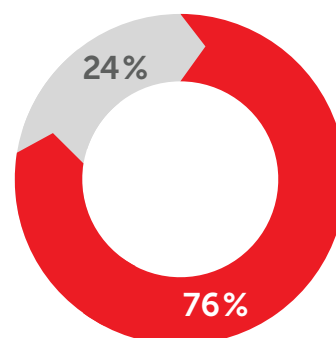
The majority of respondents mentioned that community perceives them (women) **positively**. They see them as attractive and successful personalities, with rebellious characters, as free women, and a source of hope. They also consider these women leaders as a source of confidence amongst members of the society and have a large number of followers. They are also seen as influential as they change societal thinking, protect women's rights, and change laws.

Moreover, respondents believe that women leaders' are hardworking, energetic, represent human rights activists and have a cause to fight for. In addition to that, they are respectful for serving the community. Others perceive women leaders based on their own position, either supporters or opponents to the cause being supported and pushed by those leaders.

Q5: If we consider that women leaders are exposed to abuse and harassment, are there any mechanisms to prevent them?

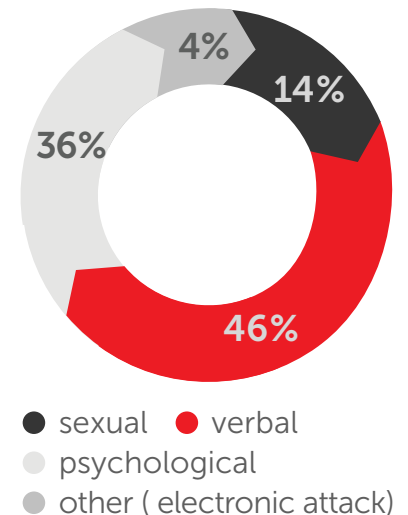
Items	%	Explanation
Yes, there is a mechanism	76%	<p>There were different opinions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some respondents mentioned that there is a Cybercrime Unit and women who are exposed to such abuse must complain to it. Other women declared that complaining to the Cybercrime Unit is useless and not effective because it doesn't protect women's rights efficiently. Thus, women usually avoid complaining to this unit. ● Other respondents advised that women should take their rights physically and verbally. ● Some mentioned that women should block the account of cybercriminals as well as increase women's awareness in the way they publish topics on social media and how to present themselves.
No, there is no mechanism	0%	
I have no idea if there are mechanisms	24%	They believe that there are no mechanisms and women should be strong and defend themselves

- There is a mechanism
- There is no mechanism
- Have no idea if there is mechanism



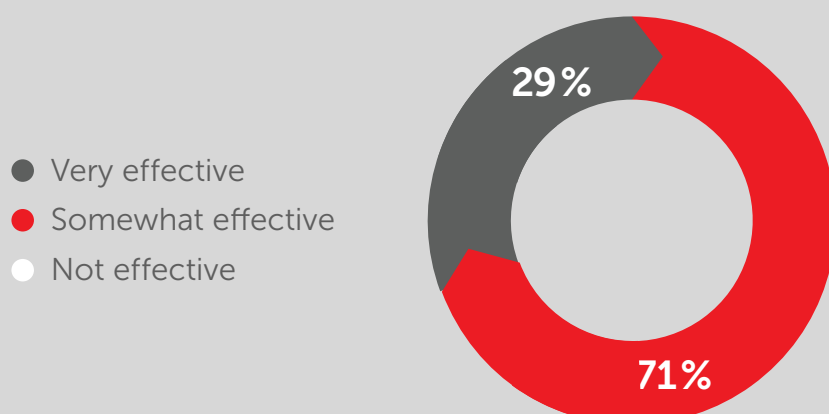
Q6: What kind of abuse or harassment women leaders are exposed to when using social media?

Types of abuse	Frequency	Explanation
Sexual	14%	Through sending sexual messages on private inbox
Verbal	46%	
Psychological	36%	Decreasing the capability of women in accomplishing tasks and lack of confidence of women
Other (electronic attack)	4%	



Q7: How effective is social media as a tool for promoting issues between women and their consensus on them within the virtual platforms?

The effectiveness of social media as a tool to promote issues among women and their consensus within virtual platforms	%	Explanation
Very effective	29%	It facilitates communications and networking amongst women leaders in the governorates and the formation of working groups to discuss specific issues as well as reaching larger groups.
Somewhat effective	71%	It might be effective when working on similar social issues that have identical barriers and challenges, but might create negative competition when applying for a leadership position or if or if some of them get a chair in the parliament. Access and control perceived as a threat for some women in the community.
Not effective	0%	



Q8: Do you see a negative reflection among women leaders in dealing with each other, which can lead to the withdrawal of certain situations?

Most of the interviewees agreed that there is the problem of “Women against Women”. This happens when women compete over the same or similar positions, in particular political ones. . Some women leaders or those who have a strong fan base succeed more in gaining the targeted position and have the power to promote their issues and fight other women through social media by posting strong messages, opposing posts and photos or by using videos for show off purposes or to promote themselves while belittling other women in the same positions. . But at the same time, we can always find supportive women who have similar challenges and believe in women leadership in any sector.



D.Part 3: Experience

Q1: What type of topics women are interested in on social media in your opinion?

The results of the study show that more than 50% of women were more interested in issues related to women's rights and violence against women, while there was also interest in multiple topics such as cooking, childcare, popular fashion trends, beauty-related trends, celebrity trends, arts and education as well as other social topics.

Q2: Based on your practical experience, how do you see the extent of compatibility between the use of social media by women to communicate messages that express community issues and between the prevailing values and customs in the Jordanian context, especially as we talk about areas that differ in terms of their acceptance or rejection of the use of such means for cultural considerations?

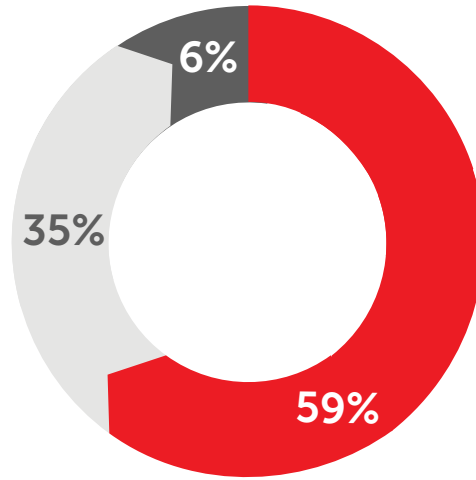
No.	Items	%	Explanation
1.	There is consensus	59%	There is a consensus because of the fear of the reaction if it deviates from the customs and traditions. No matter how the leading women reached their position, they adhere to customs, traditions and tribal culture because if they don't commit, they will be attacked and insulted by society.
2.	There is consensus to some extent	35%	Sometimes the ideas that are presented by women cause problems and are considered unacceptable to society's customs and traditions such as issues of personal relationships, gender roles, and openness to other cultures. This also depends on the culture of individuals in society and to what extent they accept women's messages and opinions on various societal issues.

3.

There is no consensus

6%

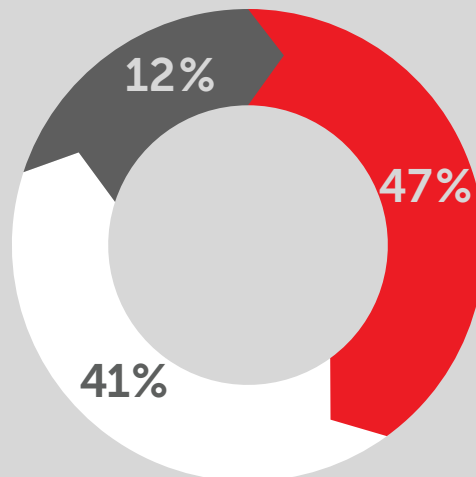
Women will most likely not share many of their opinions due to the risk of backlash from the community



● There is consensus ● There is consensus to some extent ● There is no consensus

Q3: In comparison to the practical experience you possess, do you think that you are able to influence our society on political, intellectual or other issues?

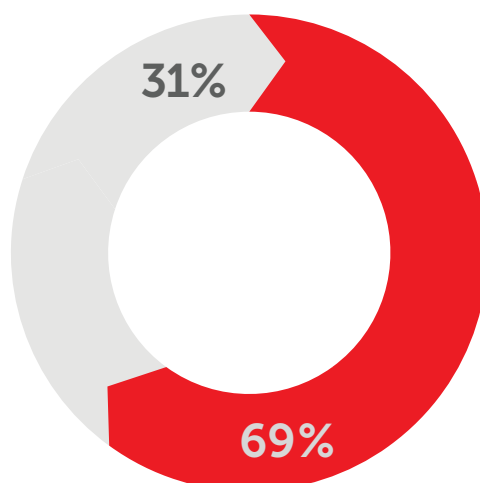
Items	%	Explanation
Sufficient	47%	They find that they have a good experience in the area of media and community outreach; this allows them to develop a large fan base.
To somewhat sufficient	41%	It depends on the knowledge and familiarity with raising issues as well as the type of the target group
Not sufficient	12%	They find that they can only influence their society in their field of expertise



● sufficient ● To somewhat sufficient ● Not sufficient

Q4: In your opinion, what is the extent and ability of social media to enhance your role as a leader in society and to highlight you more in the societal envelope, and how far is the opposite?

Items	%	Explanation
Enhancing the leadership role of women	69%	This happens when a woman in a leading position promotes her accomplishments by using social media, as this also helps to develop a large fan base that supports the leading woman in her social movement. This depends on her personality.
Not enhancing the leadership role of women	0%	
To somewhat enhancing the leadership role of women	31%	happen in the case of focusing on real issues that affect society like persona; initiatives to improve the social or economic situation in the community and meet the needs of all groups and avoid superficial topics that enhance indirectly the stereotype of women social role. One of the respondents believes that working towards empowering other women face-to-face and building a relationship and trust with a certain community will most likely be more effective than social media. Young women like to be informed through social media, but direct communication physically is the backbone.



- Enhancing the leadership role of women
- To somewhat enhancing the leadership role of woman
- Not Enhancing the leadership role of women



E: Part 4: influence and impact of social media

Q1: What are the effects of social media on women in terms of personality, social relations and their impact on the local community?

Personality: Increasing skills, knowledge, and self-development for women at all levels, and developing the woman's personality and increasing her confidence. This also affects women in various negative behaviors since a lot of the social media content focuses on trends and fashion. Many women are influenced by the glamour and tend to want to live it where in reality most of the glamour portrayed on social media is either non-existent or superficial.

Social relationships: Increasing the circle of social relations, social interaction and communication between members of the society, but it has a negative aspect in terms of some people who give themselves the right to interfere in other people's affairs. It also might broaden relations, but they may remain superficial if they are not pursued for direct contact

Q2: What are the pros and cons of using social media from your point of view as a woman?

The advantages of using social media platforms

- Increase the circle of knowledge.
- Affected by positive models.
- Giving people space to express themselves and amplify their voices.
- Easy access to the target group.
- Increasing knowledge and developing skills.
- Networking.
- Openness to the world and giving women in conservative areas a sense of freedom.
- Low cost, widespread availability, ability to provide solutions.
- Opportunity to exchange experiences locally, regionally and internationally.
- More integration into society.
- Active role through the ability to convey personal ideas to everyone through various platforms.
- Feeling more free.
- A good way to stay informed and sees the trends and topics people are discussing. This can range from politics to celebrity trends.

The disadvantages of using social media platforms

- Lack of respect from others, being subjected to abuse and thus feeling frustrated.
- Defamation and lack of respect for the other opinions.
- Misuse (use of inappropriate words), incitement.
- Interfering in privacy and personal life.
- Exposure to blackmail or exploitation.
- Using social media for purposes that do not serve society and violate its norms and values.
- Reaching a large number of followers, without having the quality of followers, and thus be subjected to harassment, voyeurism, bullying, and offense.
- Exposure to types of harassment and offense related to the appearance or body.
- The high rate of cybercrime.
- Increase the spread of bitterness
Spreading of rumors
Social media is very disconnected with the actual situation of many people.
- People who are posting online tend to show only the positive aspects of their life. This can make many people compare their reality to one portrayed on social media, and feel dissatisfied and unhappy with their own reality. People can also build a fabricated world if their only way of interaction and communication is through social media

Q3: What is the negative impact the use of social media has on women leaders?

- ⊖ Community threats might force her to move backward instead of encouraging her. Also, societal restrictions can weaken her role in impacting society.
- ⊖ Sexual and verbal abuses, undermined.
- ⊖ Feeling frustrated.

Q4: Is social media augmenting the leadership role of women when using media platforms?

Items	%	Explanation
(Yes) Social media enhanced the leadership role of women	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Depends on her personality, her fan base, and her family's support. ● If the woman leaders uses social media platforms properly and presents her activities and accomplishments.
(No) Social media has not enhanced the leadership role of women	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This space is open and available, and shows the capabilities of women, their ideas and their impact. ● It is faster than traditional media. ● A powerful and helpful tool. It was not previously effective, but during COVID19-, it became the main tool for communicating with the outside world and talking more about social and economic conditions. ● The ability to reach as many women as possible and share their views and experiences with people from various backgrounds. ● If women are close to the community, they can be followed and get acquainted with their ideas and proposals.

Q5: To which extent does social media pose direct or indirect threats to women leaders?

Items	%	Explanation
<p>Yes: Social media can cause direct or indirect threats to women</p>	<p>75%</p>	<p>In a conservative culture such as Jordan, reputation plays a major role in society. Women may face negative comments and attacks leading to the buildup of a bad reputation.</p> <p>There are other threats that women may face including physical attack and verbal threat. In addition, some women do not have sufficient awareness about privacy, and how a woman can protect her accounts if she uses social media. The threat depends on the topics discussed, how society perceive them, as well as the law's ability to protect them.</p> <p>Moreover, if the women leaders from tribal areas or from conservative regions publish any sensitive messages, their lives might become in danger.</p>
<p>No: Social media can cause direct or indirect threat to women</p>	<p>25%</p>	<p>In the case of women taking into account the customs and traditions, they are not exposed to any threats. Also it does not lead to any threat if the woman has self-confidence and does not harm others while raising her issue.</p>



Conclusion

Women face the same patriarchal and traditional gender stereotypes on social media as much as in real life, if not more in some cases. This is especially evident in the general public's response on sensitive topics on social media such as "honor killings" where there is a significant number of commenters, most of which are men, agreeing with - if not praising - the perpetrator of violence against women. Additionally, many women get harassed on social media, which led to the creation of the Cybercrimes Law that women, or any person who have been victims of online bullying, exploitation, or blackmail can pursue justice through legal channels and courts of law.¹⁸

Despite multiple adverse conditions - such as unfavorable laws, societal constraints, and discrimination - women have shown their ability to achieve remarkable gains using social media. In fact these gains due to the use of social media have attracted regional and global recognition. There is a wide recognition that social media plays a significant role in enhancing women's participation in economic, social, and political life. The pursuit of national development is not a selective process, but one that is all-inclusive, and in which all citizens are given equal opportunity. It is only when women no longer feel discriminated against will they utilize their education, aspire to positions of responsibility, and perform maximally because their empowerment will lead to a productive contribution to socio-economic, cultural, and political development.

The leader role for Jordanian women in all aspects of life is conditional to their ability to continue the fight on all levels. Until now women leaders are still limited to certain sectors such as social justice, gender equality, social development and education. But the judicial role for example, is still male dominated for religious, societal and cultural reasons.¹⁹

However, many Jordanian women reached high levels in leadership positions such as the six case studies that mentioned in this paper, through a long journey full of challenges, intellectual and care-giving.

Based on the research data analysis of both the interviews and survey, these are the main findings:

- Most women believe that social media can be an effective tool to support their efforts by opening up spaces for their participation in the public sphere.
- Women leaders continue to face some restrictions in using social media based on their community background and the traditional context.
- Most women face challenges and multiple threats when advocating for sensitive social issues or promoting themselves within political platforms. In addition, they believe that "The Cyber Crime Law" needs to be implemented to protect women who face threats.
- In a tribal context, women who possess mass and partisan base and big families have better opportunities to reach leadership positions in both the public and virtual spheres. However, those who do not have the advantage of connections through a tribe or a powerful family need more effort to address their social and political issues through their personality, knowledge and experience presence.
- When women start using social media to serve their objectives, they must be ready psychologically to face all kinds of threats, criticism and opponents. Other than that, they will lose and give the virtual community a wrong perspective toward women and a big opportunity to attack and enhance the traditional perspectives of women's roles.
- Using social media is a two-edged sword, we can use it to benefit our cause and achieve fundamental goals to improve women and community social, political and legal situations. On the other hand we can use it in less effective and possibly harmful ways that support the stereotype of women's roles, thus weakening their position in the society.
- Women against women approach is one of the reasons of preventing women from reaching leadership positions, sometimes because of competition, jealousy or due to the lack of belief in women's presence in real and virtual platforms.
- Social media can be harmful for female politicians if they take wrong decisions within the public sphere. The reactions to these perceived mistakes expressed through media might lead to bullying and abuse, also considering that social media is biased towards men.
- When a woman presents concepts that contradict her traditional role and which are not accepted by her patriarchal community, she will be attacked through social media by several virtual commenters and sometimes these attacks include hate speech and verbal abuse. Women are perceived to be weak and unable to respond, sometimes because they refrain from doing so. This enhances harmful stereotypes and this is one of the most dangerous forms of stereotyping the image of political women in the media.



Recommendations

- Women must be actively engaged in acquiring technological skills to take advantage of social media, integrating the likes of Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms with devices such as smartphones, iPads, laptop and desktop computers. While doing so, women need to acquire the knowledge and skills to be safe and protect themselves and their accounts from hacking, cyberbullying and other types of cybercrime.
- Spheres that have political, legislation and sovereign dimensions do not include many women leaders and politicians, while those with a service dimension have more women. This reflects the discrimination women face in real life and that happens in the Jordanian context as well as globally.
- There is a need for clear guidelines that control and clarify the relationship between the three elements (woman, media and the government). These guidelines should aim to raise the gender sensitivity approach when dealing with social media, and emphasize that women participation in the public spheres and through the virtual media is a prerequisite for the development of society, democratic reform and for achieving the values of citizenship and justice, as a supreme national interest.
- Media institutions should start opening spaces and safe platforms for discussions with women organizations and feminist movements about the importance of media to support women participation in the virtual sphere. Women must be trained more on how to deal with social media, how to present their issues and how to use their humanitarian and political discourses to mobilize the public.
- Work to find a national strategy to ensure the end of the negative perspective toward women leaders' participation through social media.
- Advocate to modify laws and legislations which include a kind of discrimination towards women and detract their effective role in the community.
- Work on collecting all the documentations and statistics regarding the type of women participation through social media in what related to decision making and political activity.
- Ensure universal access, based on local and situated research that looks at variance in local barriers to access (language, affordability of devices or data, location, class, ethnicity, race, caste, etc.).
- Research the relationship between education and access, presence of women in online spaces, and the potential of online learning.
- Research issues related to disability and accessibility standards and specific impacts this has in relation to gender & social media.





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