



Woman in Development and Politics

Women and Social Structure Change; Analyzing the Narrative of Active Women Activists in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 1 May 2024 Received in revised form: 26 August 2024 Accepted: 23 September 2024 Published online: 31 December 2024</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Women's Associations, Kurdistan Region, Social Structure, New Masculinity, Female Agency, Narrative Analysis.</i></p>	<p>Introduction The main goal and question of the present research is based on the fact that considering the structural changes of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, especially after its formation, where is the position of women in these changes and what role have, they played in these changes? This highlights the two-way relationship between female agency (role) and position (structural relations) and can look at structural changes from the perspective of women. Therefore, it is important to address the role and structural relations through those who are active in the social field and women's field. As a result, these structural changes can also be evaluated in the case of women and from their point of view. What can be discussed in the first place is that the Iraqi Kurdistan region, as a semi-autonomous region in the north of Iraq, has entered a world that has moved towards modernization after the general elections in 1992 AD. This has happened along with the growing trend of capitalism and the occurrence of structural changes in its social fabric. Having said that, considering the change of social structures in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, especially since its formation and stabilization, we can discuss the role and position of women in asserting their rights and fighting for this change. By using the theories of socialist feminists, especially the theory of mutual reinforcement of capitalism and patriarchy from Hartman and Eisenstein, as well as Sharabi's theories and his concept of new masculinity, to describe the situation of structural changes in the Kurdistan region and the role and position of women. These changes are discussed. Due to the fact that a lot of research has been done on the role and position of women in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan, but less has been done on their role and position in the structural changes of [Iraqi Kurdistan] society. This also forced us to an aspect of the research that used the narrative of activists, especially those who are involved with women's issues and problems every day, as a basis for analysis, so that we can, in addition to examining the role and position of women in the past structural changes. Let's look at the current situation of Iraq and Kurdistan, which is the most important reason and innovative aspect of the research. In the Kurdistan region, this process has gained more momentum and women have a role and place in government and administrative positions. Also, despite the multitude of parties and political spectrums, they have had a high political participation after these structural changes in 2005 AD. In the previous law, the percentage of women was set at 7% in the first session of the parliament in 1992, and in the second session of the parliament, the participation rate of women increased to 25% in 1992 and in the third session of the parliament.</p> <p>Methodology Considering the discussions about the qualitative method and also adopting a suitable method to advance the work, the narrative analysis method (narrative method) has been used as the method of doing the work. According to the goals and method of doing the work, the "semi-structured" interview tool and strategy was used. The participants are 18 activists of women's associations in the Kurdistan region, especially in the cities of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk and Halabja, in twenty women's associations, who were interviewed in 2022 and 2023, with an average interview time of 60 minutes. The technique of "thematic analysis" is</p>

used to analyze the interviews. Also, the "thematic analysis" technique is used to analyze the interviews. This technique is a process for analyzing textual data and transforms scattered and diverse data into rich and detailed data that are presented and explained in the form of concepts and themes based on the topics and questions raised.

Results

The results were categorized and analyzed in 6 secondary themes of political parties and shaping women's demands, dominance of patriarchal culture, commodification of women, participation and possession of managerial and political positions, and the dual role of education and media. Interviewees and research results indicate the beginning of structural changes since the 90s, especially for women in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. The uprising of the Kurdish nation, which led to the formation of the Kurdistan regional government, was the beginning of the growth and expansion of associations and, at the same time, the prominence of women's issues. In this period, women entered the political and legislative arenas, the associations started to fight against the patriarchal and patriarchal traditional culture. Based on the findings, at the same time, the struggle to eradicate traditional problems such as circumcision, forced marriage, shirbaha, etc., could help the process of structural changes. The interviewees emphasized on the changes in their role and position due to changes in laws, holding managerial and political positions, education and the positive role of the media, and the process of structural changes regarding their role and position has been transformed with these cases. Despite this, the interviewees who emphasize the weak changes in the role and position of women in Iraqi Kurdistan. With regard to government changes, they discussed the stabilization of the political situation, women's social participation, legal changes, the role of the media, and education to improve the role and status of women.

Conclusion

The results showed that changes in the social structure took place after 1991 AD, that is, when Kurdistan region was formed, and as a result, the role and status of women has also changed. From that time until now, political parties have given shape to women's demands and associations and have looked at women's issues within the framework of party goals. Despite this, women have been able to gain their position in this structure by participating and occupying managerial and political positions, and in this, the role of education and media as well as associations has been important and influential. Women's associations, as one of the most important structural changes, and active women themselves as agents of change, have started to approve fair laws, eradicate old social and cultural patterns, and spread awareness, support, and represent women's problems and challenges. And they have been able to improve the role and position of women both at the level of female agency and at the level of structural relations.

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