

The Problematic of Women's Empowerment from a Political Perspective in Algerian Society

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ABSTRACT

Through this research paper, we aim to shed light on the problematic of women's empowerment from a political perspective within Algerian society. The importance of this topic stems primarily from the premise that women are active and vital members of any society. Consequently, it is necessary to involve them in the local development process. Perhaps one of the most prominent mechanisms contributing to this is the process of empowering women in the political sphere by involving them in decision-making processes.

Regarding the findings of our research paper, they are evident in several indicators. Chiefly among them is that the political empowerment of women is, in fact, a mechanism that contributes in one way or another to the actual development process within Algerian society, despite the existence of certain obstacles and challenges that hinder this.

Keywords: Empowerment; Women's empowerment; Women's political empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is characterized by numerous and diverse changes that necessitate the involvement of all segments of society to face the resulting challenges. These changes have encompassed various fields- cultural, economic, social, and even political. Each of these domains requires a form of empowerment for individuals, both men and women, to confront these challenges. Algeria, in turn, has worked to provide opportunities for women's empowerment across multiple fields. In our study, we will focus on a crucial and sensitive area regarding the political empowerment of women. Although Algeria has made significant efforts to achieve a substantial degree of women's political empowerment by joining numerous organizations and ratifying various international and national agreements, this matter continues to raise many questions and problematics. Based on this, our study seeks to investigate the problematic of women's political empowerment in Algerian society. In our intervention, we will address several elements that we believe will facilitate an understanding of this topic, structured as follows:

1. Concepts of the study.
2. Fields of women's empowerment.
3. Obstacles to women's empowerment.
4. Requirements and conditions for achieving women's political empowerment in general.
5. Mechanisms of women's political empowerment in Algeria.
6. Challenges of women's political empowerment in Algeria

1. Concepts of the Study

1.1 Concept of Empowerment

Linguistically: It derives from the Arabic verb *Makkana* (to empower/ enable), which implies stability, firmness, high status, and capability. As a verbal noun, empowerment carries the meaning of affirmation to encompass deeply rooted stability.

Terminologically: Empowerment represents the elimination of various stereotypical processes and behaviours in society and institutions that seek to stereotype women and marginalized groups by placing them in lower ranks. It also involves enhancing the capacity of individuals and groups to make purposeful choices, and transforming these choices into practical actions to achieve various desired outcomes and goals. (Achi, 2020, pp. 34-35).

1.2 Concept of Women's Empowerment

It refers to "developing and encouraging women by raising their educational level, providing them with opportunities to work in various fields, equipping them with the necessary education and vocational training, and striving to confront and mitigate the obstacles that hinder their effective participation in development." (Aissaoui & Rekrout, 2021, p. 231)

Furthermore, women's empowerment is considered a "comprehensive process that begins with a woman's self-awareness and her sense of control over her life within her environment, in addition to her ability to make decisions. On a collective level, it signifies women's ability to participate in the development process, materializing societal awareness of their individual or collective rights, and their capacity to join pressure groups that contribute to defending them." (Salami, 2016, p. 185)

Additionally, women's empowerment aims to enhance women's authority in economic, social, and political spheres. This can be achieved by creating more opportunities for women to acquire further assets and capabilities, enabling them to make diverse choices. (Ben Noui, 2019, p. 59)

Women's empowerment also denotes their ability to be active members in the political, economic, and social spheres, and their role in building and developing society.

In Islamic Jurisprudence, the concept of women's empowerment means acknowledging women's rights, lifting injustices against them, and fostering their development, education, and qualification regarding their pivotal roles, accompanied by the application of the jurisprudence of necessity and need regarding their valued contribution to the reform of their society.

We also find that the concept of women's empowerment consists of several components:

Cognitive Component: Refers to a woman's understanding of her circumstances, her status, and the underlying reasons behind them at both the micro and macro levels of society.

Psychological Component: Involves the development of feelings regarding a woman's ability to act on personal and societal levels to improve her circumstances, and shaping perceptions toward her capacity to succeed in change efforts.

Economic Component: Requires a woman's ability to participate in productive activities that afford her a degree of financial independence. (Al-Enezi, 2025, p. 14)

Through our presentation of the concept of women's empowerment, we can point to some determinants that directly contribute to establishing this concept:

The Right to Choose: This requires the existence of alternatives that help women exercise genuine choice. Undoubtedly, not all choices are equal in their importance and impact on their lives. Strategic choices regarding people's lives are crucial and help shape secondary choices. This is translated by developmental programs that view the individual as possessing capabilities and choices enabling them to contribute to self and community development. This is based on how well projects meet their needs and their level of participation in identifying and evaluating implemented activities, which contributes to the capacity to participate in decision-making.

Self-Reliance: Meaning the possession of necessary skills that enable women to work and generate income.

Building Organizational and Collaborative Capacities: Since power is not given but taken, women must be mobilized and organized to empower them to confront gender-based inequalities. (Achi, 2020, pp. 35-36)

Accordingly, we conclude that women's empowerment is a strategy aimed at providing women with the opportunity to work in various fields and contribute to significant decisions within the society in which they live. This ensures that women are fully aware of all their diverse rights within society.

3.1 - Concept of Women's Political Empowerment:

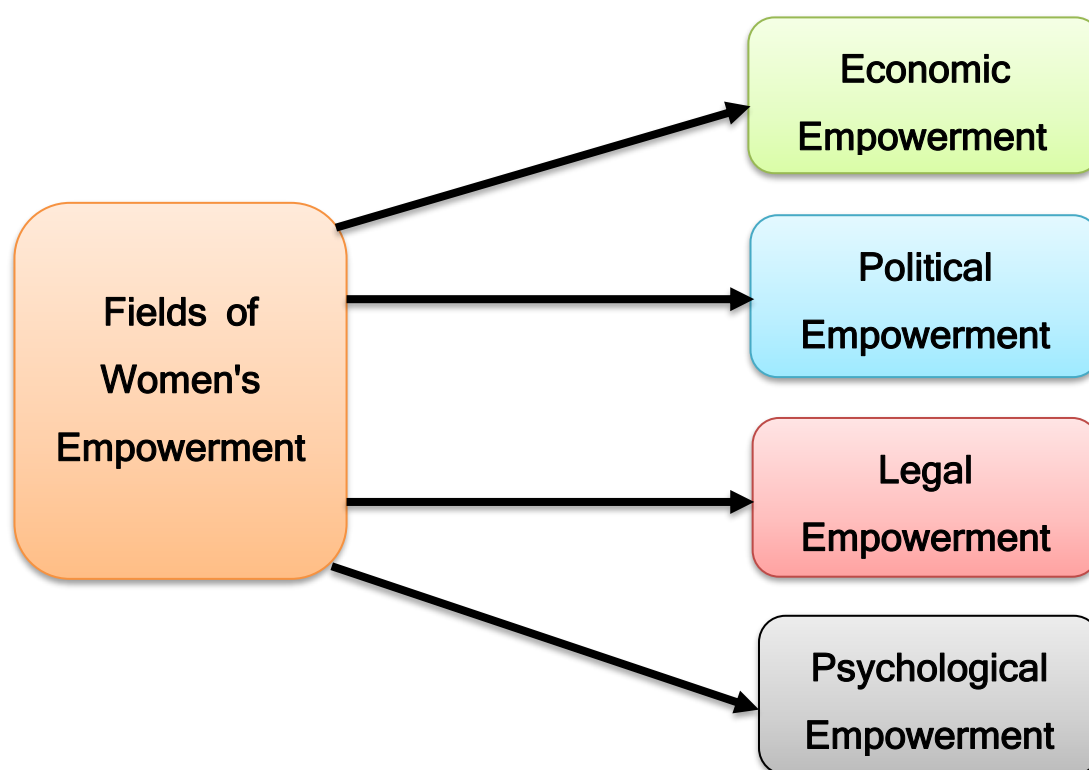
Saber Balloul defines the political empowerment of women as: "Empowering women with strength and capabilities to become a crucial element in bringing about the process of change, while enhancing women's political participation."

Furthermore, some define women's political empowerment as "a dynamic process that is influenced by and influences what exists in society, particularly given the presence of a set of conditions, foremost among them being the establishment of awareness regarding the importance and necessity of women's political empowerment." Thus, the political empowerment of women means involving women in the entirety of processes that contribute to the development of society. This is achieved by activating their role in all fields, adopting strategies that contribute to preserving women's rights, and working to integrate them into the political sphere. It also entails granting them the opportunity to achieve and build themselves and their status in various positions, including decision-making positions. (Mansouri, 2018, pp. 103-104)

2 - Fields of Women's Empowerment:

Women's empowerment encompasses several fields, structured as follows:

Figure No. (01): Illustrates the main fields of women's empowerment.



Source: prepared by the researcher.

2.1 - Women's Economic Empowerment: This empowerment provides women with the ability to control family resources and sources of income, in addition to various economic aspects such as market access. It also involves providing employment opportunities equal to those of men, facilitating access to important economic positions, ensuring their participation in economic decision-making, and enhancing their financial independence.

2.2 - Women's Political Empowerment: This is achieved through women's engagement in the political system after acquiring a set of political knowledge. This is primarily embodied in the right to vote and run for election, in addition to joining political parties.

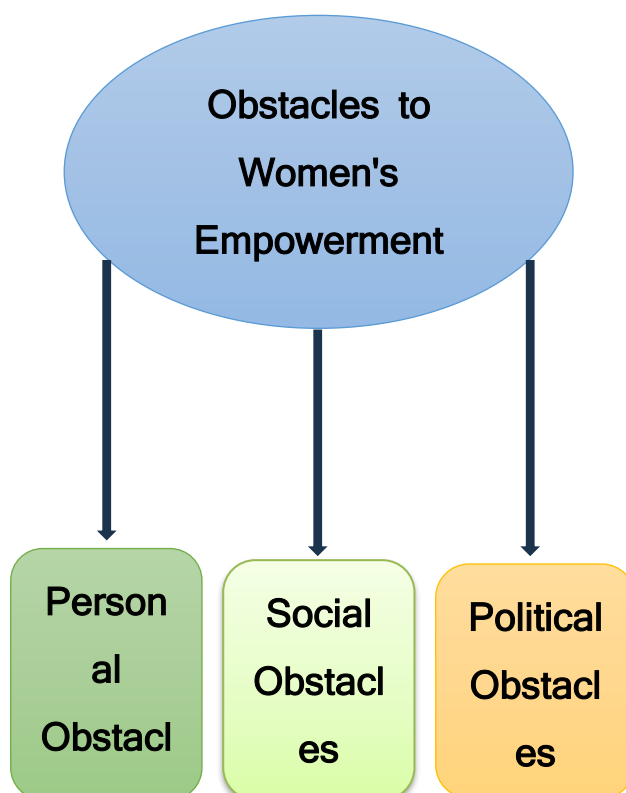
2.3 - Women's Legal Empowerment: This empowerment enables women to know the entirety of their legal rights and to obtain the societal support that helps them exercise these rights. This is done through rights awareness campaigns, mobilizing society to support them, enacting laws that bolster and defend women's rights, and rectifying any violation of rights by resorting to the judicial system.

2.4 - Women's Psychological Empowerment: Psychological empowerment, quite simply, achieves psychological comfort for women, alongside self-respect and the enhancement of self-efficacy. It also involves societal awareness of the issues that concern them across various fields, enabling women to reach a stage called the phase of integration and entitlement within society. (Khaled Shaaban & Khairallah Khalaf, 2023, p. 1187)

3 - OBSTACLES TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:

The process of women's empowerment faces several obstacles, structured as follows:

Figure No. (02): Illustrates the most prominent obstacles to women's empowerment.



Source: Prepared by the researcher.

3.1 - Personal Obstacles:

These obstacles relate primarily to a woman's personality, psychology, capabilities, and educational qualifications, which hinder her from occupying leadership positions. As is known, the human performance of any individual encompasses the sum of knowledge and skills they form or develop concerning their work, while desire refers to the level of motivation an individual holds toward their work. Therefore, the most difficult challenge a woman faces is a feeling of inadequacy, coupled with weak self-confidence and a reluctance to perform her role. This negatively affects her behaviour, leading her to form a self-perception that she is unworthy of leadership work and unfit for such a position, in addition to the fear of bearing such responsibilities. (Bekakra, 2019, p. 43)

3.2 - Social Obstacles:

These obstacles relate to the society's culture and its perception of women, how they are raised, and prepared to carry out their overall responsibilities. They are tied to the social environment's view of women working and assuming leadership positions, which prevents women from exercising leadership. Furthermore, inherited customs and traditions may restrict a woman's role solely to being a housewife and child-rearer, thereby considering her unequal to men in capabilities- whether mental, physical, or emotional. Many parents used to believe that educating males was more important and a better investment than educating females. (Bekakra, 2019, p. 42)

3.3 - Political Obstacles:

Despite declarations on the necessity of legal and political equality between men and women, a significant differentiation and disparity persist. This disparity stems from tribal governance and prejudices regarding the lack

or absence of necessary capabilities for women to assume high-ranking political and administrative positions. Furthermore, traditions and customs sometimes forbid women from competing with men, especially under strict societal constraints that, as previously mentioned, prevent women from holding positions headed by men. This also leads to their reluctance to engage in political participation, translating into a lack of political enthusiasm—particularly since there is sometimes a lack of conviction regarding women's roles among the leaders and heads of political parties. (Boujehifa & Qidari, 2022, p. 501)

4 - REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS FOR ACHIEVING WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:

Through our research on this topic, we emphasize that there are many conditions related to women's participation in the political sphere. Accordingly, international law has affirmed that it is the duty of states towards their individuals and citizens to guarantee women's right to exercise all their rights equally with men, without disparity or any form of discrimination, regardless of its shape, type, or source. These conditions include:

The right to equality and non-discrimination.

The right to participate in public and political life.

The right to manage public affairs.

We also find other principles that can serve as an important pillar in effectively realizing the process of women's political empowerment on the ground. Among these principles, we mention the following:

Establishing high-level institutional leadership aimed at gender equality.

Integrating women as a crucial element in the development process.

The necessity of women entering the economic field and approaching decision-making centres.

Establishing bodies dedicated to addressing women's issues.

Improving the implementation mechanisms for women's fundamental rights.

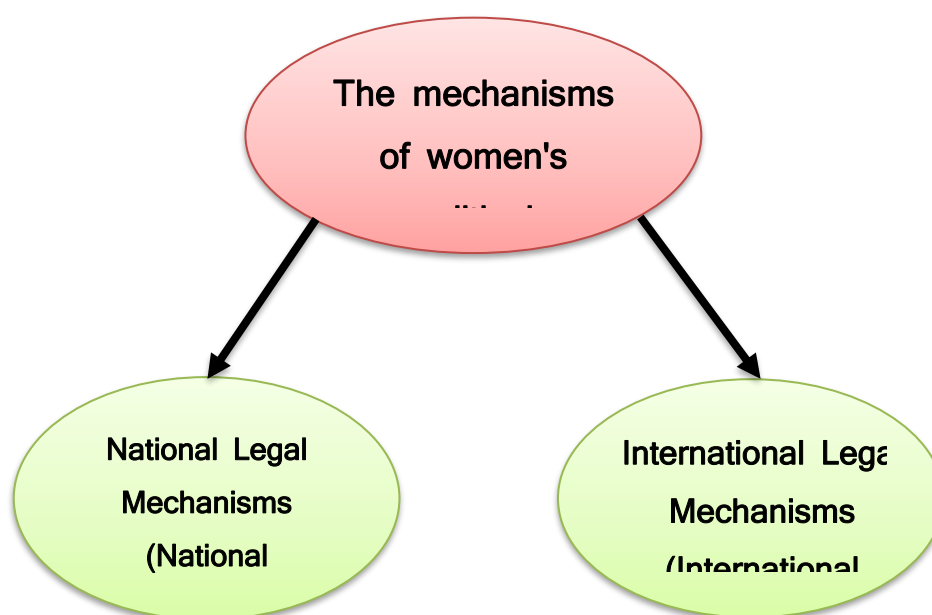
Respecting human rights and human freedoms for all without discrimination based on sex, language, or religion, without differentiating between men and women, and actively observing these rights and freedoms.

Individuals' and states' understanding and comprehension of the most prominent agreements concluded regarding women's participation in political life. (Malki, 2017, pp. 43-44)

5 - MECHANISMS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN ALGERIA:

Women's political empowerment in Algeria relies on two sets of mechanisms: international and national. These mechanisms are explained as follows:

Figure No. (03): Illustrates the mechanisms of women's political empowerment in Algeria.



Source: Prepared by the researcher.

The Algerian state has expressed its will to promote the status of women and improve their rights, in addition to elevating their position across all fields and levels, especially politically. This is clearly embodied through its ratification and signing of numerous international conventions and covenants, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. As for the internal efforts undertaken by the Algerian state aimed at advancing the future of women, they have materialized through the issuance of an arsenal of legislation, which is as follows:

5.1 - International Legal Mechanisms (International Legislations):

Algeria's ratification of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in March 2004.

Algeria's ratification of the international convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value in 1969.

Algeria's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, submitting two reports: the first in 1999 and the second in 2005. (Azeroual, 2016, p. 31)

5.2 - National Legal Mechanisms (National Legislations):

When discussing internal legal mechanisms related to women's political empowerment, we can acknowledge that they have been characterized by several positive features. This applies to both the single-party era and its associated legislation (the National Charters, the Tripoli Program of 1962, the Algiers Charter of 1964, the 1976 Charter, and the 1986 Charter), as well as the era of multi-party politics and political openness through enacted laws (the 1989 Constitution, Electoral Law No. 17-91, Family Code No. 05-02, Nationality Law No. 01-05, the Labour Law, and Law No. 03-12 relating to expanding women's representation in elected assemblies).

The entirety of this legislation expresses the following:

The authority in Algeria granted women the right to vote in elections in 1962.

All citizens are equal before the law, and no discrimination of any kind shall be shown.

Working to ensure the equality of all male and female citizens in rights and duties by removing all obstacles that hinder the effective participation of everyone in political, economic, and social life.

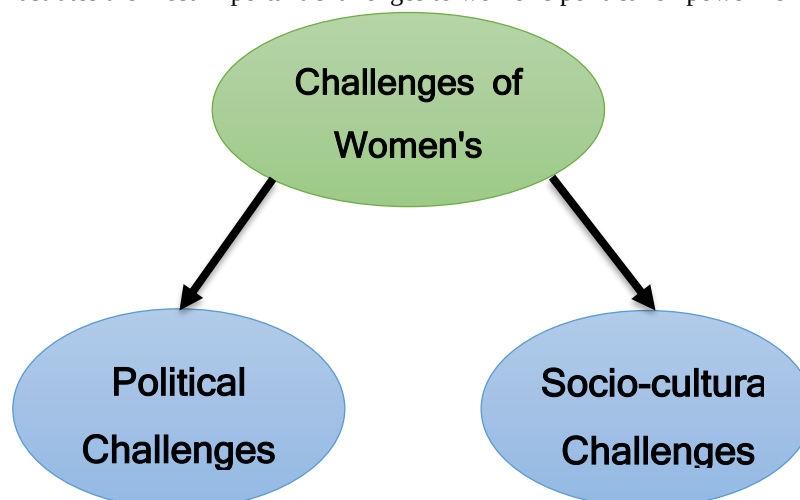
The equality of all citizens in assuming state functions and positions, based on the conditions determined by the law.

Furthermore, the Algerian legislator has attempted to politically empower Algerian women through the establishment of entities such as the Ministry in charge of Family and Women's Affairs in 2002, the National Committee for Expanding Women's Political Participation in 2009, the Women and Political Participation Forum, the strategy to combat gender-based violence, and the Algerian National Council for Family and Women. All these bodies were created for the purpose of empowering women politically. (Azeroual, 2016, p. 32)

6 - Challenges of Women's Political Empowerment in Algeria:

The political empowerment of women faces many challenges, which we have summarized into two main elements: socio-cultural challenges and political challenges. A brief explanation of them is provided below:

Figure No. (04): Illustrates the most important challenges to women's political empowerment in Algeria.



Source: Prepared by the researcher.

6.1 - Socio-cultural Challenges:

These challenges are fundamentally tied to the religious factor, regarding which many trends have emerged, ranging between supporters and opponents of women's political work, especially concerning parliamentary assemblies. This opposing group relies on an interpretation of Islamic law arguing that men uniquely possess the physical and mental capacities that enable them to organize and divide labour.

We also find that social heritage plays a role in hindering women's political empowerment through family customs that are sometimes intertwined with patriarchy (masculinity). These customs prefer to support and encourage a male candidate over a female one, regardless of eligibility and capabilities, operating under the slogan that a man competing against a man is acceptable, whereas a woman competing against a man is impossible. If a woman does compete against him, it is considered a transgression and a diminishment of his value. It can be said that this issue acts as a direct challenge and obstacle to women's empowerment and political participation.

6.2 - Political Challenges:

These challenges directly encompass the public policymaking process, which we find remains a male monopoly, in addition to the absence of a comprehensive political empowerment strategy. We observe a significant gap between the legal stipulations regarding gender equality and political power, where women's practice and representation remain very weak. Algeria, like other Arab countries, suffers from severe restrictions on associations regardless of their orientations and interests, particularly women's associations. This serves as an obstacle hindering the potential for women's empowerment in Algeria. (Farah, 2021, pp. 96-97)

There are other challenges facing women's political empowerment, including, for example, the following:

The nature of political activity in some parties, which is not bound by a specific temporal and spatial framework, making it incompatible with women's circumstances. For instance, party meetings might be held at late hours or in places where it is difficult for women to be present.

The multitude of family tasks and obligations for women compared to men, which limits the effectiveness of their participation in activities and events of a political nature, even if they are present.

Furthermore, we find that the fundamental idea limiting women's political empowerment in Algeria is that the world of politics is an exclusive world for men. Therefore, women clash with a political will controlled by men. (Omair, 2021, p. 325)

CONCLUSION:

We conclude at the end of our intervention that the process of women's empowerment in the political sphere, despite the changes and developments witnessed in the Algerian political arena, remains one of the most critical areas facing numerous obstacles and challenges.

This is despite Algeria having undertaken several reforms, most importantly the necessity for the Algerian state to work on promoting women's political rights to increase their chances of presence and participation in the political field and decision-making centres.

Therefore, we recommend and emphasize the necessity of expanding women's political participation at all levels. As mentioned, this should be achieved through their official and legal integration and involvement to ultimately reach the process of women's empowerment in the political sphere- even if this, in reality, remains relative due to the challenges we have highlighted in our research paper.

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