



The Political Participation of Algerian Women: Between the Reality of Political Empowerment in Response to International Requirements and the Hope for Effective Membership in Elected Councils



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Leila Benterki *

Laboratory of Applied Legal Studies, Faculty of law, University of Constantine 1, Algeria, Benterki.leila@umc.edu.dz.

Abstract

Recent years have seen an increasing interest in human rights, especially women's rights, as they play a significant role in the field of social development, representing half of society. The actual start of their involvement in political action was through political participation in elected councils. This was enshrined by the Algerian legislator in successive legislations, where the focus shifted from a male representation system to the idea of promoting women's rights after joining international treaties. Subsequently, the principle of equality in rights was adopted. The 1996 Constitution, amended in 2008, aimed to remove obstacles to women's participation in the political field through Article 31, which introduced a quota system. This was reinforced by the 2016 Constitution and the Organic Law 12/03, which specified the methods for expanding women's representation in elected councils by imposing a quota system and gender parity in political life, as well as the constitutional amendment of 2020.

Keywords

Women;
political empowerment ;
participation ;
politics ;
councils.

الكلمات المفتاحية

مرأة ؛
تمكين سياسي ؛
مشاركة ؛
سياسة ؛
مجالس .

المشاركة السياسية للمرأة الجزائرية: بين واقع التمكين السياسي استجابة للمتطلبات الدولية وأمل فعالية العضوية في المجالس المنتخبة

ملخص

شهدت السنوات الأخيرة تزايد الاهتمام بحقوق الإنسان وخاصة حقوق المرأة لكونها أحد الفواعل الهامة مجال التنمية الاجتماعية كونها تمثل نصف المجتمع، وجسدت الانطلاقة الفعلية لها في العمل السياسي عن طريق المشاركة السياسية في المجالس المنتخبة، وهذا ما كرسه المشرع الجزائري في تشريعاته المتعاقبة حيث تحولت الوجهة من نظام التمثيل الذكوري إلى فكرة ترقية حقوق المرأة بعد الانضمام إلى المعاهدات الدولية، ثم اعتمد مبدأ المساواة في الحقوق، فجاء دستور 1996 المعدل في 2008 لإزالة ما يعيق مشاركة المرأة في المجال السياسي من خلال المادة 31 منه حيث فرض نظام الكوطة، ثم أكد ذلك دستور 2016 وكذا القانون العضوي 03/12 المحدد لكيفيات توسيع حظوظ تمثيل المرأة في المجالس المنتخبة الذي فرض نظام الكوطة والتناصف في ممارسة الحياة السياسية ، وكذلك التعديل الدستوري 2020.

* Corresponding author. E-mail: Benterki.leila@umc.edu.dz.

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I- Introduction:

There are various trends in women's work, which have gone through two phases: a phase of women remaining at home and the formation of the domestic feminist movement, specifically in the 19th century, based on the belief that women are naturally more suited to domestic life than men and that "keeping her away from the corrupt world of commerce and industry contributes to her moral elevation."

However, some Western views, including those of "Friedan," believed that women working at home would not feel fulfilled, thereby advocating for the completion of higher education and the pursuit of a successful professional future and finding their place in the public sphere, marking the beginning of the second phase of women's work. It has happened that women have come to dominate in significant proportions in some jobs, necessitating their entry into political work to represent a large segment of working women (Kamal, p. 64).

Political development is based on the spirit of citizenship, loyalty, and overall political participation. The issue of political participation is considered one of the most sensitive topics in our current time, especially in Arab countries. Political and union participation plays significant and important roles in improving and developing the state, the individual, and society socially, politically, and even culturally. However, there is a reluctance, especially among women in a 100% male-dominated society in developing countries.

Study problem:

The problem of this study can be formulated in the following main question:

What is the nature of women's rights to political and union participation? And what are the reasons for their reluctance to engage in political work, and how does this affect their rights?

1. The Legal Framework for the Political Participation of Algerian Women

Political participation plays a crucial role in consolidating democracy, as the degree of a country's advancement is measured by the extent to which it embodies its citizens' political participation in political decision-making processes, the organization of state apparatuses, and determining the type of governance system. This is achieved through the expression of their political opinions at all levels. It's observed that Algeria has made significant strides in this field since adopting the idea of party pluralism, especially after international organizations turned their attention to advocating for gender equality and enhancing women's integration into the political arena. The Algerian legislator has enshrined this in various national legislations. In this section, we will clarify the concept of women's political participation and the legal foundation of this idea.

1.1 The Concept of Women's Political Participation

Several determinants influence the understanding of women's status in society and the evaluation of their activity at all levels, the most important of which are social upbringing, education pattern, and the social status of the family in which they are raised. The Algerian Constitution has enshrined the principle of equality between men and women so that the latter do not face legislative barriers that hinder their movement in practical life. To clarify the theoretical framework of women's political participation as a human activity related to social behavior practiced by women in the state, we will present a series of definitions and then explain the importance of this activity and its distinctive characteristics.

1.1.1 Definition of Women's Political Participation

Political participation is generally defined as "the role of citizens in participating in public life and in determining the policies to be implemented at the local and national political system levels. The level and degree of participation range on a spectrum starting from voting, which is the most common activity practiced by the public, to participating in elections, contacting officials, engaging in party, cooperative, interest, or union activities, and expressing opinions in referendums or popular objections or proposals. It also includes the right of voters to dismiss a deputy or dissolve the parliamentary body (Al-Sawani, 2001, pp. 67-68)."

Samuel Huntington defined it as "individual activities aimed at influencing governmental decision-making, whether individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, seasonal or continuous, peaceful or violent, effective or ineffective, legitimate or illegitimate. (Mohamed, 2015, p. 25)"

It is also defined as "an individual's eagerness to play a positive role in political life through voluntary exercise of the right to vote or candidacy for elected bodies, discussing political issues with others, or joining intermediary organizations (Al-Baz, 2002, p. 18)."

It is described as "political behavior voluntarily practiced by citizens to contribute to public policy-making and decision-making at all levels, choosing ruling elites in various positions, monitoring government performance, and expressing opinions in various communication means about issues that impose themselves on the public opinion agenda (Ghaffar, 2009, p. 58)."

Through these definitions, it is clear that political participation represents a social behavior that involves the transformation of a person from a passive, non-participating citizen in the governance system to a positive citizen expressing opinions on all matters. It encompasses everything a citizen does related to practicing political life in their country.

Political participation can be direct, through voting and candidacy in elections, party membership, and holding political positions, or indirect, such as discussing political matters, influencing public opinion, or spreading political awareness and knowledge. These activities are permitted for everyone and are not restricted to a specific gender or category but only require reaching the legal age of majority, nationality, and registration with the relevant authorities, in addition to having some political awareness, especially if the person is involved in political life.

It is notable that most jurisprudential trends perceive political participation as a concept stemming from Western liberal thought. However, in reality, its roots are derived from Islamic religion, as evidenced by numerous Quranic verses devoted to the idea of consultation (Shura) at all levels of the state. This is exemplified by the verse: " So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]." (Surah Al-Imran, 3:159)

Additionally, the Quran states: "And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend." (Surah Al-Imran, 3:159) This is in addition to what is mentioned in the honorable Prophetic Hadith.

Thus, Islam has made caring for public affairs, engaging in the nation's issues, and intervening verbally and physically to rectify and reform society's affairs a collective and social duty, falling under the mandate of commanding good and forbidding evil, a collective obligation for which the entire nation is accountable if neglected (Al-Baz, 2002, p. 23).

In reality, several factors affect the effectiveness of a citizen's political participation, whether male or female. The most important of these is the political culture derived from the level of awareness and political knowledge in society, social upbringing through which an individual becomes acquainted with the political system and internalizes political values and concepts from the social environment, in addition to the impact of economic development on an individual's life by securing the necessary means for a decent life, allowing citizens to participate in the decision-making process.

1.1.2 The Importance of Women's Political Participation

As previously mentioned, political participation is an activity or behavior carried out by a citizen, whether male or female, either spontaneously or may be politicized, i.e., directed by certain parties to influence the direction of governmental decisions and the state's public policy. The importance of political participation can be divided into three aspects:

- **Importance for Individuals:** Political participation is one of the simplest rights of a citizen that provides the opportunity to express their opinion on the political, social, and economic affairs of life to achieve the goals of comprehensive development. Thus, the citizen feels a sense of responsibility and realizes the integration of public and private interests. It makes women more aware of their roles, opening the door to positive cooperation between them and men in building formal and civil institutions and bridging the gap between the grassroots and various state institutions (Oushi & Oushi, 2015, p. 102).
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- **Importance for Official Bodies in the State:** Political participation represents a cornerstone in democratic systems as it indicates popular support for influential government leadership in managing and directing political work. It forms a positive value in contemporary political systems as one of the elements of interaction in the

institutional field through the practice of every citizen's right to express their opinion objectively and expand the scope of political work to include all segments of society (Khedrani, 2010, pp. 342-343).

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- **Importance for Society:** Political participation is considered a civilized method for the masses to interact and an ideal way to bring about new changes, avoid political conflicts, and address issues to create social integration and achieve national integration among society's categories. It also leads to contributing to making political decisions in the state and influencing the course of political life, in addition to contributing to the development of developmental programs by various segments of society, thereby maintaining political and security stability in society and providing equal opportunities for individuals to shape the governance form and participate in determining their state's destiny and political conditions as they wish (Mohamed, 2015, p. 35).

1.1.3 Characteristics of Women's Political Participation

Women's political participation is characterized by a set of general characteristics that can be summarized as follows (Al-Aboudi, 2015, pp. 59-60):

- It is a comprehensive and integrated social process, a voluntary behavior, and a deliberate activity in which individuals participate in decision-making at every stage of development, thereby feeling social responsibility towards issues and goals related to the state.
- It is a positive and realistic acquired social behavior that translates into actual, practical actions closely related between the masses and state institutions, encompassing all activities of developmental life, whether economic, social, or political.
- Political participation is both a right and a duty at the same time. Every person has the right to discuss their country's issues, elect their representatives, or run for office if they see it as beneficial. The duty is that every citizen, whether male or female, is bound by social obligations and responsibilities towards their society. It is not confined to a specific place but extends to the collective thought of the masses for their participation in a common destiny.
- Political participation is both a goal and a means at the same time. It is a goal because political life necessitates the participation of the masses in social responsibility, and it is a means to empower citizens to play a pivotal role in advancing and elevating society.

1.2 The Legal Foundation for the Political Participation of Algerian Women

Discussing the topic of Algerian women's participation in political work necessarily involves referring to the legal references supporting women's engagement in political activities. This is in the context of efforts made by members of the international community to promote women's rights in all fields, including their integration into the political arena. Algeria has joined various such conventions and embodied this in the successive legislations it has enacted, forming a solid base to support this crucial initiative.

1.2.1 International Legislative Frameworks for Women's Political Participation

Due to the prevalence of dictatorships and the miserable conditions they left in various countries worldwide, members of the international community have given significant importance to the idea of political participation in general, and women's political participation in particular. It has been organized in various declarations, conventions, and international documents:

A. United Nations Charter, 1945

Women's rights received special attention at the international level, especially the idea of their political participation to involve them in political life and eliminate all forms of discrimination between them and men in exercising rights. The United Nations Charter, as the most important international document, states in its preamble, "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small...". Article 8 of the Charter states, "The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs" (UN, 2018). Article 55(c) of the Charter states, "To promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as

to race, sex, language, or religion, and without distinction as to men and women, ensuring these rights and freedoms actually" (UN, 2018). These articles make it clear that the United Nations advocates for equality in enjoying rights without discrimination among individuals based on race, sex, religion, or language in exercising their rights and fulfilling their obligations in all areas of life.

B. United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 1947

The General Assembly of the United Nations established the Commission on the Status of Women to study the condition of women worldwide and to reach recommendations for their advancement at the global level and to develop policies to confront any form of discrimination, considered a violation of the principle of equal rights and an infringement on globally consecrated human dignity (Ghaffar, 2009, p. 61). It issued a recommendation that women should constitute a minimum of 30% of decision-making positions at the national level.

C. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

The Declaration is considered the most important document of international legitimacy, stating the principal norms governing the relationship between states and their citizens. Article 2 of the Declaration states, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, without any distinction between men and women". Article 21 states that everyone, women and men, have the right to participate in their country's governance (UN, 2018).

D. Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1952:

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations and entered into force two years later in 1954, its first article stipulates that women enjoy the right to vote on equal terms with men, as well as the right to be eligible for election to elected bodies according to the national legislation of their countries, and affirms the right of women to hold public office without any discrimination between them and men (Ghaffar, 2009, p. 62).

E. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966:

This Covenant was established to combat forms of discrimination and to establish principles of justice and equality. Article 2 states, "(1. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. 2. Where not already provided for by existing legislative or other measures, each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take the necessary steps, in accordance with its constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Covenant, to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the present Covenant) (UN, 2018)."

Article 3 of the Covenant ensures the equal right of men and women to enjoy all civil and political rights, detailed in Article 25 as areas where discrimination is not allowed:

- Participation in public affairs.
- The right to vote and to be elected.
- The possibility to hold public office in the country.

F. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979

This Convention came into effect in 1981 and is one of the most important conventions dedicated to women's rights, containing 30 articles focused on equality between men and women. Article 1 defines discrimination and condemns all forms of discrimination, requiring states to enshrine equality in their domestic legislation and take all necessary measures to actualize it (UN, 2018):

- In the processes of candidacy and voting.
- In formulating and implementing government policy.
- In participation in non-governmental organizations and associations.

G. A series of other documents from 1985 to 2000

During this period, several documents calling for respect for women's rights were issued. One of the most important is the Women's Decade declared by the United Nations from 1976 to 1985, focusing on women's rights and advocating for their causes, starting with the Mexico Conference under the motto (Equality - Development - Peace). The Nairobi Conference in 1985 aimed to activate women's participation in public and political life. The Inter-Parliamentary Union focused on the phenomenon of women's weak political participation, which was addressed at the Paris Conference in 1994, emphasizing the need to allocate seats for women in electoral districts. The Beijing Declaration in 1995 called for the improvement of women's conditions at all levels to activate their political participation, stressing a 30%

representation in decision-making positions by 2005 as a step towards achieving 50% in the future. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals document in 2000 is one of the indicators for promoting equality between women and men in political life (Ghaffar, 2009, pp. 63-64).

1.2.2 National Legislative Frameworks for the Political Participation of Algerian Women

Like other countries, Algeria has joined most of the aforementioned conventions and has sought to embody them in its national legislations. Below, we will take a look at the most important constitutions of Algeria and then highlight Organic Law 12/03 related to the methods of expanding women's representation in elected councils.

A. Key Constitutions of the Algerian Republic:

We will discuss the stance from the 1996 Constitution up to the current 2016 Constitution.

- **The Constitutional Amendment of November 28, 1996:** It also enshrined the necessity of equality between citizens, men, and women, in the right to healthcare, education, employment, union rights, and the right to strike, in addition to non-discrimination in exercising political rights through Articles 29, 31, and 32 (Presidential Decree No. 96/438, 1996).

The opportunities for Algerian women were expanded in the 2008 constitutional amendment, where the president established a national committee tasked with preparing Organic Law 12/03, which allows the application of Article 31, which stipulates the promotion of women's political rights and enhances their chances in elected councils. This indeed resulted in the actual issuance of this law, which led to the transition to a quota system and then to parity in occupying seats in elected councils (Law No. 02/03, 2008).

- **The Constitutional Amendment of March 6, 2016:** This amendment enshrined equality in enjoying rights as stated in Article 34, "The institutions aim to guarantee equality of all citizens, men, and women, in rights and duties by removing obstacles that hinder the development of the human personality and prevent the full participation of all in political, economic, social, and cultural life." It maintained Article 35 as it was in the 2008 amendment, while Article 36 stipulates, "The state works to promote parity between men and women in the employment market. The state encourages the promotion of women to positions of responsibility in public bodies and institutions at all levels" (Law No. 16/01, 2016).

B. What Organic Law 12/03 related to the methods of expanding women's representation in elected councils brings

The Algerian legislator embodied what came in the 2008 Constitution in Article 35 by issuing Organic Law No. 12/03 dated January 12, 2012, which required that the candidacy declaration must indicate the gender of the candidate, and referred to the rejection of lists whose nominations do not comply with what came in Article 02 related to the process of distributing seats in various elected councils as follows (Organic Law 12/03, 2012):

In the National People's Assembly elections:

- 20% when the number of seats equals four (4).
- 30% when the number of seats equals or exceeds five (5).
- 35% when the number of seats equals or exceeds fourteen (14).
- 40% when the number of seats equals or exceeds thirty-two (32).
- 50% for seats of the national community abroad.

In the elections of the Provincial People's Assemblies:

- 30% when the number of seats is 35, 39, 43, and 47 seats.
- 35% when the number of seats ranges from 51 to 55 seats.

In the elections of the Municipal People's Assemblies:

- 30% in the Municipal People's Assemblies located in district capitals and municipalities with a population exceeding twenty thousand (20,000) people.

The distribution of seats among the lists is based on the number of votes each list receives, and the percentages mentioned in Article 02 are mandatorily allocated to female candidates according to their order in the winning lists. The legislator granted a period of one month preceding the election date for the nomination lists to comply with the provisions of Article 02 mentioned above. Additionally, any candidate or elected official can be replaced by another candidate or elected official of the same gender in all cases of substitution provided for in the Organic Law related to the electoral system and the laws related to the municipality and the province.

2. The Reality of Women's Political and Union Participation in Work

The reality of political and trade union participation in women's work is to mention the importance of international conventions on women's political and trade union work, and then to try to study the reality of women's political and trade union work in Algeria

2.1 International Conventions on Women's Political and Union Work

The political right is guaranteed by most international conventions and covenants as one of the most important institutions with an effective role in development. This right has indeed been enshrined in various international texts and covenants, the most important of which are:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, in its Article 23/4 mentioned earlier, "The provisions of this Declaration are binding for all states," noting that this text only addresses the individual's right to establish and join unions but does not touch upon the principle of independence from the state or the freedom to withdraw from the union.
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.
- Followed by the European Convention on Human Rights in Rome, 1950.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which implicitly recognized this right in Article 1/1j by guaranteeing the right to freedom of choice of profession and work, the right to promotion, job security, and all benefits and conditions of service. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations in 1979, sometimes referred to as the "Women's Bill of Rights," is the only global convention addressing women's rights comprehensively. The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field." The Convention consists of 30 articles and is the only human rights treaty that emphasizes women's reproductive rights and recognizes culture and traditions as significant factors affecting the roles of men and women and family relations.
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) formally included the provision for the freedom to establish and join unions in 1948 as a foundation for improving working conditions, stability, and social peace. It strives for gender equality in all fields, especially in the union field, by organizing training programs specifically for women (Atallah, 2006, p. 163). Algeria joined the ILO immediately after independence on 19/10/1962.

With the evolving role of women in work and the increasing rate of their participation in all sectors, we note their long struggle for guarantees of practice. Therefore, women have participated and continue to participate in the emergence of parties and unions. It is worth mentioning the appearance of some women's unions in the world, especially in France, which was pioneering in recognizing the existence of unions or labor organizations under the law of March 21, 1884, where women fought for their ability to participate in work and unions, whether single or married, starting with the law of March 13, 1920, in Article L-411-5, "Every employee is free to join the professional union of their choice, regardless of their sex, age, or nationality." This was followed by a significant step in enshrining the principle of equality between men and women, including the right to work and the right to belong and lead unions.

2.2 Women's Political and Union Participation in Algeria

In Algeria, successive legislations have ensured equality between men and women in employment and in union freedom. This is reflected in the successive constitutions of the Algerian Republic, especially Article 23 of the 1989 Constitution, which explicitly stipulated the right to unionize, followed by several texts that formed the legal framework for union activity, most importantly Law 90-14, which regulated labor relations, prevention and collective disputes, the right to strike, and individual disputes at work, without discrimination between workers and employees in the public and private sectors.

It's noteworthy that the legal provisions in this regard do not discriminate between men and women, thus the right to unionize is guaranteed for both women and men equally, as inferred from the content of Article 2 of the law, which

states, "Workers and employees belonging to the same profession, branch, or sector may form a union." This granted Algerian working women complete freedom to establish a trade union organization or join one.

Despite this, women's representation remained weak and their numbers small compared to men. In this case, and according to the recommendations of the 10th Conference and previous conferences of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, which repeatedly emphasized the need to establish women's union branches within Arab unions, the General Union of Algerian Workers created women's branches within the union, marking the real and effective start of women's work (Hadjia, 2014, p. 154).

After the issuance of Law 90-14 and other laws that included the rights of workers in general and women in particular, independent unions emerged after the General Union of Algerian Workers had monopolized the union scene. However, it's observed that women are reluctant to engage in union work despite their presence in the workforce and in all sectors in significant percentages. Women's participation in leadership positions out of the total organizations is 31 percent of the total union members.

It is striking that many unions lack female presence entirely at their national offices, while women constitute the vast majority in the sectors in which these unions are active.

Despite the abundance of international efforts in the field of union work and the resulting conventions that support and affirm this principle and its incorporation into the domestic legislations of countries, all agree that the right to unionize is a fixed right for everyone, prohibiting any discrimination based on race, color, sex, or otherwise, indicating the principle of equality between male and female workers and prohibiting any discrimination between them. Despite this, women's representation in unions and parties remains low, despite possessing significant resources that increase their interest in union work, including:

- Education: Women have asserted themselves through their educational level, reflecting a degree of intellectual awareness and cultural capital that directly affects and influences their social and union awareness.
- The emergence of feminist movements worldwide defending women's interests and advocating for the expansion of their rights.
- Laws and constitutional texts: These affirm gender equality in terms of rights and duties, including professional, union, and even political rights, including Article 29 and 31 of the Constitution and Article 31 bis 3 of the 2008 Constitution, which states, "The state works to promote women's political rights by expanding their chances of representation in elected councils," marking the first reference to the quota system confirmed in the electoral law. A report on the progress of Arab women in Algeria highlighted the quota system or quota regime and the inclusion of female candidates in electoral lists, with the number of women's seats ranging from 20 to 50 percent, in addition to women leading four political parties in the country (Arab Women Organization, 2015). The constitutional amendment of 2020, under Presidential Decree 20-442, Article 68, states, "The state works to promote parity between men and women in the labor market. The state encourages the promotion of women to positions of responsibility in public bodies and institutions at all levels" (Presidential Decree 20-442, 2020).

2.3 Women's Reluctance to Engage in Political and Union Work

Despite a plethora of laws, Algerian women's representation in parties and unions has not kept pace with the achievements in the political arena. Notably, the significant presence in various local and national councils following the implementation of the law allocating a third of party and independent list seats to women since 2012 does not reflect a similar situation in the social and economic institutions for working women in Algeria. This raises questions about the reasons for their reluctance and its impact on rights and collective bargaining.

2.3.1 Reasons for Weak Political and Union Representation of Women

The reality of women's low participation in professional affairs and their representation in parties and professional unions can be attributed to several factors:

- Social and cultural upbringing, which views women as the weaker link, incapable of leadership or reform, linked also to the patriarchal heritage in Arab society, based on customs and traditions that question women's ability to bear responsibility despite their significant presence in the workforce, especially in our current era.
- The multiple roles of women inside and outside the home, which prevent them from practicing union and political rights in public life, considering union work as a luxury or a secondary activity for them.

- The composition of the workforce worldwide and the low educational level among many working women, which does not qualify them for leadership positions in many countries, especially in Algeria.
- Ignorance of political and union rights as stipulated by law in domestic legislations and international covenants, due to their preoccupation between work and home, divided between economic and social roles.
- Union work is a challenging subject requiring a unique membership, needing a personality capable of analyzing results, persuading, and engaging in labor disputes, leading women to conclude that the struggle for union rights is a demanding task requiring time, effort, and sacrifice that women cannot undertake, thus deemed exclusively a man's domain (Atallah, 2006, p. 17).
- Women's participation in professional and labor unions is confined to general membership without a strong union towards ascending to high-level union work.
- Men's own retreat from engaging in unions due to the new economic structure adopted by the state, which does not allow for worker coalitions that could produce awareness of the surroundings and shared interests (Zubeiri, 2017, p. 14).
- The increase in non-standard work, such as temporary or part-time work, which does not encourage women to join unions and, consequently, reach higher positions.

To overcome these reasons, Algerian women have attempted to surpass these causes. Thus, participants in the national seminar on working women and social dialogue under the banner of the independent union SNAPAP in Algiers on 18/02/2014 proposed the project "Charter of Working Women," aiming to enhance women's role in the professional field and encourage their participation in the developmental process.

The charter includes a section that allocates a minimum of 30 percent of jobs at all levels to women to promote their role in union organizations. It emphasizes the importance of extending the right to breastfeeding hours to two years, reducing working hours for parents caring for disabled children, and granting working women who foster a child the right to maternity leave based on documentation (Al-Arab newspaper, 2015).

2.3.2 The Impact of the Low Representation of Women in Politics and Unions

Despite the law guaranteeing gender equality in political and union work, the rate of participation or assumption of leadership positions remains low in all developed countries, not to mention Arab countries, including Algeria. This is due, as previously mentioned, to objective reasons at times, and to the social upbringing of women and their perception of themselves on one hand, and personal reasons related to the woman herself on the other, considering that union work is demanding and requires a lot of commitments that may conflict with her domestic responsibilities.

The weak representation of women in the union sector inevitably leads to a predominance of male representation, who often does not fully understand the requirements of women nor defends their rights, especially during negotiations and the drafting of collective agreements, except for what is obvious and established in the law, and does not strive to find solutions to their problems.

For the reasons mentioned above, we say that the lack of women's participation in union work is a loss of their rights, whatever the reason. We also emphasize the gap between what the constitution stipulates regarding the principle of gender equality or the principle of equality among citizens and the principle of non-discrimination between genders, and what the rest of the laws impose as restrictions on exercising rights, despite the achievements Algerian women have made in the political field, reaching the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of power.

Conclusion

The establishment of a rule of law is achieved by representing all its individuals, including women, who constitute 80 percent of the workforce in Algeria. Therefore, we cannot ignore the emergence of some parties and unions at the level of certain active unions in Algeria that affect sensitive sectors, especially education and health unions. We recommend the necessity of:

- Changing the male-dominated culture in political and union practices, and opening the field for women to membership and leadership without doubting their abilities or being preoccupied with their responsibilities.
- Adopting the principle of equal opportunities, applying it, and reserving leadership positions for elected women or a quota system as stipulated in the Working Women's Charter, which has not yet been ratified by the responsible ministry.

- Providing special training programs for women in politics and unions to build their leadership capacities and train them in management and negotiation.
- Building strong alliances between unions, women's organizations, and other civil society organizations, and developing programs to advance the rights of working women.

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