

Women Political Participation in Persian Gulf Countries

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Abstract

Political participation among the members of a political government is one of the most essential factors influencing efficiency and sustainability in such systems. In this regard, women as half of the workforce contributing in macro decision making can play an important role in political system development and efficiency. Thus, most countries to be in the direction of political development through different policies are trying to strengthen the women political participation in political decision making and power structure. Nevertheless, in Arab countries, women yet do not possess a suitable position in the field of politics and ministry arena. Thus, this study is seeking to find the answer to the question of what are the most influential factors in the limited number of women ministers in Persian Gulf Arab countries. To answer the research question, Delphi and Shannon techniques were used and the researchers compiled the viewpoints of ten political experts in Arab countries. The findings revealed that the most important factor for the limited number of women ministers in such countries is "political" issues and then "cultural", "social", "economic", and "personal" respectfully.

Keywords: Women, Political Participation, Ministry, Arab Countries, Persian Gulf.

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1. Introduction

Political participation is one of the most important index of measuring the degree of countries development. As a part of human resources in a society, women through political participation can play a determining role in the political development formation. To achieve the developmental goals, every country has to use all their human resources. Women, as half of the active human population, are considered key capacities in the development process. In order to achieve political development, many countries have tried in recent decades to provide the necessary conditions for promoting women's political participation by adopting diverse strategies and policies. These measures have been taken with the aim of utilizing women's capabilities in the field of politics and major decision-making to strengthen their presence in power structures and political institutions. In this regard, Persian Gulf Arab countries have not been an exception. During last decades, women political participation has been one of the most important issues for the Persian Gulf Arab countries experts and they have considered positions for the women in political structures. The reason is that from one hand their religion is Islam for which women presence and participation in different aspects is of significance and from another hand for a country to be considered developed throughout the world, women participation is an important feature.

In Persian Gulf Arab countries, yet, women participation in political fields specifically ministry is lower than expected. For example, 9 women in UAE¹, 4 in Qatar², 4 in Oman³, 4 in Kuwait¹, 2 in Bahrain², and 3 in Iraq³

1. Labani bint Khalid bin Sultan Al-Qasimi, Minister of Tolerance, Najla bint Mohammad Al-Awar, Minister of Social Development, Maitha Salem Al-Shamsi, Minister of Advisor, Reem Ibrahim Elhami, Minister of Advisor in the field of international cooperation, Jamila bint Salem Al-Mahiri, Minister of Advisor in the field of public education, Noura Mohammad Al-Kaabi Advisor Minister for Federal National Council Affairs, Bint Sohail Al-Mazrouei is the advisory minister for youth affairs, Ahoud Khalfan al-Rumi, the advisory minister for beauty affairs, Sara Al-Amiri, the advisory minister for advanced sciences, Maryam Al-Mahiri, the advisory minister for food security, and then Najla bint Muhammad Al-Awar was replaced by Hessa bint Isa Boalhamid. Dad, and Labani bint Khalid bin Sultan al-Qasimi was replaced by Nahyan bin Mobarak

2. Hanan Mohammad Al-Kwari, Minister of Health, Bathina bint Ali Al-Jaber Al-Naimi, Minister of Education and Higher Education, Maryam Bint Ali Bin Nasser Al-Musnad, Minister of Social Development and Family, Hessa Bint Sultan Al-Jaber, Minister of Information and Communication Technology.

1. Suad bint Muhammad bin Ali Allawatieh, Minister of Art Affairs, Madiha Al-Shibani,

have attended in ministry position. In Saudi Arabia, no women have succeeded to become a minister. These statistics show the low participation of women in political fields in such countries. Accordingly, the lack of study and identification of the reasons for this limited participation can endanger these countries political development and stability. So, it is required that these reasons be identified as political participation is one of the premises in political development. This identification not only strengthens the studies in the field but also is of importance both practically (political behavior and decision making) and theoretically (theory making). Thus, this study is seeking to find answer to the main question of what are the most important factors in women limited participation in ministry positions in Persian Gulf Arab countries and the solutions to this problem? This research is not a hypothesis test.

2. Literature Review

A few studies have been conducted on the women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries. These studies mostly have researched into the question in Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

One of the studies is about the women political participation in southern Persian Gulf Arab countries. Its results reveal that the limitation in the political participation of women is related to the traditional structure of such societies as well as their specific cultural tribal thoughts (Atarzadeh & Marandi,2012). The article "Investigating the position and role of women in the Middle East in political participation" believes that political participation is necessary for political development.They concluded that in the Middle East women political participation is limited due to masculine political structure, low level of women literacy, and women physiological features. (Pishgahi Fard and Zohdi Gaharpour,2010). Feizi studied the women political and social position in the Middle East in two countries; Iran and

Minister of Education Ravieh Bint Saud Al-Busaidiyeh, Minister of Higher Education, Rahja Bint Abdul Amir, Minister of Tourism

2.Masoumeh Mubarak is the Minister of Planning, Ghadir Asiri is the Minister of Social Affairs, Maryam Agil is the Minister of Economy, and Rana Abdul Rahman Abdullah Fari is the Minister of Public Affairs and the Ministry of Housing.

3.Nadi Hafaz, Minister of Health and Fatemeh Al-Balushi, Minister of Social Development

4.Sami Al-Saeidi, Minister of Finance, Ivan Faiq Jabro, Minister of Immigration, Hayam Abboud Eliasri, Minister of Communications

Saudi Arabia. He revealed that a combination of factors such as primacy-recency effect in modernity, differentiation in religious methodologic basis, and the kind of understanding of religion have been reasons for better political position of women in Iran compared to Saudi Arabia (Feizi,2016). Zohdi Gaharpour in his dissertation titled ‘special analysis of democracy in the Middle East’ believed that women have no place in power structure and that their presence in political fields have been limited to some subsidiary positions (Zohdi Gaharpour,2009).

Another study by Karolak has specifically undermined the undesirable political participation of Bahraini women in political fields (Karolak,2012). Ahmad in a study concentrated on Bahraini women believed that women political and social situation is in lower level compared to men (Ahmad, 2013).

An article titled "Women Political Participation: The Model of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)" examines the historical trajectory of women's political participation in the United Arab Emirates, from the appointment of the first female minister in 2004 to the achievement of gender parity in parliament in 2019. It also highlights the interconnected role of leadership, public policy, and legislation in driving this process. In addition, the article addresses the challenges that Emirati women still face in political decision-making, particularly social norms and cultural expectations (Alzaabi & Yachie,2025). An article titled "Political Empowerment of Women and the Mediating Role of Political Awareness: The Case of Oman" focuses on the Sultanate of Oman and attempts to analyze the reasons for the continued political weakness of women in the Middle East and North Africa region from the perspective of public opinion. The findings of this study, which was conducted using a survey method and with the participation of 288 people, indicate that both formal factors (such as government policies) and informal factors (such as culture and social structure) play a significant role in the decline in the level of political empowerment of Omani women (Dauletova & others). A study titled "The Role of Women in Political Action in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries and Emirati Women in Particular" examines the role of women in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, with an emphasis on Emirati women, in political action. The author first addresses the common challenges faced by women in this region, emphasizing the role of cultural and social norms in limiting women's participation. He then emphasizes the impact of political

institutions on the decision-making process and the need to pay attention to the specific conditions of the Gulf Cooperation Council member states (Najib and Haifa,2013). In addition, a book titled "Gender and Politics in Kuwait: Women and Political Participation in the Gulf" examines the place of women in society and politics, and the discourses surrounding feminism, taking a fresh look at Kuwaiti women's struggle for political participation. She traces the history of women and their contributions to the Kuwaiti state, from independence and the writing of the constitution in the 1960s, to the occupation of Iraq in the 1990s, and the struggle for the right to vote and stand for election in the 21st century (sabah,2013).

Finally, the thesis "The Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation" examines the relationship between the level of political awareness and the extent of women's political participation, and the impact of this participation on the political life of women in the United Arab Emirates. Ultimately, this thesis has concluded that, firstly, the political participation of Emirati women is not limited to a specific group and has broader dimensions. Second, the prerequisite for sustainable participation of women in politics requires cultural and social development and legal reforms, and the growth of women's political awareness plays an effective and significant role in this regard(Ameri,2013).

Looking through literature as above reveals that these studies despite remarkable findings have pinpointed the women limited political participation in the Middle East. The present research, however, studies factors contributing to limitations in women political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries. The reason is that these countries are Iran's neighbors and have similarities to Iran in some geographical, cultural, and religious features. So this study is both theoretically and practically contributing to what exists in Iran's situation. Previous researches have used descriptive and analytical methods whereas the present study uses a quantitative and qualitative method applying Delphi and Shannon techniques. Using these techniques, the researchers are trying to find the factors influencing the women limited political participation specifically in ministry positions. To do so, it is required to directly find out the experts' opinions in Iran as well as in Persian Gulf Arab countries. This is the theoretical and strategic necessity of the research through which the women limited political participation, as a problem, is removed.

3. Theoretical Considerations

3-1. Political Sociology Approach

Proponents of Sociological approach believe that internal factors (personal and psychological characteristics) and external factors (family, friends, school, university, media, etc.) have an effective role on the degree of people political participation. It means that during political socialization, the people become familiar with values and attitudes of their own society. Before getting to know political socialization, it is better to see what socialization is.

Socialization is the process through which the person accepts the norms and values of his own society. Parsons believes that the man has three raw orientations in his organism. Perceptual orientation which is based on recognition. Evaluation orientation appreciates good or bad and favorable or unfavorable values. And finally, normative orientation which decides upon dos and don'ts and emphasize on them. Then Parsoner expresses that when organism confronts culture, personality system is formed which eventually moves the person towards the goal, resulting in social action and reaction. The next stage is socialization in which the social system is formed from outcome of social action. This consequently results in unity, participation and people trust to each other (Abdolahi,2004:63-99).

In other words, socialization refers to preparing a person for playing a role in both public (social, economic, political) and private (father, mother and spouse) grounds. Accordingly, a social system through different cultural and educational methods trains people so that in future they can be in charge of small or big responsibilities. So family, friends, educational system, media and social networks have an influential role in people socialization.

Political socialization means that people become gradually familiar with political attitudes and values and they finally accept the political performance patterns through which their political character is formed. In this process, attitudes, values and political criteria of a society transfer from one generation to the other (Jennings,2009:789). This doesn't mean that everybody who acquires initial recognition of political participation necessarily takes part in different political fields. In fact, emergence of political performance especially political participation requires a person's skills (Kelin,2005:3-4). Huntington (1976) believes that two factors are influential in political participation. The first one is acquiring a social status such as education level which strengthens the person's empowered feeling

to influence macro decision making. So the social status creates a feeling of ability or disability by means of the influence it leaves on the person. The second factor is organizational channels such as groups, institutions, syndicates, parties etc. which increase the possibility of political participation (Huntington, 1976:119).

Some other experts such as Lerner believe that different factors influence political socialization. They are primary factors (family, classmates), secondary factors (educational institutions, political parties, trade unions, and media) (Lerner, 2004:80). Moreover, Lipst (1963) emphasizes that the pattern for political participation in every system is the same. Along with personality and psychological variables (age, sex), some variables such as family economic status (income, job), social status (the marital status, citizenship) and political status (membership in political parties) influence political participation (Lipst, 1963:82).

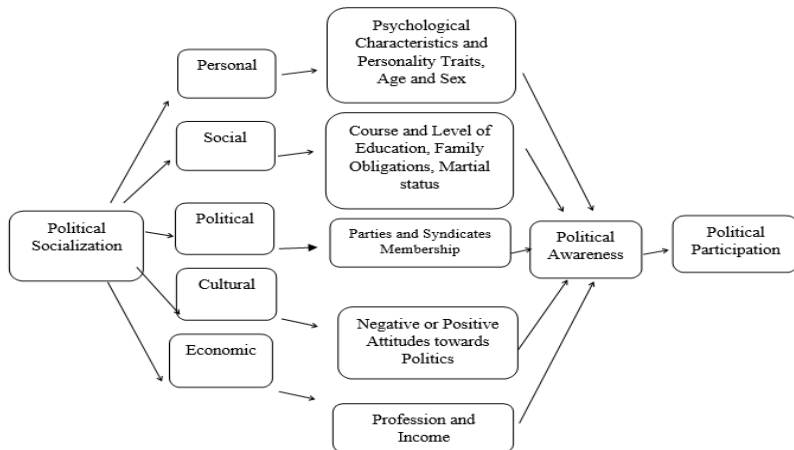


Fig (1): Chart Shows the Variables Affecting Political Participation

According to presented viewpoints, most social science experts believe that socialization is the action and behavior of a person in daily life influenced by the groups he belongs to. This group dependency determines the kind of person's reaction to social affairs. For example, in the family the parents through negotiation transfer their political values to their children in order to show their interest and lack of interest to political issues. Moreover, school and media by means of broadcasting information affect the political thoughts and performance. So people's political considerations are influenced by the society they live in. As a result, the person's political

performance is derived from people and groups he lives with (Tavasoli, 1999:325).

The political side of a person is often formed in the family, school, and university environment. In fact, sex, and the state of its socialization based on society culture is one of effective variable in political participation. Mostly in family and school, women figure out that men are the ones who are involved in political field and that women have been socialized to accept roles as housekeeping and motherhood which are not in line with politics. Milbras (2007) believes that in family, school, and society the boys and girls socialization is different which this brings about gender gap in acquiring political jobs. The boys ambition is becoming a president whereas the girls have a desire to get married with a man who might become a president one day. Thus, from childhood, most people learn that politics is something masculine which later becomes prominent in adults' behavior. So, the process of political socialization can be a big obstacle for women participation to acquire political leadership (Milbras,2007:127). But if the process of political socialization is directed in a correct way and men and women are trained equally in political fields, the women political participation will undoubtedly increase.

4. Methodology

This study is a quantitative and qualitative one which is based on Delphi and Shannon techniques. In the first step, to apply Delphi technique, some experts were chosen regarding the subject of the study. The population of the study included ten experts of politics from Persian Gulf Arab countries and Iran. Then, the ten chosen experts were interviewed. The researchers explained for them that the degree of women political participation for ministry positions in Persian Gulf Arab countries is low.

After this explanation, the researchers were seeking to find out the experts' opinions about the women limited political participation in these regions. Then based on the data gathered from the interview and the necessary references a questionnaire was prepared and delivered for the participants. The participants answered the questionnaire anonymously. There were rooms in the questionnaire where the participants could add points and questions not mentioned by the researchers. Next, the researchers received the questioners and deleted the redundant points and added the participants' new proposed parts. After that the new questionnaire was formed it was delivered for the participants again. The participants answered the questions

in the questionnaire and pinpointed the added and deleted points and consequently delivered the questionnaire anonymously. This process continued in four stages until that experts reached a consensus and their opinions was converged (Hus,2007:10-11).

After that the interviews' data was analyzed, the effective factors contributing women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries from experts' viewpoints were extracted. Then these factors were compared to other factors gathered from reviewing the references and finally 27 factors affecting the women limited political participation were determined.

Table (1): Final Factors Obtained from Reviewing Previous Resources and Experts' Interviews Regarding Women Limited Political Participation in Persian Gulf Arab Countries

1.Theatrical political management positions	2. Family obligations (the priority of maternal role and having a over political roles)
3.Negative attitudes towards women attendance in political fields	4.Masculine political structure
5.Women inefficiency in politics	6. Inappropriate economic situation
7. Low level of women success in politics	8. Women low level of education and political information
9. Women low level of attendance in parties, organizations and political publications	10. Low number of efficient women institutions and organizations to create awareness for women attendance in politics
11. Lack of interest to politics	12. Boys and girls different training by family
13. Political officials little trust and support for women attendance in politics	14. Scientific institution limitations in the country to observe the women participation obstacles and find their solutions
15. Women lack of equal educational facilities to enter political professions	16. Lack of strategic and pathological attitudes towards women limited participation
17. Existence of patriarchal culture in these regions customs and traditions	18. Women anxiety about harming religious values attending public places
19. Economic dependency to men	20. Lack of parents and wife support for women to enter politics
21. Women lack of self esteem	22. Lack of trust and women avoidance towards politics
23. High pressure to make balance between dual roles and finally leaving political participation	24. Lack of educational centers support regarding issues related to women participation in politics
25. Little amount of informing and awareness by media regarding women political issues	26. Women being sensational rather than sensible
27. Women anxiety and fear from others negative attitudes	

The important point is that the first 15 factors in Table (1) were extracted from experts' interviews and factors 15 to 27 from reference review. Then

the 27 factors were classified into 6 subject groups of ‘social’, ‘political’, ‘economic’, ‘family’, ‘personal’ and ‘cultural’. They are shown in Table (2). Then, a questionnaire based on 5-scale Likert for the 27 factors was prepared. The participants scored each factor. To do the calculation score, 1 marked total disagreement and 5 total agreement, shown as A to J.

Table (2): Experts’ Scores to every set of Factors in Delphi Technique Second Questionnaire

Factor Number	Factors influencing women limited political participation in Middle East	Factor set	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Different training of boys and girls in family	Social	5	5	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	5
2	More importance of maternal role and having a husband than political participation	Social	5	5	4	5	5	4	3	3	5	5
3	Parents and husbands’ disagreement to enter politics	Social	3	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3
4	High pressure to make balance between dual roles and finally leaving political participation	Social	4	4	5	5	3	5	3	5	5	5
5	Lack of interest to politics	Personal	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	1
6	Lake of trust and avoidance from politics	Personal	4	5	5	2	5	4	4	5	1	4
7	Lack of women success in politics	Personal	2	5	5	5	2	5	2	3	2	3
8	Lack of self esteem	Personal	2	5	5	5	2	5	2	3	2	3
9	Being sensational rather than sensible	Personal	2	3	5	2	5	5	3	2	2	3
10												
11	Negative attitude towards women attendance in politics	Cultural	4	2	5	2	5	2	5	5	5	5
12	Patriarical culture in regions’ customs and traditions	Cultural	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	4	5	5
13	Women anxiety and fear from others negative attitudes	Cultural	2	4	3	2	4	5	5	5	5	5
14	Woman anxiety to harm religious values if attending public places	Cultural	3	2	2	5	5	5	2	3	3	2
15	Little notification by media regarding subjects related to women political issues	Social	2	4	3	2	4	5	5	3	5	5
16	Women scientific institutions limitations in the country to observe women participation obstacles and how to remove them	Social	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	3	2
17	Lack of support from educational centers such as university to consider women political issues	Social	3	4	3	4	5	5	4	5	3	2
18	Lack of equal educational facilities for women to enter political professions	Social	4	4	3	4	5	5	4	5	3	2
19	Low level of education	Social	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	3
20	Lack of some officials’ support and trust to choose women in political fields	Political	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5
21	Low number of women institutions and	Political	5	4	2	5	5	2	2	4	5	5

	organizations to inform and provide places for women political participation											
22	Women theatrical political positions	Political	2	3	4	5	5	3	5	2	2	3
23	Low level of women participation and attendance in political parties, organizations and publications	Political	5	3	4	5	5	3	5	4	2	3
24	Lack of strategic attitude towards women limited political participation	Political	4	4	5	5	2	5	4	3	5	5
25	Patriarchal political structure	Political	4	4	5	5	5	2	3	4	5	5
26	Economic dependency to men	Economic	4	4	5	5	2	4	4	5	5	5
27	Unfavorable economic situation	Economic	3	4	5	2	5	4	4	5	5	5

5. The Results

In the second phase of Delphi technique, the researchers summed up the given scores and used the mean. Fig (3) shows the mean of every set of factors indicating that the family set has gained the most scores and the highest mean. It reveals that ‘Social’ is one of the most important factors influencing women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries after which comes ‘political’, ‘cultural’, ‘economic’, and ‘personal’ factors respectively.

Shannon technique was used to analyze the data obtained from Delphi. It is a mathematical formula to analyze the data. Using this technique makes it possible to obtain every factor information load which results in women limited political participation. To use this technique, by means of a mathematical relationship 1, the data in frequency table became normalized. In this formula, F_{ij} is the participants’ score to every factor and p_{ij} is the normalized score. Then, using mathematical relationship 2, the information load of every factor (E_j), was calculated and determined. In this relationship, n is the number of items and m is the number of participants.

Then, by means of mathematical relationship 3, every factor weight was obtained.

(1)

$$P_{ij} = \frac{F_{ij}}{\sum_{i=1}^m F_{ij}} \quad (i = 1,2, \dots, m ; j = 1,2 \dots n)$$

(2)

$$E_j = -k \sum_{i=1}^m [p_{ij} \ln(p_{ij})] \quad j \in 1 \dots n \quad k = \frac{1}{\ln(m)}$$

(3)

$$W_{ij} = \frac{E_j}{\sum_{j=1}^n E_j}$$

**Table (3): Findings Obtained from Delphi Second Stage Questionnaire
(Women Limited Political Participation in Persian Gulf Arab Countries)**

Factors	Set	Sum of Scores	Scores Mean	Set Mean	Factors' Information Load	Shannon Technique Weight	Set Weight Mean
Lack of interest to politics	Personal	32	3/2	35/6	1.406	0.04320	0.04339
Lake of trust and avoidance from politics		32	3/2		1.406	0.04320	
Lack of women success in politics		39	3/9		1.425	0.04376	
Lack of self esteem		34	3/4		1.401	0.04304	
Being sensational rather than sensible		41	4/1		1.425	0.04378	
Negative attitude towards women attendance in politics	Cultural	46	4/6	39/5	1.427	0.04383	0.04366
Patriarical culture in regions' customs and traditions		40	4		1.426	0.04382	
Women anxiety and fear from others negative attitudes		32	3/2		1.406	0.04320	
Woman anxiety to harm religious values if attending public places		40	4		1.426	0.04382	
Little notification by media regarding subjects related to women political issues	Social	38	3/8	41/4	1.404	0.04311	0/04363
Women scientific institutions limitations in		38	3/8		1.404	0.04311	

the country to observe women participation obstacles and how to remove them							
Lack of support from educational centers such as university to consider women political issues		41	4/1		1.425	0.04378	
Lack of equal educational facilities for women to enter political professions		40	4		1.426	0.04382	
Low level of education		36	3/6		1.427	0.04386	
Different training of boys and girls in family		46	4/6		1/427	0/04383	
More importance of maternal role and having a husband than political participation		44	4/4		1/423	0/04372	
Parents and husbands' disagreement to enter politics		41	4/1		1/425	0/04378	
High pressure to make balance between dual roles and finally leaving political participation		39	3/9		1/425	0/04376	
Lack of some		39	3/9		1.425	0.04376	0.04368

officials' support and trust to choose women in political fields	Political			40/33			
Low number of women institutions and organizations to inform and provide places for women political participation		42	4/2		1.426	0.04386	
Women theatrical political positions		34	3/4		1.401	0.04304	
Low level of women participation and attendance in political parties, organizations and publications		39	3/9		1.425	0.4376	
Lack of strategic attitude towards women limited political participation		46	4/6		1.427	0.04383	
Patriarchal political structure		42	4/2		1.426	0.04386	
Economic dependency to men		Economic	39		3/9	38/5	
Unfavorable economic situation	38		3/8	1.404	0.04311		

Table (3) shows that the findings obtained from Shannon technique are different from those obtained from mean and frequency which indicates the factors importance and their ranking differently. As the Shannon technique validity to weigh the factors is more, it is considered as the basic measure to

interpret the results. Based on Shannon algorithm, factors as being emotional not sensible, lack of self-esteem in women, and the women anxiety to harm religious values were among the least influencing factors in women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries. So these factors were deleted due to lack of experts' consensus. Consequently, 24 factors in six sets of subject matter were agreed upon by experts and it was shown that the 'political' set had the most influence after which come the factors, 'cultural', 'social', 'economic', and 'personal', respectively.

Three factors, "low level of education", "lack of support from some officials for women's election and presence in politics", and "male political culture in the customs and traditions of the regions" are among the most important factors that have led to limited political participation of women in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, as follows:

One of the most important factors influencing women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries is the lack of confident and support by some officials to allow presence of women in political fields. Formation of this factor has happened through men's political socialization because at first the children whether male or female are influenced by their family and the family as the social core in every society affects the children insights and attitudes in different aspects. So, the children socialization originates from the family and for children of tender years the family is representative of the whole world. Thus, the child's imagination of the self and of the world outside is directly influenced by the family opinions and insights. The values the person accepts in different fields and the different roles he has to play are learned in family relationships network. In the second place, schools, universities, and media influence formation of people attitudes. So it can be claimed that the situation is the same in political socialization. Whatever a person learns about politics from childhood to adulthood originates from the family whether or not it encourages people to participate in political fields.

According to the researches done regarding Persian Gulf Arab countries, it can be acknowledged that the political structure of these regions is mostly masculine and that men due to political socialization of these countries have been prepared to play roles in political fields. The reason is that they have learned politics as something masculine so as not to support women to participate in political fields efficiently (Najib,2013:9-10). In addition, the

women unsuccessful performance in political fields has strengthen this belief.

The second factor influencing the women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries is patriarchal culture represented by some masculine customs and traditions which do not provide a suitable ground for women participation in politics. In fact, based on such a culture, the women activity in public affairs especially politics is not acceptable. Moreover, the political behavior of the women themselves is thought-provoking as the viewpoint of some of them toward politics is not optimistic and they view politics as masculine which leaves no room and necessity for their participation in political fields. This viewpoint comes from the women limited participation in political parties and institutions. Due to physical and mental characteristics, women often prefer not to take part in jobs dealing with anxiety, aggression, stress, etc.

The third influential factor for women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries is their low level of education. According to United Nation Human Development international statistics, the degree of illiteracy in women is more than men in most Persian Gulf Arab countries. Not only is the proportion of men registration in higher education more but also the women registration for primary schools is less compared to the men. The level of literacy in both men and women, however, has increased from 1997 (Kolaei & Hafezian,2006:50). Consequently, thanks to the women low level of education, their political awareness regarding their own country and the world is less compared to the men. Accordingly, the women political activities are much more limited than men (Shansavand,2001:164).

6. Conclusion

Women political participation is one of political development criterion. So, to maintain higher level of political development, most countries have tried to enhance women political participation in political decision making and legislation. Yet, the degree of women political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries is limited. So in this study the researchers tried to find answers to this question as what are the influential factors in women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries. To answer the question, a qualitative methodology based on Delphi and Shannon techniques was used. Consequently, 24 factors in six sets of subject matter were agreed upon by experts and it was shown that the 'political' set had the most influence after which come the factors, 'cultural', 'social', 'economic',

and personal', respectively. Also, from the perspective of experts, three factors, "low level of education", "lack of support from some officials for women's election and presence in politics", and "male political culture in the customs and traditions of the regions" are among the most important factors that have led to limited political participation of women in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

In addition to identification of influential factors on women limited political participation in Persian Gulf Arab countries, some suggested solutions are presented as follows:

- Adopting decisive policies to appoint more qualified women to key executive positions, deputy ministries, embassies, etc.
- Allocation of gender quotas for women in their parliaments, local councils, etc.
- Enhancing educational system in Persian Gulf Arab countries and establishing suitable facilities for men and women equal education.
- Educating boy and girls equally in schools and universities to make necessary changes in beliefs and attitudes existing in political culture and structure of Persian Gulf Arab countries and encouraging women to enter political positions.
- Designing non-governmental training courses in the fields of civil rights, political management, etc.
- Incorporating the concepts of gender equality and political participation into school and university curricula
- Teaching and culturalizing regarding struggling with patriarchy through publishing books, making movies, holding seminars and chairs of theorizing.
- Short term and long term policy making (education, acculturation, satisfaction maintenance) to change beliefs and attitudes present in society especially women empowerment).
- Short-term or long-term cultural policies (education, culture building, and persuasion) to change existing beliefs and attitudes in society, especially regarding women's capabilities, such as supporting cultural productions (films, documentaries, etc.) that portray the role of women positively.
- Reforming family, citizenship, and employment laws that hinder women's active participation in the public sphere.

- Support research and media campaigns that challenge traditional stereotypes about the roles of men and women and highlight the role of women as effective political and economic decision-makers (using social media).
- Support to provide financial resources for publications related to women issues.
- Encourage and support the creation of non-governmental organizations and professional associations of women (unions of engineers, lawyers, professors...).
- Government and society support to form women research institutions in order to study women limited political participation and to propose efficient solutions to them.
- Support to provide financial resources for political parties to continue their activities.
- Create legal incentives for political parties to include women in electoral lists.
- Economic empowerment of women through expanding job and entrepreneurship opportunities for women in the public and private sectors and establishing funds to support women's economic projects.

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8. Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare that there is no conflict of interest and that they have complied with all ethical issues in the research.

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