



## **A Study about Women's Presence in the Media Coverage of the Municipal Elections 2016**

### *Executive Summary*

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## **First: The Methodological Framework of the Study**

### **1- The Objective of this Study<sup>1</sup>**

The study examines how the Lebanese media will deal with women during municipal elections in May 2016. What is the status allocated to them and what is their reflected image? The study also raises central questions about the role of the media in disseminating a stereotype of women and in spreading awareness about their role and presence in the society. Its aim is to highlight the status of women in the electoral media which paves the way to include them in public affairs. It also shows the responsibility of the media to free women from the social chains that prevent them from playing their roles in the society.

The study seeks to answer the following questions. How did the media distribute coverage rates between women and men? What role do women have in the media? Did the media contribute to the visibility of women as a key player or as a main focus of coverage? Did women attract media? Did media enable women to deliver their voice directly? What is the direct access of women to media compared to men? How did the media deal with women as sources of electoral discourse in media coverage?

The same study classifies itself as a discourse against discrimination regardless of its form and subject matter. Human is our subject here. When a woman is naturally absent, this means that the problem concerns the entire community, and when we say “no” to discrimination, this includes all sorts of differentiation such as ethnic, religious, or gender.

Hence, the issue of women's presence in the media coverage of the municipal elections is important as it reflects a form of the Lebanese democracy and the concepts that the media share in their reflection, preservation and passing.

## **2- A Theoretical Framework**

### **A- Gender Roles**

The roles of men and women in the society and the nature of their relationships are subjects of economic, cultural and ideological factors. Gender studies help in the first phase to ensure equality between men and women in the field. Gender does not support diversity in given race regarding sex that distinguishes between men and women, it instead illustrates what was translated to Arabic as “الاجتماعي النوع” which refers to the cultural and historical societies in construction of both men’s

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the current study is a summary of an extensive 45-page study that includes 28 detailed tables. This study attempts to shorten the research. Interested parties can return to the full text of the research.

and women's contributions. The difference between them is not biologically inevitable.<sup>2</sup>

“It is safe to say now that gender is a cultural discrimination between men and women, and its roots are mainly related to culture and not nature.”

## **B- Women's Quota**

The issue of women and politics leads us to the concept of the "quota." It is a Latin term proposed at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing<sup>3</sup> in 1995 as one way to help solve the problem of women's low participation in political life.

The Beijing conference suggested that women's quotas should be a positive distinction of at least 30 percent in the world's parliaments. Yet, more than 21 years after the Beijing Conference, which has been unanimously approved by 189 countries and which is a key focus for women, the status of women in the world<sup>4</sup> still needs substantial support.

In Lebanon, women's and human's rights organizations are still demanding the presence of women in the political life. The development of unfair laws and “respect for the international conventions signed by Lebanon, in which they are committed to include quotas in electoral laws.”<sup>5</sup>

## **3- Coding**

In May 2016, the Interior Minister held municipal elections in Lebanon in four stages. The total number of press coverage related to the elections was 753 press coverage and 1534 TV reports. The total was 2287 coverage where TV accounted 67% of all coverage. The television programs also devoted weekly talk shows to the subject of the elections.

- The Daily Newspapers: Annahar, Assafir, al-Akhbar, al-Mustaqbal, L'Orient Le Jour and The Daily Star. The total was 753 news coverage.

- TV Stations: LBCI, OTV, MTV, Future TV, al-Jadeed and al-Manar. The total was 1534 broadcasts amid the evening news bulletins.

- Regional Political Dialogue Programs: Kalam Ennas (LBCI), al-Ousbouh Fi Sa'ah (al-Jadeed), Inter-interviews (Future TV), Hadeeth Assa'ah (al-Manar), Bila Hasana (OTV) and Bi Mawdouiyeh (MTV). All these channels broadcasted the

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<sup>2</sup> Same reference.

<sup>3</sup> Conference document:

<http://www.pal-monitor.org/Upload/uploads/6061ad9870.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> « Participation des femmes à la vie politique : le Liban à la traîne. Pourquoi un quota? » OLI, 11/06/2012.

<sup>5</sup> Translated: «Quota in the election law» .. a meeting for «Lebanese», the newspaper of the future 14/10/2016.

Original:

«الكوتا في قانون الانتخاب».. لقاء لـ«لبنانيون»، جريدة المستقبل 2016/10/14

elections except for Tele Liban which halted the airing of its program “Kalima Horra” during the monitoring period. The total was 24 episodes. The methodology was based on qualitative and quantitative analyses, also known as content analysis, of the observed material.

## **Second: Analysis of the Coverage**

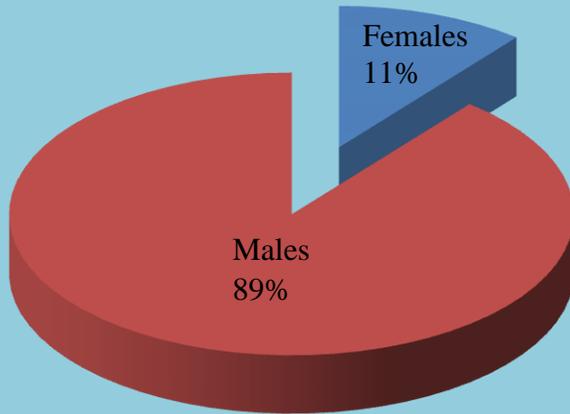
This section presents an analysis of the contents of the media which were examined during May 2016. It aims at measuring the positive and negative quantitative indicators that have emerged through the use of media with women. The results are easily accessible from the distribution of coverage related to municipal elections in the written press, television news and political talk shows. It also included the distribution of press coverage and television news between males, females and indicators of women’s centrality in the coverage of the press and television, as well as the distribution of the percentage of media appearance of male and female speakers and the proportion of speeches’ time allocated to each category.

### **1- Distribution of Coverage Between Males and Females**

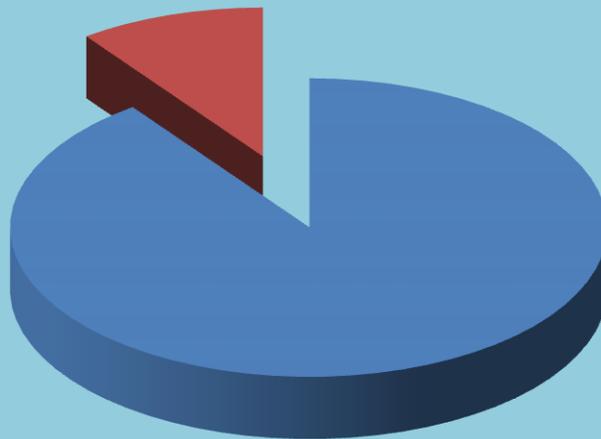
The media coverage varied in size and among different newspapers. Through these coverage are news of candidacy, reluctance, announcement of regulations, alliances and press statements issued by the various parties, as well as some follow-up investigations of certain issues. In addition to the news related to the organization of elections and supportive positions. While both newspapers and news reports covered the elections’ observation and the announcement of results, television broadcasts were exclusive to newspapers in publishing articles on electoral and legal education.

The figures showed that the total coverage of alliances, competitors and voters came in the first interest by more than 70% (70.38% for newspapers and 70.99% for television reports). Females’ attendance in these coverage was overwhelmingly high where females accounted 11% in journal articles and 10% in television reports (Tables 1 and 2).

Distribution of press coverage of electoral issues between males and females during May.  
The sample consists of 753 press coverage.  
Table No 1



Distribution of TV news coverage of electoral issues between males and females during May.  
The sample consists of 1534 news reports.  
Table No 2



Females  
10%

Males  
90%

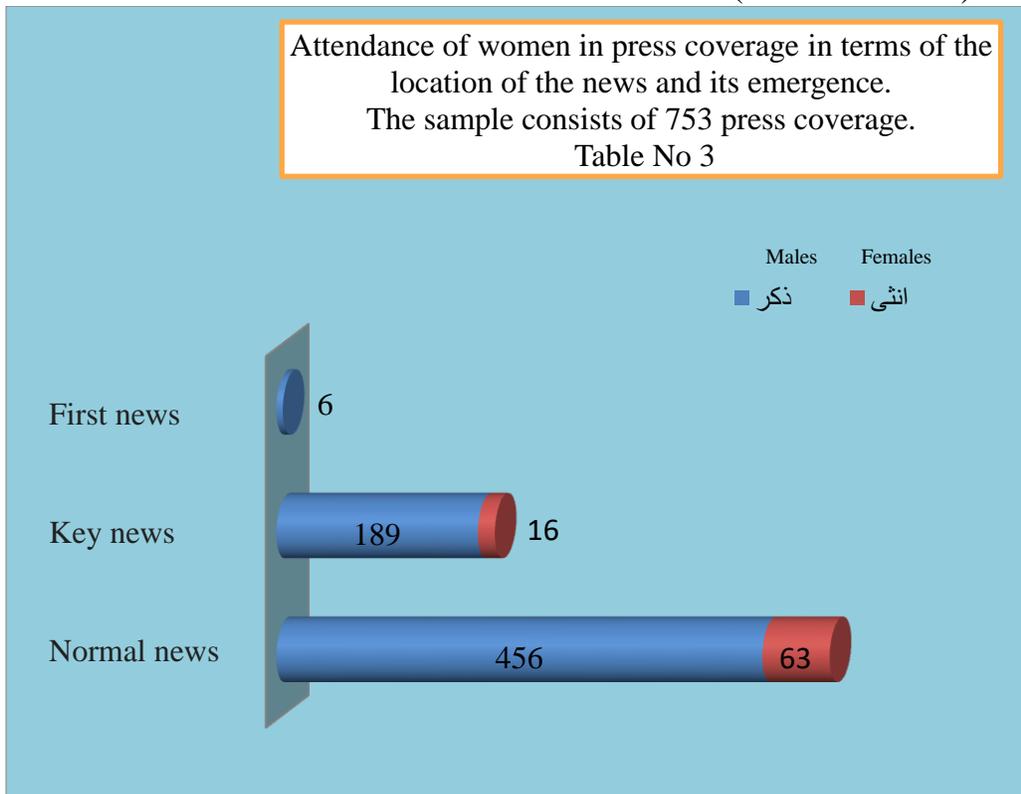
## 2- Position of Women in Coverage and Interviews

The fact that women are the focus of news or media coverage in general is an important indicator in the study of gender issues. In media practices, women are the focus of stories on issues related to violence, rape and suffering. In the media

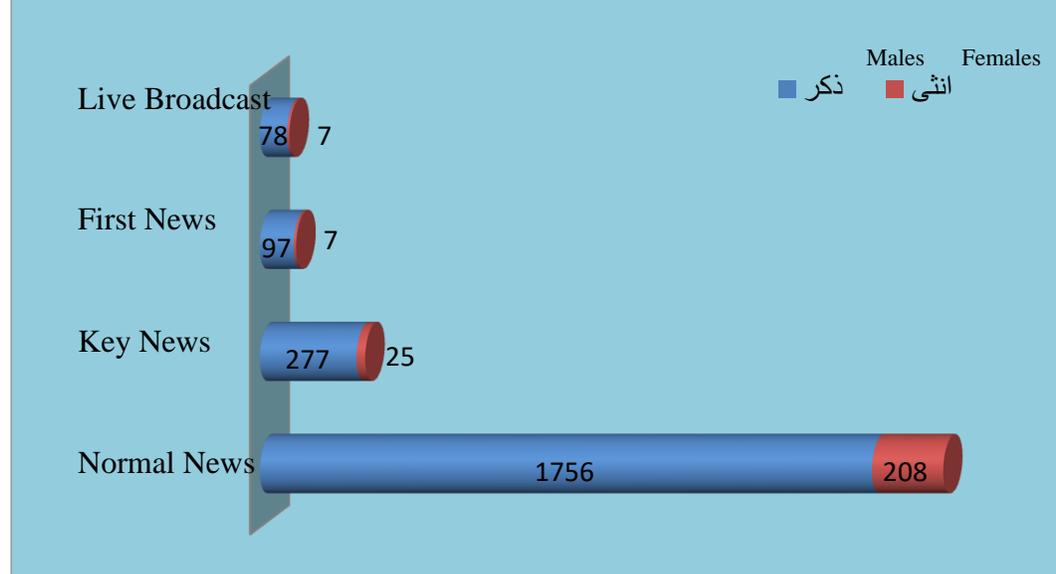
coverage associated with elections and the political participation of women as candidates. The centrality of women in coverage as an attraction and attention is a positive indicator.

However, this positive indicator did not appear in the monitoring results related to the press coverage of the municipal elections in May, and the percentage of women's coverage was only 1%. As for TV news, the percentage rose significantly to 13%.

In the study sample, women were completely absent from the prominent story in the front pages of newspapers. The presence of women in coverage, direct television transmission and the first reports in television news broadcasts, recorded between 7% and 9%, and between 8 and 9% in the main news. Regular newspapers and television news account for 12% and 13.5% (Tables 3 and 4).



Attendance of women in TV news coverage in terms of the location of news and its emergence.  
The sample consists of 1534 television reports.  
Table No 4



We mean the front page when we say first news, the second and the third pages when we say main news and the inner pages when we say regular news. The observation also showed that women did not receive any interviews during May, while it did not record exclusive television interviews during the coverage of the electoral process during the month.

### 3- Women as a Source of Electoral Discourse

The sources of electoral discourse in the media are varied during coverage. This speech represents the voice of the different players in the electoral process, namely the political and competing candidates, organizers and participants in organizing and monitoring the electoral process and awareness, in addition to voters and public opinion.

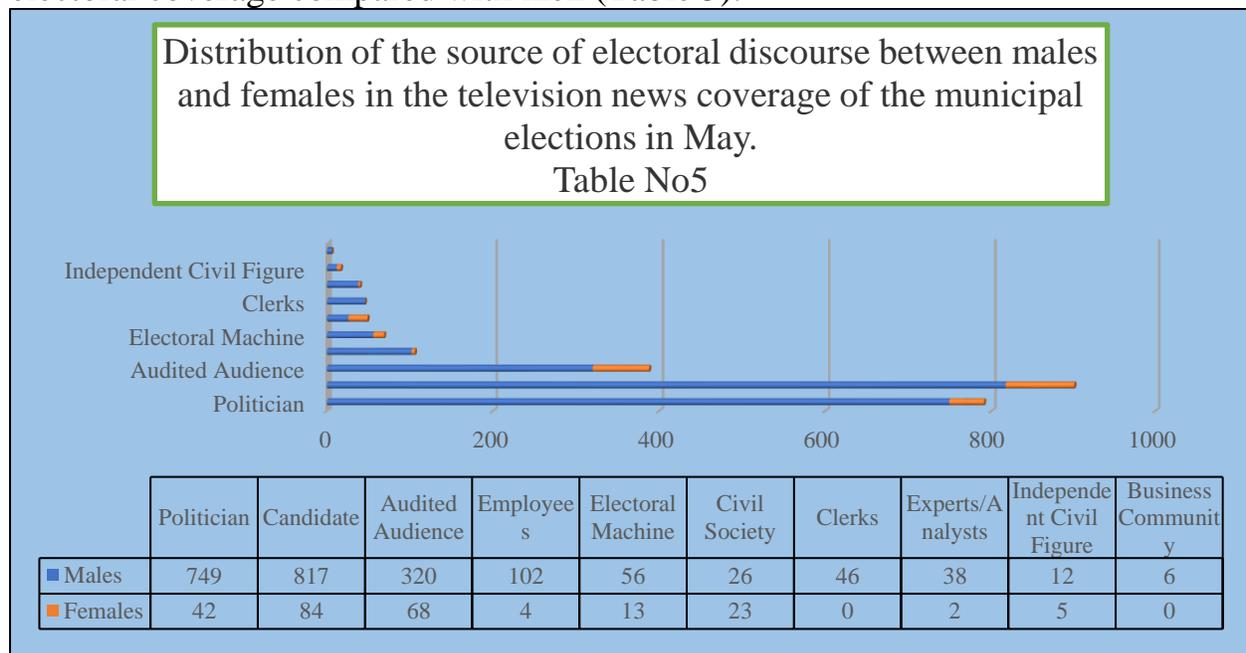
An analysis of the speech shows that politicians formed the main source of the press coverage of the municipal elections in May. Candidates in the television news bulletins came right after that indicating the political nature of these elections. Numbers show that the presence of civil society as well as public opinion and media coverage was marginalized. The weakness of women in political life causes their absence in the media.

Women's political discourse constituted 10% of the sources of public politicians' discourse in the newspapers, while it dropped to about 5% in the television news bulletins.

The participation of female candidates as a source of the electoral discourse amounted about 10% in each of the newspapers and television news broadcasts, while this percentage reached 50% of the public surveyed in the newspapers and 20% in the television news broadcasts. Out of 388 respondents in the various TV reports, only 68, 20% of the total, expressed their views on the subject.

In addition to the above indicators, the attendance of male experts and the analysts as a source of the electoral discourse in the television news reports reached 95%. No intervention for a woman was recorded in the news reports from the business community, while six interventions were recorded by different businessmen.

The numbers converged between men and women in one field. Men accounted 26.6% of the total and women 23%. The average was 1.49% of the total as a source of electoral discourse in television news broadcasts in the field of civil society's activity during the municipal elections in May. This positive indicator, however, carries negative evidence of women's roles in the association activity field which is accompanied by the decline in indicators of other women's roles in different electoral coverage compared with men (Table 5).



#### 4- The Discourse of Women's Equality and Participation in Elections

The speech called for women's equality and encouraged their participation in political life. Low percentages were recorded where 1.36% in newspapers and 2.5% in television newscasts. Men participated in this speech with limited numbers of 5 out of 64 invitations in news broadcasts and 2 out of 14 invitations in newspapers.

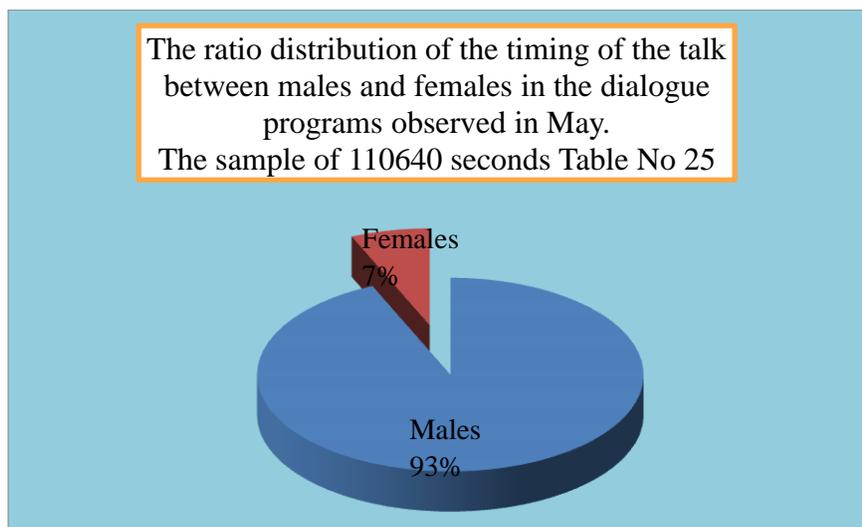
The results showed that about 70% of the speech calling for participation and equality came from candidates for the municipal elections. The remaining percentage was distributed among some of the statements issued by various parties and the public surveyed in the television reports on the one hand and the politicians and administrators on the other.

It can be concluded that the candidates and those involved in the electoral process are aware of the importance of women's participation in public life in terms of their role as a key voter.

### **5- Women in the Programs of Political Dialogues**

The municipal elections in May constituted a heavy item for the political dialogue programs that were devoted to review and discuss the elections. Private channels have devoted weekly talk shows for the elections. The sample included 24 episodes distributed among six different programs in the coding. The analysis of the seminars showed the interest of the programs of political dialogues on the subject of municipal elections at 78% of the total time allotted for these programs. The percentage of media appearances for speakers in the political dialogue programs in May ranged between males and females by 11% for women and 89% for men out of a total of 146 different media appearances. These percentages correspond to the percentage of women appearing in newspapers and news programs.

As for the time span specified for both sexes, it differed from the percentage of media appearances (Table 6). The percentage of time devoted to women decreased to 7% from their rate of 11%. This shows that the media do not give women enough time to talk in comparison to the time allotted to men.



### Section III: Conclusions and Summaries

Did the media come in the form of society? Does the scene reflect the reality? In other words, do the media reflect the reality of women in society and at the same time reflect the social reality as a whole?

The total number of seats, the total number of female candidates and the total number of women winning between 2004 and 2016 are too far from equality between men and women, even the 30% or the 40% in developed countries.

The following table shows that the total number of candidates for 2016 is 1519 out of 12249 of the total seats, and the total number of women winners is 663 which 5.4% of the number of seats.

District	Total Number of Seats			Number of Female Candidates			Number of Female Winners			Percentage of the seats' total (%)		
	2004	2010	2016	2004	2010	2016	2004	2010	2016	2004	2010	2016
Beirut	24	24	24	9	21	19	1	3	3	4.2	12.5	12.5
Mount Lebanon	3413	3528	3672	170	466	528	75	188	246	2.2	5.1	6.6
Beqaa and Hermel	1728	1938	2100	55	129	137	26	48	54	1.5	2.47	2.5
The South and Nabatiye	3051	3210	3318	119	252	300	38	91	119	1.2	2.8	3.58
The North and Akkar	2430	2724	3135	199	479	535	75	206	241	3.1	7.56	7.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>10646</b>	<b>11424</b>	<b>12249</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>1347</b>	<b>1519</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>

In 12 years, the percentage of seats has risen from 2% to 5.4%, but in the past six years the ratio has risen from 4.7 to 5.4, a difference of 0.7 points.

### 5- Quantitative Monitoring

- The numbers showed that the coverage of alliances, competitors and voters ranked the first with a percentage that exceeded 70%, which was the highest percentage, and television has the largest share of the contributions, where it contributes alone with 67% of the coverage ratio, with a significant difference between this result and the rest of the coverage. While electoral and legal education took the lowest percentage of 0.30% in televisions and 0% in newspapers.
- The percentage of women's attendance is weak with numbers that correspond to the television coverage, press and talk shows (10% for press and 11% for television reports and talk shows).
- Women were absent as prominent news in the front page. Even the percentage of attendance in the main, ordinary and weak news paved the course of the attendance rate as a whole. In direct transport, the first news item is less than 10%.
- Women were absent in newspapers interviews during the monitoring period, and there was an absence of men and women from exclusive interviews on television. In the printed press, the percentage was almost 1% of coverage and 13% of television.
- Numbers between men and women in television newscasts converged in the field of civil society activity: 26 for men and 23 for women. However, in comparison to the general percentage of the electoral discourse, these numbers remain marginal (1.69% and 1.49%). In fact, this positive indicator carries negative evidence regarding the role of women in the field of association activity, which is accompanied by a decline in the indicators of the roles of other women's potentials compared to men during the coverage of different election campaigns. The percentage of women was 50% of the public surveyed in newspapers and 20% in television news bulletins. The number of female candidates as a source of electoral discourse was 10.28% compared with the male candidates in the television reports (817 men 84 women) and 9.13% in the newspapers (197 men and 18 women).
- The letter of advocacy for women's equality and motivation to participate in political life is almost absent. The percentage of attendance is very low with 1.36% in newspapers and 2.5% in television newscasts. About 70% of the speech calling for participation and equality comes from candidates for municipal elections.
- The largest percentage of the talk shows was 80% for male candidates and 20% for female candidates, 95% for male politicians and 5% for female politicians, and 97% for male experts and 3% for female experts. The total attendance of civil society representatives was only five in 24 episodes including three men and two women.
- During the political talk shows, five different calls for women's participation in municipal elections were monitored. Most of these calls were from men.

- The attendance of male experts and the analysts as sources of the electoral discourse in the television news reports was 95%, and no intervention for women was recorded in the news reports about business versus six interventions for different businessmen.

## **6- In Content Analysis**

- The study showed the percentage of the area allocated to women, their presence and the framework in which there was gender discrimination against them.

- The media's exposure to female candidates and voters was one of the main challenges of the Lebanese. The general feature of media involvement with female candidates was to reduce and restrict their chances of participation. Women were involved in debates and publications in which their participation was limited and timid. Despite the diversity and multiplicity of media coverage of women's participation in the elections, they varied within the prevailing traditional community concept which focused on the traditional women's role by dividing the existing roles that are considered the basic role of women in the private sphere without allowing them to approach of the total municipal files and development proposals.

- In spite of the negative media handling with the female candidates and the lack of opportunities for their appearance, the presence of women was remarkable and their speech was characterized by force and development. The speech of women was ahead of the media discourse which did not keep pace with this development and was not able to keep up with the remarkable progress of women's view of themselves as a citizens. Most of it reinforces stereotypical discourse against women.

- The majority of workers in the media continue to reproduce the same stereotypical image of women rather than to build public conviction in the importance of women's participation in the public sphere as a fundamental right and a necessity of social progress.

- Some of the women's speech during the election campaign is a paradox in view of their roles as first citizens, and the awareness about their rights and the importance of their participation in the municipal elections and in public affairs is growing. Their participation and active roles in the society are linked to their importance as well.

- Female candidates suffered from exclusion from their role in public life.

- Female candidates in the various visual and written media, which have been monitored, have expressed their views and preparations for the roles of full citizenship as Lebanese citizens of all nationalities. This assumes a rejection of the prevailing tradition of discrimination against them and reconciliation with the

dominant cultural and social heritage that reproduce all forms of violence and discrimination. Women's rights awareness in terms of development and democracy was shown in the interviews with them.

- The study also recorded a presence of conservative women's discourse as if it perpetuated stereotypes of their participation in public opinion.
- The political dimensions of women's speech were influenced mainly by the speech of the non-candidate and non-political women. This indicates that if women are given the role, they can work in politics and public affairs just like men, but the role in Lebanon is taken by women as a result of circumstances surrounding men such as the sister or the wife of a political figure and/or the man is absent.
- Media coverage and its nature did not reflect the presence of women as political actors in nature, but rather their participation as candidates, critics and correspondents in order to give a virtual impression that democracy exists and progress is gradually gaining momentum.

## **7- Recommendations**

- It seems necessary to approve women's quota in order to activate the role of Lebanese women in public affairs.
- The prevailing media performance contributes the stereotyping of women's and restricting them through the model image that makes their presence in society equivalent to their weakness, and it restricts their activities in the domestic affairs and family matters. Therefore, the media should reconsider women's role in society. The performance of media through the word and image, and through the participation rate and how to put topics, questions and vocabulary used to address women in order to free them from stereotypes that harm them.
- The awareness of the media that the space given to the speech is important and, therefore, the proportion of women's presence in the media is an activation of their role. Hence, it is necessary to involve women in the various media programs alongside with men as experts, analysts and actors in all fields of society.
- Electoral and political education is necessary by the media, which has not given it the importance it deserves. This would have a positive impact on the reality of women.
- Activate the so-called journalism constructive, which publishes positive news, to create a balance with catastrophic news and that try to find solutions. It is a new type of media called "informational solutions," or "optimistic media" that illuminates the positive aspects and excludes women from the cycle of victim abuse.
- Because the society reproduces itself through others' images, the call to reconsider the stereotype of men and women is urgent.

- Urging women to work in public and political affairs in particular (i.e. in governance, not only in the development field) by supporting their proposals and highlighting them in the media, which would help improve their status in various fields.