

FINDINGS FORMET TO EXAMMINITION

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TOPIC OF RESEARCH: **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA**

FINDINGS

1. **Vision 2030 has emerged as the driving force behind women's political empowerment.** The reforms have significantly expanded women's representation in the Shura Council, public administration, diplomacy, and other leadership positions.
2. **Saudi Arabia's political development reflects a state-led model of reform.** Unlike many democracies, women's political participation has grown mainly through government-led initiatives rather than grassroots political movements.
3. **Legal and institutional reforms have strengthened women's political rights.** Reforms related to mobility, employment, education, and public participation have enhanced women's role, although cultural and social challenges still remain.
4. **Women's increasing political participation has contributed to better governance and national development.** Their growing involvement has improved policy-making, promoted inclusive governance, and strengthened Saudi Arabia's global image as a reform-oriented nation.
5. **Sustainable political development requires deeper and more meaningful women's participation.** Future progress depends on increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies, strengthening leadership opportunities, and ensuring that legal reforms translate into long-term political empowerment.

SUMMARY OF ABSTRACT (ONLY 2 PAGE)

This study examines the relationship between political development and the role of women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with particular emphasis on the changing nature of women's participation in governance and public decision-making. It argues that women's political empowerment has become an important component of Saudi Arabia's modernization process, especially under the reform initiatives introduced since 2005 and accelerated through Vision 2030. The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach by integrating perspectives from political science, gender studies, and Islamic thought to analyze the evolution of women's political status within the Kingdom.

The study addresses the gap between the remarkable progress achieved by Saudi women in education, employment, and public life and their comparatively limited participation in political decision-making. It investigates the major areas of political development in Saudi Arabia, the extent of women's participation in governance, state policies on women's political empowerment, and the challenges that continue to restrict their full political inclusion. The study is guided by the hypothesis that although patriarchal social structures have historically limited women's political role, government-led reforms have significantly improved their participation, particularly during the reigns of King Abdullah and King Salman.

The research is qualitative in nature and employs historical, descriptive, and analytical methods. Both primary and secondary sources—including government documents, official reports, policy papers, books, journals, and scholarly publications—have been utilized. A comparative historical approach is adopted to examine the evolution of women's political participation under different Saudi monarchs and to assess the impact of political reforms on women's empowerment.

The study begins by examining the historical and theoretical foundations of women's position in Saudi society. It argues that while Islamic teachings recognize women's dignity and social responsibility, cultural traditions and patriarchal interpretations gradually restricted their participation in public and political life. During the reign of King Fahad (1982–2005), significant investments in education and economic development expanded opportunities for women in professional fields, although their political participation remained limited. Nevertheless, this period laid the foundation for the emergence of an educated and politically aware generation of Saudi women.

The study identifies the reign of King Abdullah (2005–2015) as a turning point in women's political empowerment. His government introduced reforms that expanded women's opportunities in education, employment, and public life. A landmark achievement was the 2015 municipal elections, in which women were allowed to vote and contest elections for the first time. Although their representation remained limited, the elections marked the beginning of women's formal participation in local governance and demonstrated the Kingdom's commitment to gradual political modernization.

Another significant development during the Abdullah era was the appointment of thirty women to the Shura Council in 2013. This historic decision integrated women into the Kingdom's highest consultative institution, enabling them to participate in discussions related to education, labour, social welfare, and family policy. While the advisory nature of the Council and institutional constraints limited their direct influence on policymaking, their inclusion represented an important milestone in institutionalizing women's political participation.

The study further analyzes the transformative reforms introduced under King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman through Vision 2030. Women's empowerment has become one of the central pillars of national development and economic diversification. Major reforms—including the lifting of the driving ban, relaxation of the male guardianship system, expansion of employment opportunities, and increased representation of women in government, diplomacy, and public administration—have significantly strengthened women's visibility in Saudi public life. These reforms have contributed to greater political participation and improved Saudi Arabia's international image as a reform-oriented state. However, the research also finds that political empowerment remains largely state-driven, with women still facing institutional, cultural, and social barriers in accessing senior decision-making positions.

The findings of the study reveal that Saudi Arabia has experienced substantial political and social transformation over the past

two decades, and women's participation has become an important indicator of this development. Vision 2030 has accelerated women's inclusion in governance and leadership, while legal and administrative reforms have strengthened their political rights. Nevertheless, traditional gender norms, limited political representation, and institutional constraints continue to affect the depth of women's empowerment.

The study concludes that political development and women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia are mutually reinforcing processes. The modernization of state institutions has created greater opportunities for women, while women's increasing participation has contributed to more inclusive governance and national development. However, sustainable political development requires moving beyond symbolic representation toward meaningful participation in policymaking and leadership. The research therefore argues that future progress will depend not only on continuing legal reforms but also on transforming societal attitudes and institutional practices that enable women to participate as equal partners in the Kingdom's political development.

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