



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Women in Lebanon's 2018 Legislative Elections

Monitoring the Media During the Electoral Campaign from a Gender Perspective

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Women Empowered for Leadership



General Scope of the Study

1- Aim of the Study

In a country that boasts diversity and the respect of freedoms, especially the freedom of the press, and being a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it only makes sense to examine how women's participation in the 2018 legislative elections was handled as one of the issues that can contribute to the advancement of

society at large on a legal, sociocultural and media level. But this examination aims first and foremost to find out what is happening and show how the concept of diversity and freedom can be far removed from what is being boasted. Then, this examination seeks to call for nurturing a sense of critical thinking that points to the areas of deficiency in order to move forward toward achieving gender equality and through it:

- Nurturing a culture of social justice and human rights,
- and nurturing a continuous critical review of intellectual and legal trends and the performance of the media for the sake of making progress.

The role of the media seems central in this equation: on the one hand, it's an effective vehicle for the dissemination of cultures and the quest to accepting and practicing them but on the other hand, it is also a reflection of the country's already established political and social culture.

The media is also both a cornerstone of democracy and a key element in electoral campaigns. The study will also address the problem of the media discourse from a perspective related to transparency and mechanisms of power and control.

Women's role in society is becoming increasingly important year after year around the world in an attempt to tackle the causes and offer solutions. There are many problems and they vary from country to country according to the different cultures, laws and abuses.

It's a difficult subject that goes beyond form or ratios and dealing with it is a long-term process. The path that was forged out of the early years of gender discussion—and even before that—is still rugged and requires caution but at the same time, it's urgent and necessary.

2- The Problem

The study focuses on the role and importance of the media in reinforcing the political and social-cultural performance and the performance of the media itself concerning women, their potential and their role in society as leaders, legislators, representatives of the nation and as candidates who are equal to their male counterparts.

The study asks: To what extent can the media be the stepping stone for progress in gender-based equality between the sexes?

The following questions stem from this problem:

- How did the media deal with the issue of female candidates in the recent legislative elections in Lebanon?
- What kind of messages did the media transmit during the electoral campaign in terms of dealing with the issue of female candidates and female voters?
- How much does the media engagement correspond to the concept of gender? Or does the media have a clear image of gender and how can it reinforce the concept? To what extent can the media motivate and contribute to the promotion of equality?
- How can the media help women deputies to step outside the boundary of the legacy of family ties to a male politician so that they can be elected to the legislative authority by convincing voters through their own projects and campaign management?
- How can the media affect the inclusion of the concept of quota as an introduction to enforce the participation of women in leadership and the establishment of this effective participation?
- And, in general: Has the media played the role it is supposed to play in a democratic system, by being the link between the candidate and the voter, and by working on building an aware public opinion out of which political authorities emerge?

3- Sample of the Study

To examine how the media dealt with women during the electoral campaign, the study relied on monitoring media contents as follows:

- Monitoring 8 TV stations from March 6 to May 4 (Télé Liban, MTV, OTV, NBN, LBCI, Future TV, Al Jadeed and Al-Manar).

- Monitoring 6 newspapers during the same period (An-Nahar, Al-Mustaqbal, Al Joumhouria, Al Akhbar, L'Orient le Jour and The Daily Star).
- Monitoring the above-mentioned TV stations during the electoral silence, i.e. from midnight of Friday-Saturday (May 4-5).
- Monitoring via social media:
 - The accounts of female and male candidates on Facebook and Twitter from April 6 to May 6
 - Female candidates' posts during International Women's Day on March 8 and during Mother's Day on March 21.

4- Methodology

To answer the problem, the study examined television and press coverage of female candidates as of the end of the candidacy application period, i.e. from March 6 to May 4. The study also examined the female candidates' social media accounts, checking their profile pictures, photos and videos related to women posted by female and male candidates, as well as the female candidates' slogans. Furthermore, the study examined female and male candidates' posts on Facebook and Twitter in order to cover everything women-related in this electoral campaign.

Observing how the media presents its material and the area it covers provides a denotative indicator that contributes to the solution. Hence, the study focused on:

- The size and type of press and television coverage and the distribution of coverage rates between male candidates and female candidates
- The rate of female candidates' direct access out of the overall coverage
- The size of press interviews
- The space allocated to female candidates in news bulletins and talk shows
- The distribution of the space allocated to female candidates in talk shows and interviews according to political leanings
- The rate of press stories where women were the main topic and the rate of the news space where female candidates were the first story compared to male candidates

- Press coverage of positions in favor of female candidates' political participation and their equality with their male counterparts in terms of assuming public responsibilities

The study also monitored social media sites, namely Facebook and Twitter, checking the female candidates' profiles and the details posted about them.

It looked over photos that contain the female candidates' slogans, videos of female and male candidates concerning women and gender issues, screenshots of some discussions on Twitter (patriarchy), and some sponsored Facebook posts.

It also checked posts between the female candidates' accounts on Twitter and Facebook, their distribution and types, as well as the types of interactive media in their own posts. It did the same with posts between the male candidates' accounts on the aforementioned platforms.

The study chose two women-related events to monitor the female candidates' posts over two days: International Women's Day and Mothers' Day, to see how female candidates integrated both events in their campaigns.

Part I

A theoretical approach

To examine the media coverage during the latest electoral campaign in Lebanon from a gender perspective and to answer the problem presented by the study, there are certain starting points that must be considered while looking into the media and gender.

The presentation must be comprehensive for the issues of women, for the media and the elections cannot be addressed outside the concepts of politics, power and history. More importantly, the topic cannot be addressed without critical thinking, which means that social and historical constants are also subject to scrutiny.

1-The Relationship from a Political Perspective

“Women have been placed in the position of minority status throughout history and even after the grudging extension of certain minimal rights of citizenship and suffrage at the beginning of this [i.e. the twentieth] century,” wrote Kate Millett, one of the leading pioneers of what was known as the second-wave feminism. “It is fatuous to suppose that women [...] have any greater representation now that they vote – than that they ever did. Previous history has made it clear that the possession of the vote for 100 years has done the black man precious little good at all.”

That was in the 1970s when Millett published her book *Sexual Politics*¹ that was translated to French under the title *La politique du mâle* and was described by the New York Times as “The Bible of Women's Liberation.”² It was also considered one of the first books that infuriated men all over the country³.

¹Millett Kate, *Sexual Politics: A Surprising Examination of Society's Most Arbitrary Folly*, Doubleday; First edition 1970.

Pour la traduction française, Gille Elisabeth, *La politique du mâle*, Stock, 1971.

²Sehgal Paul et Neil Genzlinger, « Kate Millett, Whose 'Sexual Politics' Became a Bible of Feminism, Dies at 82 », The New York Times, 8 septembre 2017, URL <http://nouveau.eureka.cc/Link/unisher1/news%c2%b72...>

³ Willson Norma, "Majority Report: A Liberated Glossary: Guide to Feminist Writings", The English Journal vol 63 no 6 page 15, 1974.

In her book, Millett sought to illustrate the mechanisms of power and their relation with gender and sexuality⁴. But she soon published a second book she called *Flying* which included, among other things, confessions about the harassment she suffered because of her first book. That wasn't a long time ago.

The research into the so-called “sexual politics” is linked to questioning the possibility of viewing the relation between the two sexes in a narrow “political light,” i.e. through the power that controls relationships and splits the scene into two groups: one dominant and the other subordinate⁵, while politics in its broader sense—or, as Millett calls it, the ideal politics “which is not what constitutes the political as we know it”—can be “conceived of as the arrangement of human life on agreeable and rational principles from whence the entire notion of power over others should be banished.”⁶ Hence the need to look into politics as a concept.

For over 150 years, women in the US have fought for the right to vote. “And now we have it we realize how badly we were cheated—we had fought so long, worked so hard, pushed back despair so many times that we were exhausted—we just said then give us that and we will do the rest ourselves. But we didn't realize [...] that the ballot is no real admission to civil life in America; it means nothing at all if you are not represented in a representative democracy. [Even though] we are 53% of its population [...] half the population [...] and the largest minority status group in history.”⁷

2-What's the Political?

Philosopher Hannah Arendt who defended the public sphere, pluralism and political work tracked “mental faculties that allow the mind to become truly political... This movement resulting from the act of thinking is what makes the mind a crucial act

⁴Millett K., *Flying (En vol)*, Publisher, Knopf, 1974.

⁵See Millett Kate, *Sexual Politics*, Translated by Hassoun Azza

http://www.maaber.org/issue_may14/spotlights1_a.htm

⁶ Millett K., *Theory of sexual Politics*, *Sexual politics*, Kate Millett, University of Illinois Press, 2000 pp. 23-58.

Millett K., *Theory of sexual Politics*, Translated by Saif El-Dawla Aida, Edited and Foreword by Kamal Hala and Sami Aya, *Feminism and Sexuality*, Feminist Translations Series, Issue 7, Women and Memory Foundation, 2016.

⁷Millett K., *Sexual Politics*, Translated by Azza H.

http://www.maaber.org/issue_may14/spotlights1_a.htm

and one of life's conditions.”⁸ Politics is all about society, and the diversity and exchange within its components, which means that politics “are built on the fact of human plurality.”⁹ In philosophy and theology, man “only exists (or becomes realized) in politics because he benefits from the same rights guaranteed to the most different individuals.”¹⁰

But the search for “what is political” and “what is politics” highlights the failure of “politics” to achieve “the political.” As pointed out by Marcel Gauchet¹¹ in his book *L'avènement de la démocratie* and as expressed by Arendt, “What went wrong is politics, meaning us as a multitude, but not what we can do and create as long as we exist as individuals.”¹²

Achieving the political in politics is both the goal and the challenge in order to keep violence and inclusiveness at bay on the one hand and to achieve equality on the other. Applying reason in thought which Arendt called for so that the thinking becomes political stems from the idea that the essence of the pluralist politics and the meaning of politics is freedom.

3-Women's Representation in Parliament in Lebanon

⁸ Mostakim El-Mahdi, Hannah Arendt, The Philosopher of Politics ... A New Book Looking Into her Theories,” *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 6/5/2016 (From the book by Bin Douda Malika, Hannah Arendt’s Philosophy of Politics, *Manshourat al-Ikhtilaf Publishers- Difaf Publishing*, 2015).

<http://www.alquds.co.uk/>

⁹See Hannah Arendt, *What is Politics*, Translated by Alkhuwailidi Zuheir, Mabrouk Salma Belhaj, Aman Publishing House, Difaf Publishing, Manshourat al Ikhtilaf, Rabat, 2014, p. 5.

“Since philosophy and theology have always been concerned with man and because all their statements are accurate, even when they state that there can not be one man, or only two men, or that all men are simply identical, neither of them has ever found any answer that is philosophically valid for the question: What is politics? There’s a difference in levels between political philosophies and the rest of philosophies in the works of all the great thinkers, even Plato. Politics never reaches the same depth. The absence of depth is nothing but the absence of meaning for such depth in which politics is anchored. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹ Gauchet Marcel, *L'avènement de la démocratie*, Gallimard, 2007.

¹²Arendt H., 2014, p. 134.

Lebanese women have the right to vote and stand for a seat in parliament since 1953.¹³ Nevertheless, only 17 women have served in the House of Representatives so far.¹⁴ Lebanon was ranked 185 out of 193 countries after the 2009 elections where the percentage of women in parliament was 3.1%. However, after the 2018 elections, it progressed to 184 with 4.6%.

4-The Definition of Gender

It's no surprise that elections everywhere receive important media coverage since electoral campaigns are largely media-based. This study monitors the media to see how it covered this period from a gender perspective.

The formation of the concept of gender (or what's known in Arabic as “social type”) has helped determine the differences between gender and sex. For when the latter refers to differences between men and women as biological, the former refers to the differences as social, cultural, etc. Which means it is subject to change. It is “the relationship between men and women on a social, political, cultural and religious basis, i.e. the differences made by humans throughout their long history.”¹⁵

The use of the term “gender” dates back to the late 1960s and early 1970s¹⁶ with Ann Oakley who meant it as “the social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’”¹⁷ and other women writers who were at the forefront of the feminist movement.

¹³Concerning countries where women gained suffrage, “the right to vote remained, until the first third of the nineteenth century, limited to the upper class. Switzerland was the first country to implement universal male suffrage in 1830, followed by France in 1848, Germany in 1871 and then all other European countries. Women's universal suffrage took a different course: the first to grant this right was the constitution of Wyoming State in the US in 1869, while Norway led the way in Europe by giving women this right in 1907, followed by Australia in 1914, Denmark in 1915, both Sweden and the United States in 1920, England in 1928, Turkey in 1934, New Zealand in 1940 and France in 1944. As with men, women’s suffrage had financial, educational or age restrictions. In England, for instance, in the beginning, only women over 30 were allowed to vote.” Al-Shami Hasan, The Importance of Elections in the Democratic System,” Modern Discussion, 8/12/2013.

¹⁴Said Tanios “For the First Time in Lebanon... 6 Women Win Seats in the Parliament,” RT Online, 7/5/2018.

¹⁵Al-Saad Nora Khaled, “Gender and Its Role in Women Issues,” Riyadh, 29/12/2005

¹⁶It is also possible to go back to an earlier date with Margaret Mead who, since 1935, paved the way for the definition of the term by discussing social roles, John Money who defined gender roles in the 1950s, Judith Butler, etc.

¹⁷Labid Rachid, “gender: Concept, Theories and Representations,” Modern Discussion 4/9/2013. See: Oakley Ann, Sex, Gender and Society, Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1972.

The WHO defines gender as “roles, behaviors and social activities that society deems appropriate for men and women.”¹⁸ These roles are a cultural, economic, political and sociohistorical construct and may be the same for men and women. Hence, the concept of gender means that a person feels as either male or female outside the biological factor. The concept helps to eliminate the difference between men and women on the basis of biological determinism and to eliminate the stereotypical image confining both women and men and “elevate the the relations between men and women to a civilized level of rationality”¹⁹ outside the context of rigid biological identity or outside the rigid biological difference and its limitations. The term helps to achieve equality between men and women.

The concept works to eliminate discrimination between men and women based on biological differences and to achieve gender equality.

The concept also helps free societies from the shackles of toxic masculinity and patriarchy, which also hurt men, and improve women’s role in the public sphere. This, in turn, helps advance society toward equality by eliminating the rigid deterministic view of women and men based on biological factors which established how they were supposed to be and what their roles were. Since sex and gender were meshed together, “nature” entrapped women in a rigid box that also defined what a woman was.

The famous quote by Simone De Beauvoir from her book “The Second Sex” in 1949, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” marks the inception of “gender” and challenges the patriarchal society²⁰. Twenty years earlier in 1929, Virginia Woolf spoke of a woman having her own room and financial autonomy which would allow her to write.²¹ She invited her to write on all subjects with no exception.

After developing the concept of “gender” as a variable and a construct, relevant organizations and associations are working on diffusing this concept and they rely on the media because it can play a major role in its application, dissemination and popularization.

¹⁸<http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/fr/>

¹⁹Labid R., *ibid*.

²⁰ De Beauvoir Simone, *Le deuxième sexe*, Gallimard, 1949.

²¹Woolf Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*, Translated by Somaya Ramadan, Madbouly Bookshop, Cairo, 2009

Gender is intertwined with discrimination and to eliminate discrimination, which is a problem on its own—and by “discrimination” here we specifically mean “sexism” which can manifest itself as exclusion, violence and “superiority” of one sex over the other. It's a form of racism against the weaker sex, women.

5-The Definition of Quota

A “quota” which essentially means “allocation” is a means to prevent the weak or lack of representation of women in political life due to their exclusion and marginalization.²²

In principle, when the 189 participating nations have agreed to implement a quota system at the 1995 Beijing Conference²³ during the Fourth World Conference on Women, the proposal was a minimum 30% representation of women in Parliament to be gradually increased until it is automatically abolished when fair representation is achieved. But after 23 years, those countries haven't made progress with the implementation of the quota system on the basis of affirmative action and calls are still being made in Lebanon and around the world to achieve it.

The quota is a temporary solution. Critics see it as a discriminatory system in itself that makes it impossible for women who are qualified to be in the public sphere to prove themselves on their own without requiring such a solution. The political scene in Lebanon has witnessed many debates about the women's quota without it ever being adopted.

6-The Philosophy of Elections

Elections are philosophically linked to uncertainty where people vote to get something better. It's an opportunity to review the previous period and it's—in principal—a stepping stone toward reforms on several levels.

²²“The Quota System: Models and Applications Around the World,” Research Paper, Nazra for Feminist Studies, April 28, 2013.

<http://nazra.org>

²³The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20A.pdf>

This mechanism “for judgment and measurement through review and selection”²⁴ is a periodically recurring opportunity that helps to permanently fix deficiencies. It is linked to democracy and the principle of conscious choice, hence the establishment of a period of electoral silence before the elections.

7-The Definition of Electoral Silence

Article 78 of the 2018 Lebanese Election Law states: “During the election pause period:

Starting from midnight of the day before the election and until the ballot boxes are closed, media outlets are prohibited to broadcast any direct announcement, advertisement or any electoral call, except for the audio or footage that is hard to be avoided during direct coverage of the electoral process. During Election Day, media coverage will be limited to airing the voting process.”²⁵ In the recent elections, the head of the Electoral Supervisory Committee, Judge Nadim Abdel Malek, drew attention to this article.

The silence period can vary from one country to another: Election day, 24 hours before the elections... Some countries even set it as two or three days before election day. The aim is to create a calm atmosphere for the voters so that they can make the right decision about who they will elect away from any influence.

In Lebanon, there was confusion concerning the expatriates’ participation in the elections as it was the first time. The Election Supervisory Authority opted for a compromise leaving the matter ambiguous in a statement issued on April 25: “All media outlets abroad covering the voting process should comply with article 78 of the Election Law No. 44 - 2017 which prohibits broadcasting any direct announcement, advertisement or any electoral call.” This was followed by another paragraph stating: “All media outlets must comply only with statement No. 20 issued

²⁴Gharaibeh Ibrahim, “Elections as a Philosophical and Social Debate,” 25/2/2016.

<http://www.alghad.com/>

²⁵An-Nahar, May 3, 2018.

by this Authority on 14/4/2018 regarding the electoral silence during the elections that will be held in Lebanon on May 6, 2018.”²⁶

As for websites, in France for instance, the law applies to websites and the candidates’ social media accounts. For example, campaign managers may not update the candidates’ websites, and any violation is subject to a fine up to € 3,750.²⁷

As for the expression, the term “digital silence” (*silence numérique*) was first used (during the 2012 French presidential elections). But some prefer the term “freezing,” (*état de gel*) because the term “silence” isn’t accurate for online application²⁸.

In Lebanon, the issue is yet to be decided.

8-Lebanon’s Political Crises

Lebanon is affected by the regional situation and international disputes, and the resulting sharp political discord is reflected on the work of constitutional institutions. It only takes going back a couple of years. For about two and a half years, Lebanon experienced a presidential vacuum when no agreement could be reached about a new president to succeed President Michel Suleiman. Then when Prime Minister Tammam Salam was tasked with forming a caretaker government, it took him over ten months to do so. Political parties were also unable to agree on a new election law, which led to extending the term of the Parliament that had expired in 2013.²⁹

Lebanon is now waiting the formation of Government No. 75 since its independence in 1943 and No. 18 since the end of the war in 1990. “In the past 27 years, after the Taif Agreement, 17 governments were formed in Lebanon, an average of one government every one and a half years. If we add the 4 years after the assassination

²⁶Rida Nazir, “Candidates Who Cannot Remain Silent!”, Al-Modon, 30/4/2018.

²⁷Deborde Juliette, « Ce qu'on peut dire (ou pas) sur les réseaux sociaux ce week-end », Libération, 5/5/2017.

²⁸ Theviot Anaïs « Un silence numérique bavard. Controverses autour de l’interdiction de la propagande politique en ligne avant le vote », *Mots. Les langages du politique* [En ligne], 103 | 2013, mis en ligne le 16 décembre 2015, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/mots/21482>

²⁹Al-Sabbagh Abbas, “After Extending the Parliament Tenure 3 Times... How Important Are the Legislative Elections in Lebanon?” 5/3/2018
<http://www.almayadeen.net/>

of Rafik Hariri to the 9 years after the 2009 elections, the result is that Lebanon had a caretaker government for over 4 years and a presidential vacuum for two years, all that in the span of about 13 years.”³⁰

Lebanon's constitutional crises have adverse effects on implementing the role of institutions. And progress is slow. In the last elections, and in spite of the debate sparked by the new Election Law according to which 128 seats were selected in 15 constituencies, the proportional representation system was adopted for the first time in Lebanon's history.

³⁰Hussein Walid, “Caretaker Government's Duration: 4 Years in 13 Years,” Al-Modon, 23/5/2018.

Part II

Quantitative Analysis of the Media Coverage of the Female Candidates' Campaign

This section presents the quantitative analysis of the media outlets examined by the study for about two months in 2018, from March 6 to May 4. It provides the monitoring results concerning the distribution of the press coverage space of various topics, the size of the news coverage, the size of press interviews, the male vs. female candidates' press coverage rates, and the rate of female candidates' direct access out of the overall coverage. It also reports on the press coverage of positions in favor of female candidates' political participation and their equality with their male counterparts in terms of assuming public responsibilities, etc.

The analysis also includes the distribution of the overall time allocated to the type of television coverage, the topics of television coverage, the female vs. male candidate time slots of news reports, the rate of female candidates' direct access out of the overall television coverage, the rate of coverage that female candidates received directly out of the overall coverage of all candidates, the distribution of the space allocated to female candidates in talk shows and interviews according to political leanings, coverage of the different parties on private TV stations, and the space allocated by private TV stations to independent candidates including those on the major parties' lists, etc.

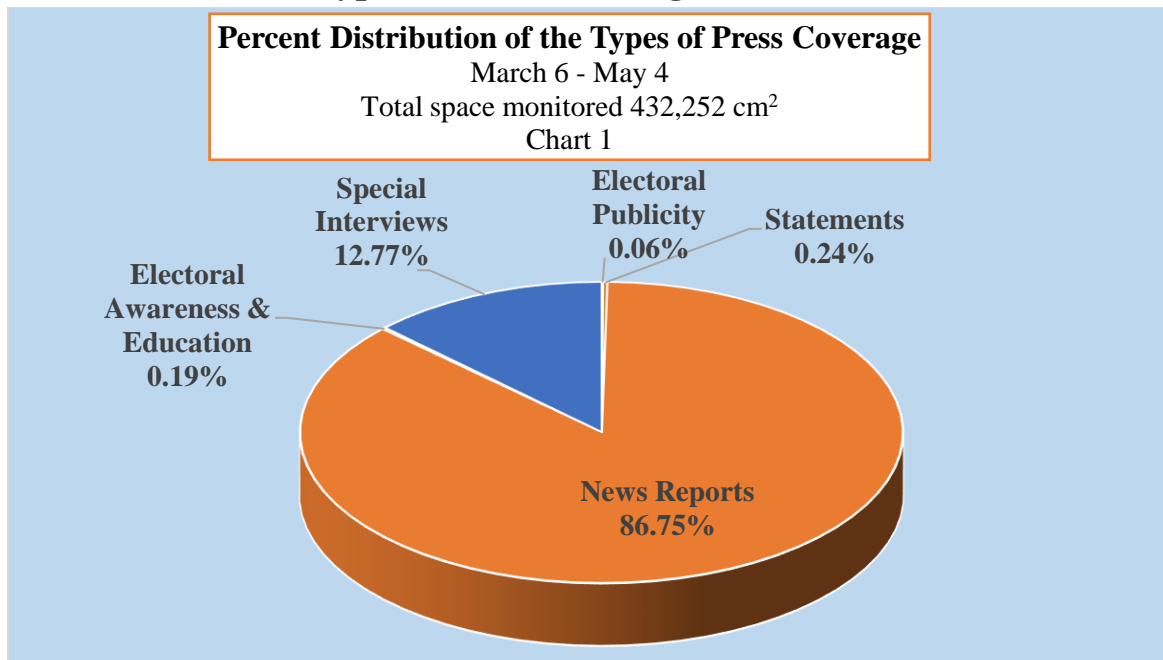
Moreover, it highlights the types of electoral silence violations in all monitored TV stations, and their distribution according to the allocated space and to each TV station.

It additionally shows the results of monitoring social media sites, such as posts between the female candidates' accounts on Twitter and Facebook from April 6 to May 6 2018, their distribution and types, as well as the types of interactive media in their own posts. It did the same with posts between the male candidates' accounts on the two aforementioned platforms.

This section provides charts as an easier way to view the results.

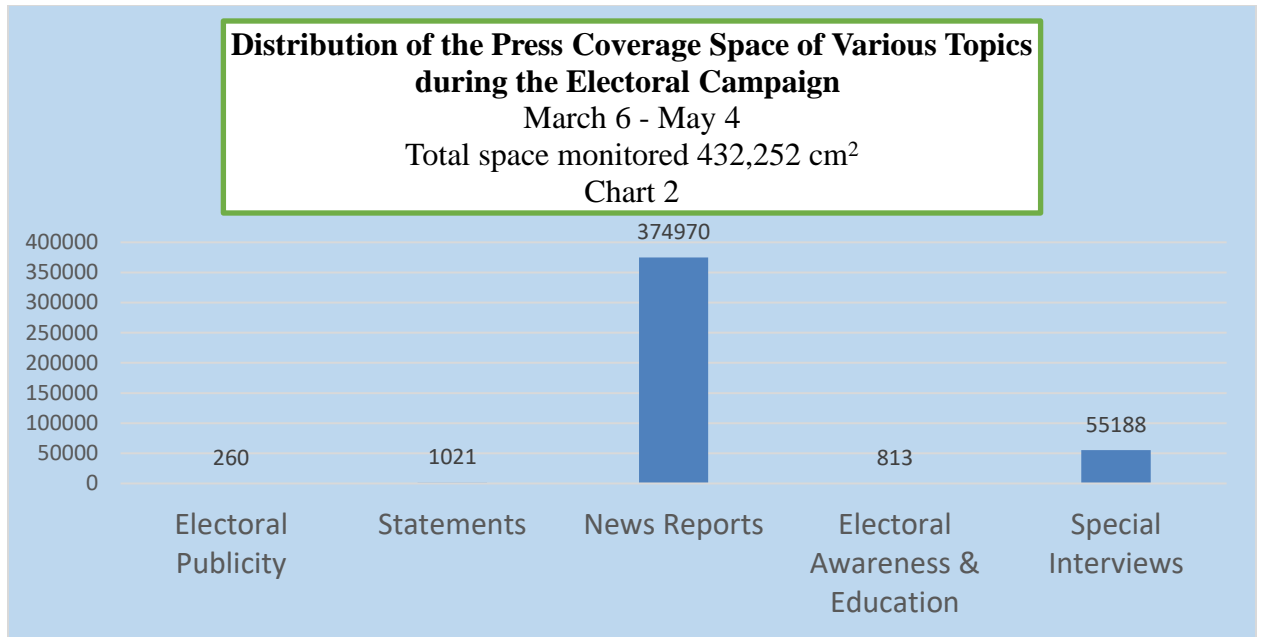
First: In the Written Press

1- Distribution of the Types of Press Coverage



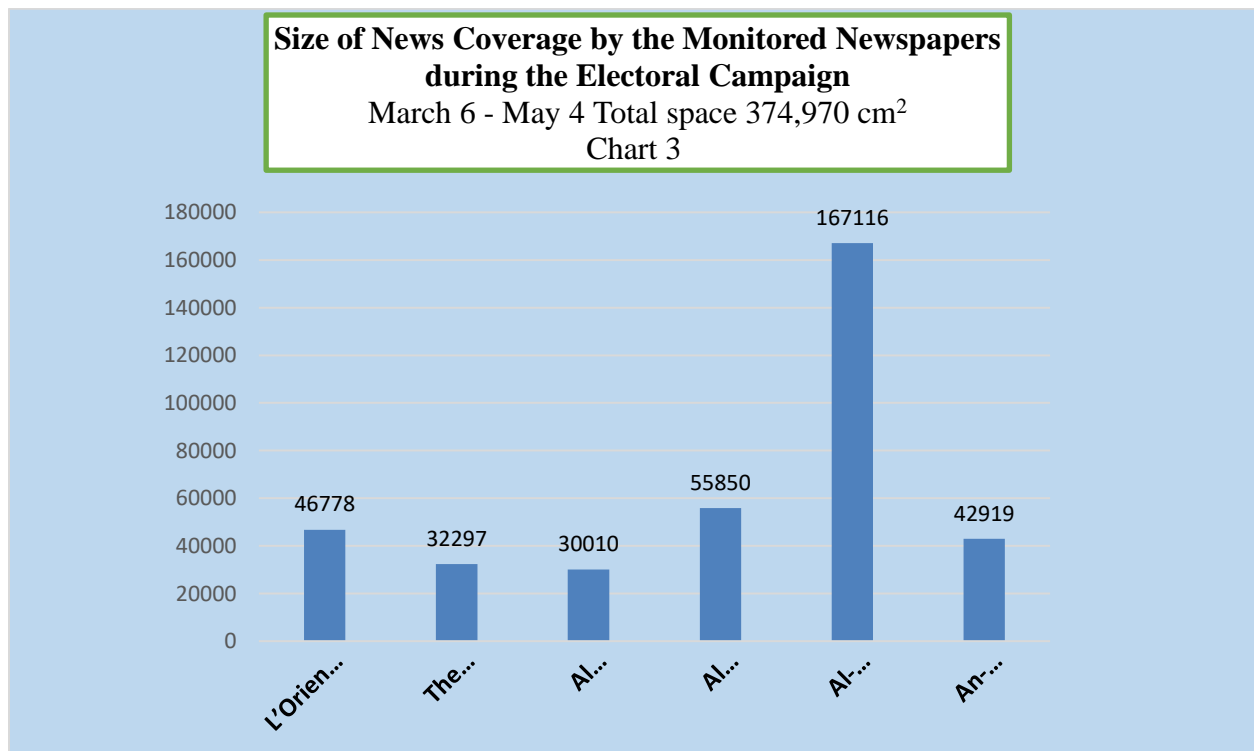
Most press coverages came in the form of news reports at 86.75% of the total space monitored, followed by special interviews with a wide gap at 12.77%, then at close and almost nonexistent rates: statements, awareness and education, and electoral publicity (ranging between 0.24% and 0.06%).

2- Distribution of the Press Coverage Space of Various Topics



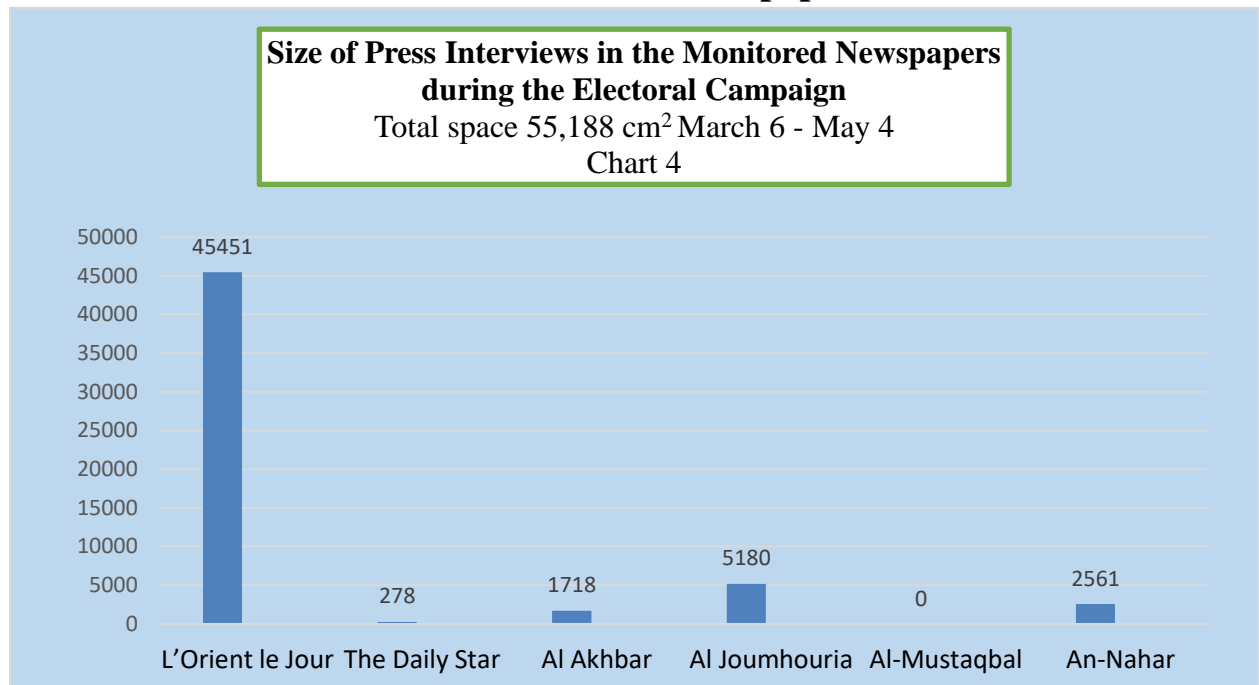
This chart shows the distribution of the sizes of the press coverage space of various topics in cm². News reports clearly dominated the space.

3- Size of News Coverage by the Monitored Newspapers



At 44.56%, Al-Mustaqbal led the coverage space by a wide margin, followed by Al Joumhouria 14.89%, L'Orient le Jour 12.47%, An-Nahar 11.44%, The Daily star 8.16% and Al Akhbar 8%.

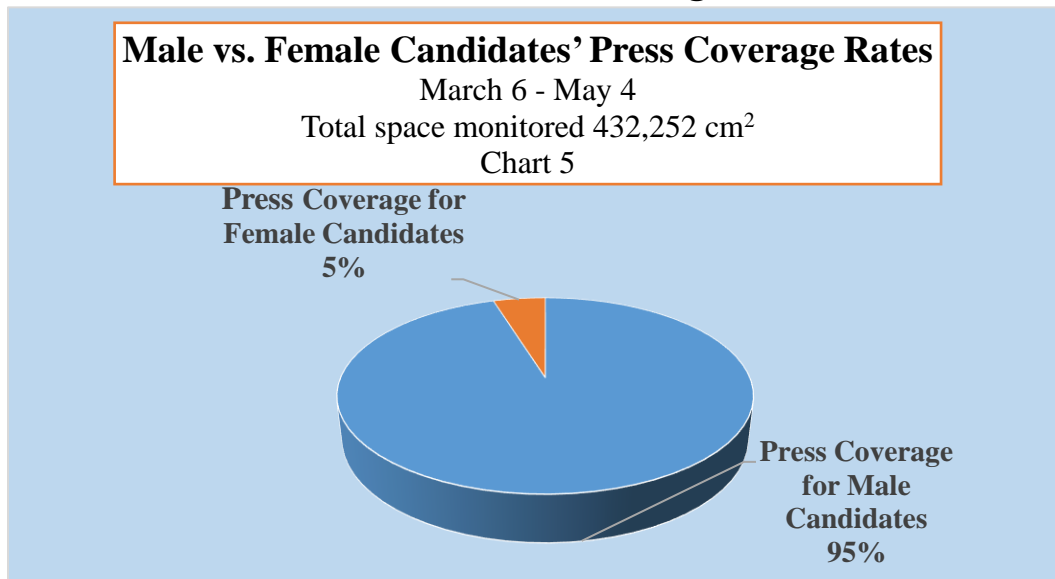
4- Size of Press Interviews in the Monitored Newspapers



L'Orient le Jour had the highest percentage of interviews at 82.35%. They asked male and female candidates the same questions, plus the question of whether or not they were deputies before. In other newspapers: Al Joumhouria 9.38%, An-Nahar 4.64%, Al Akhbar 3.11% and The Daily Star 0.50%.

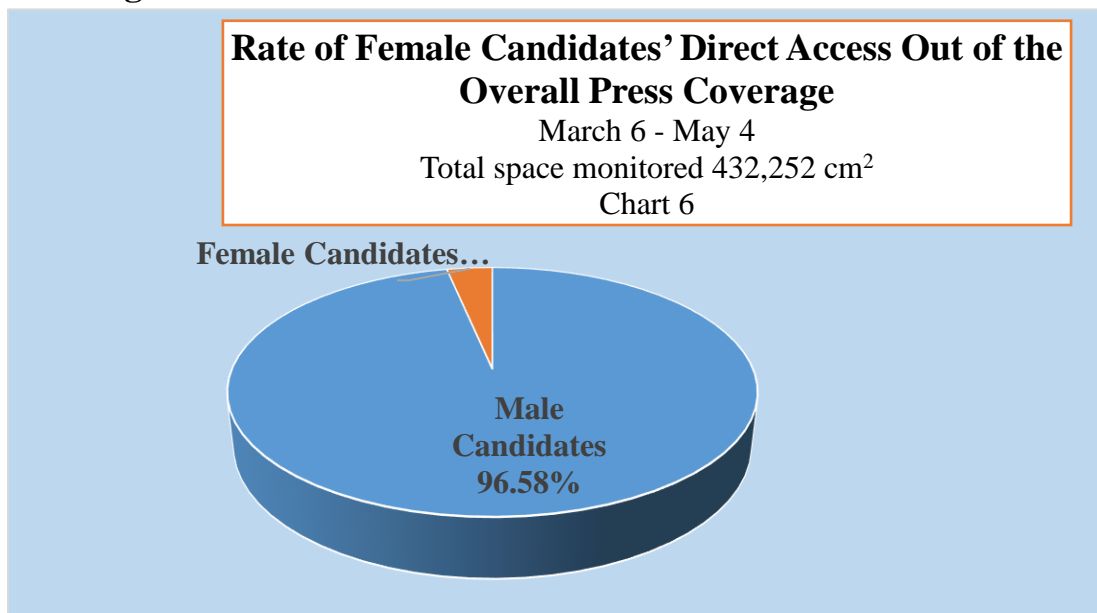
While it came first in news coverage, Al-Mustaqbal published zero interviews during the monitored period.

5- Male vs. Female Candidates' Press Coverage Rates



The overall coverage space was 432,252 cm². The share of press coverage for female candidates was 20,830 cm² (or about 5%) compared to 411,422 cm² for male candidates (or about 95%).

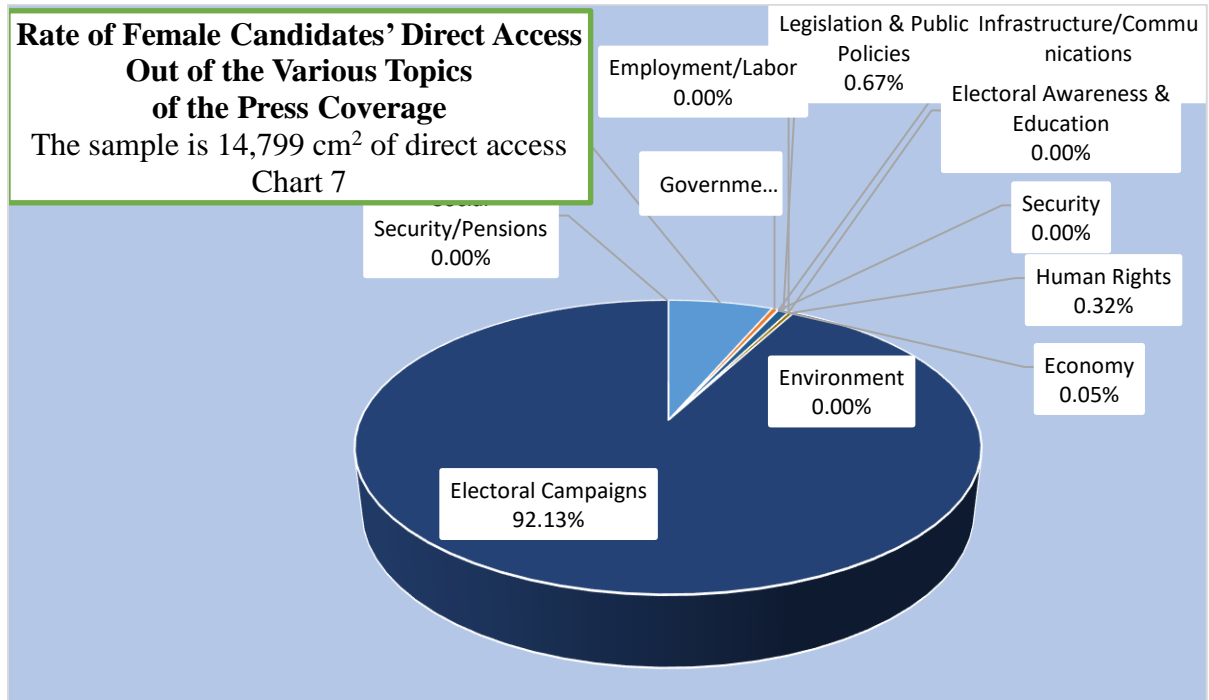
6- Rate of Female Candidates' Direct Access Out of the Overall Press Coverage



Direct access means direct speech or the literal text of the female candidates' statements through press coverage (direct statement).

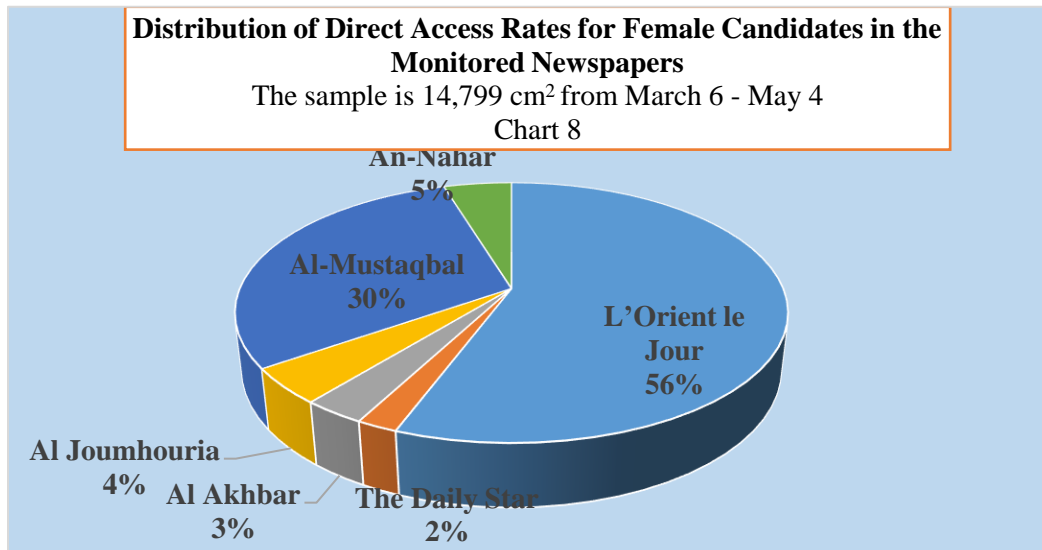
A mere 3.4% was recorded for the female candidates out the total coverage.

7- Rate of Female Candidates' Direct Access Out of the Various Topics of the Press Coverage



The chart shows how the direct access rates for female candidates were distributed among the various topics of the press coverage. The highest and almost total percentage was for electoral campaigns (92.13%) while the rate was 0% for topics such as security, the environment, Social Security, infrastructure, employment and awareness.

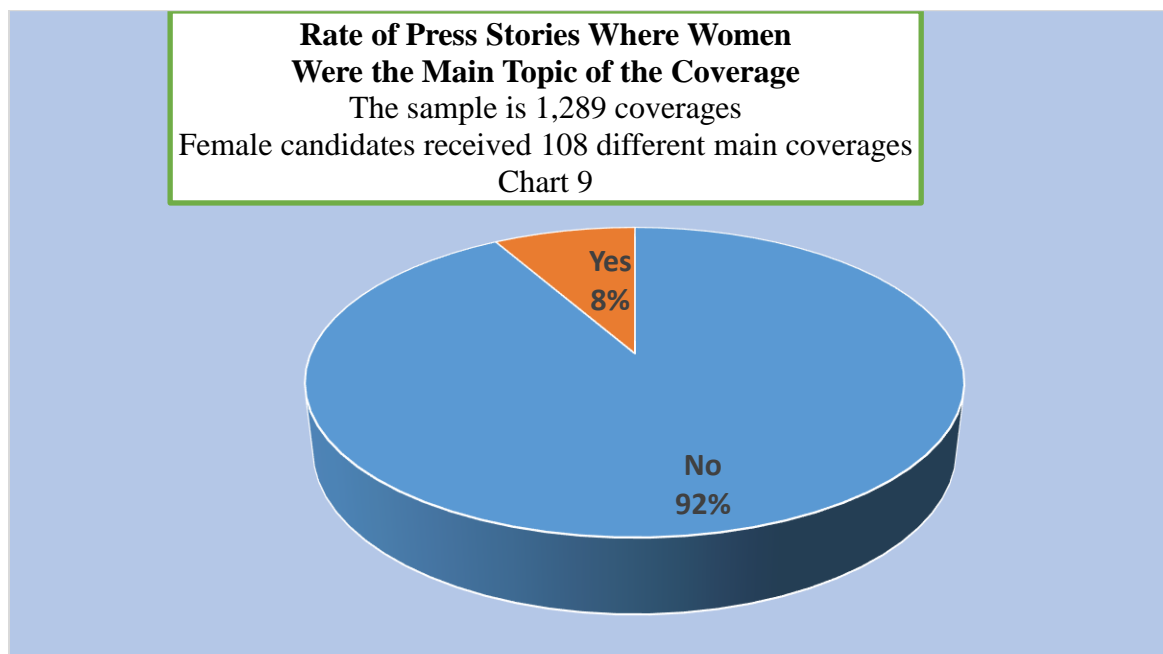
8- Distribution of Direct Access Rates for Female Candidates in the Monitored Newspapers



L'Orient le Jour had the highest percentage of providing direct access for female candidates at 56%, followed by Al-Mustaqbal at 30%, then very low and close rates recorded by An-Nahar 5%, Al Joumhouria 4% and Al Akhbar 3%.

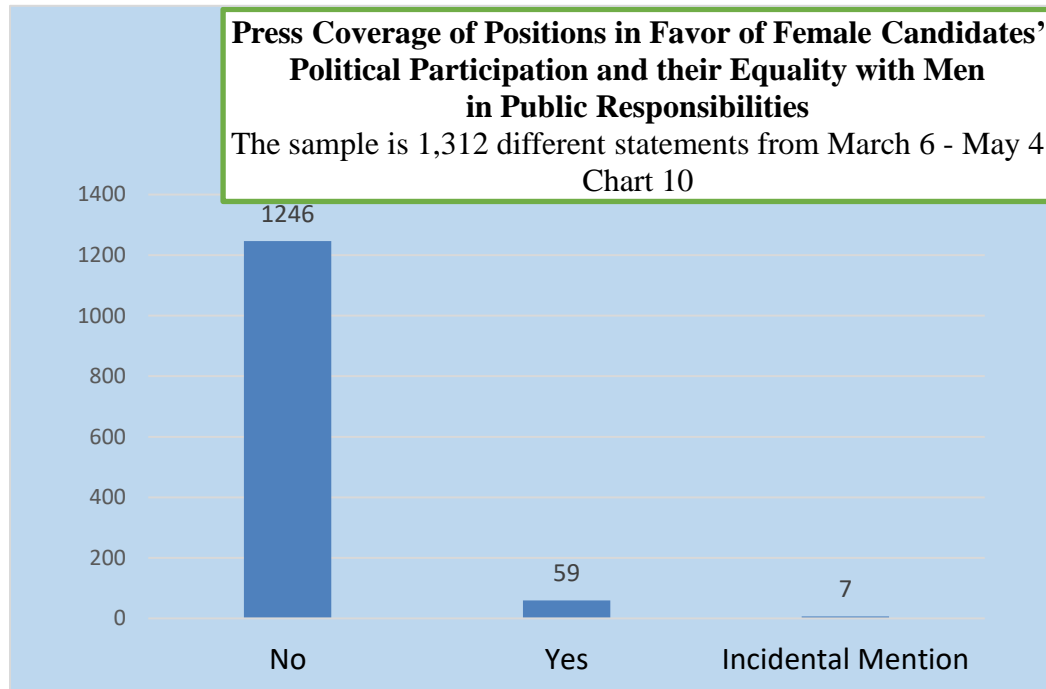
L'Orient le Jour alone accounts for more than half of the total percentage of overall access compared to the rest of the newspapers combined.

9- Rate of Press Stories Where Women Were the Main Topic of the Coverage



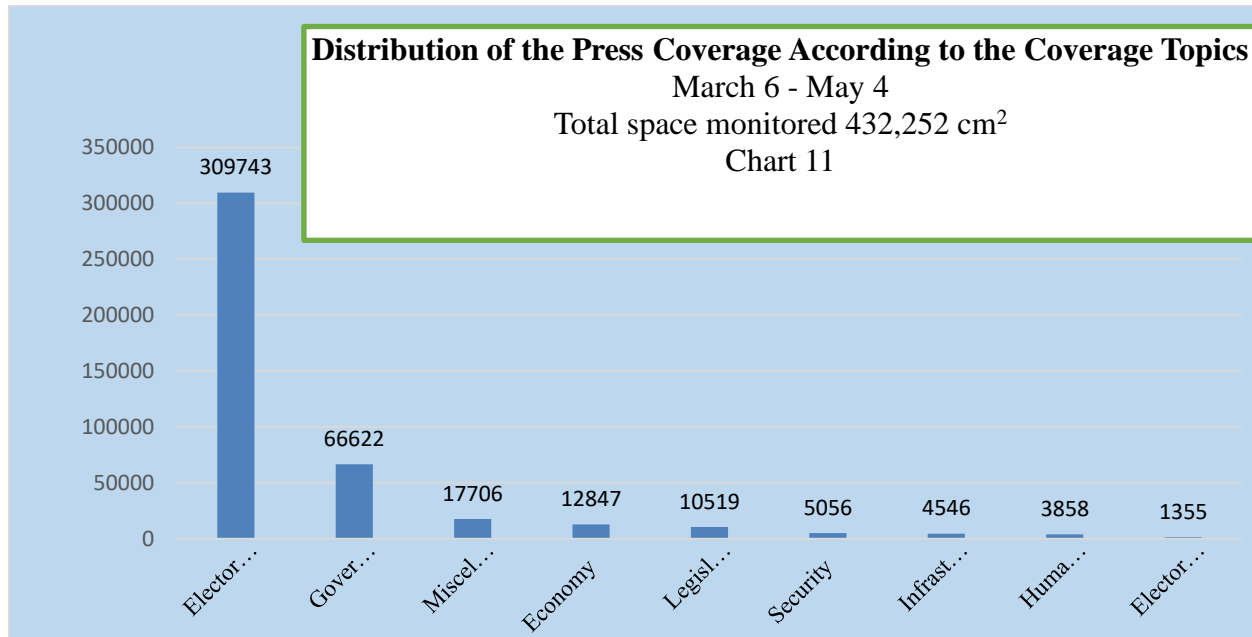
Women's presence was insignificant in press stories as a main topic of coverage and barely reached 8%.

10- Press Coverage of Positions in Favor of Female Candidates' Political Participation



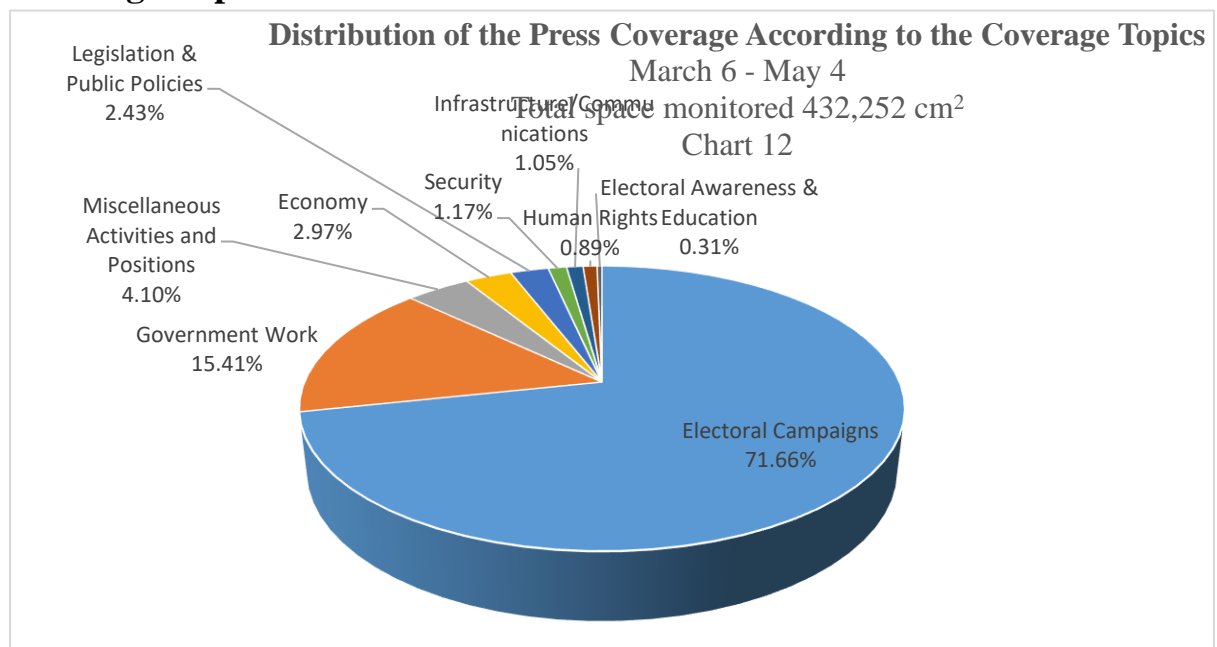
The chart shows that 94.96% of monitored positions didn't address the topic of female candidates' political participation and their equality with their male counterparts in terms of assuming public responsibilities, as opposed to 4.49% of positions that were in favor of it and discussed it as a main topic.

11- Distribution of the Press Coverage According to the Coverage Topics



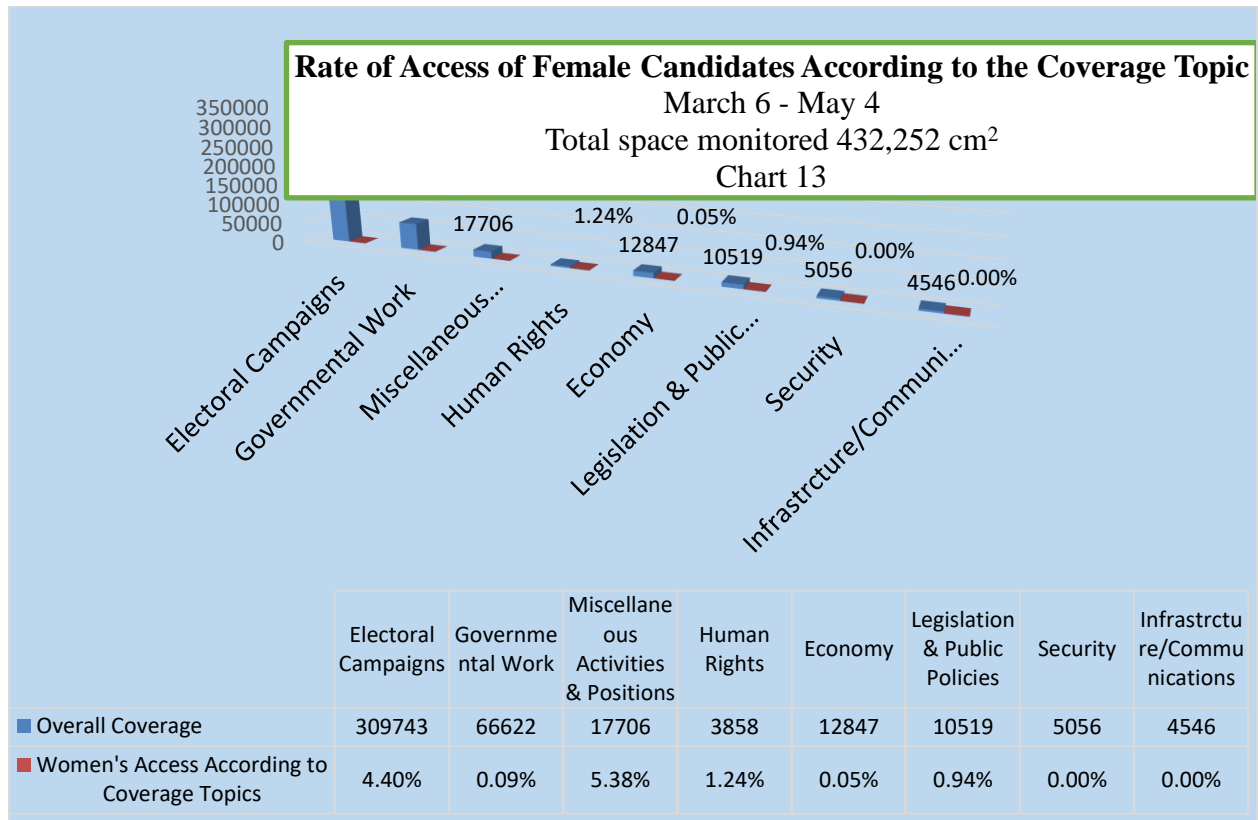
The chart shows the distribution of the coverage which reflected by their sizes the huge disparity between the first topic (electoral campaigns) and the rest of the topics.

12- Distribution of the Rates of the Press Coverage According to the Coverage Topics



As expected, for the distribution of coverage topics, electoral campaigns scored the highest share of the rates at 71.66%, while awareness and education scored the lowest rate of 0.3%.

13- Rate of Access of Female Candidates According to the Coverage Topic

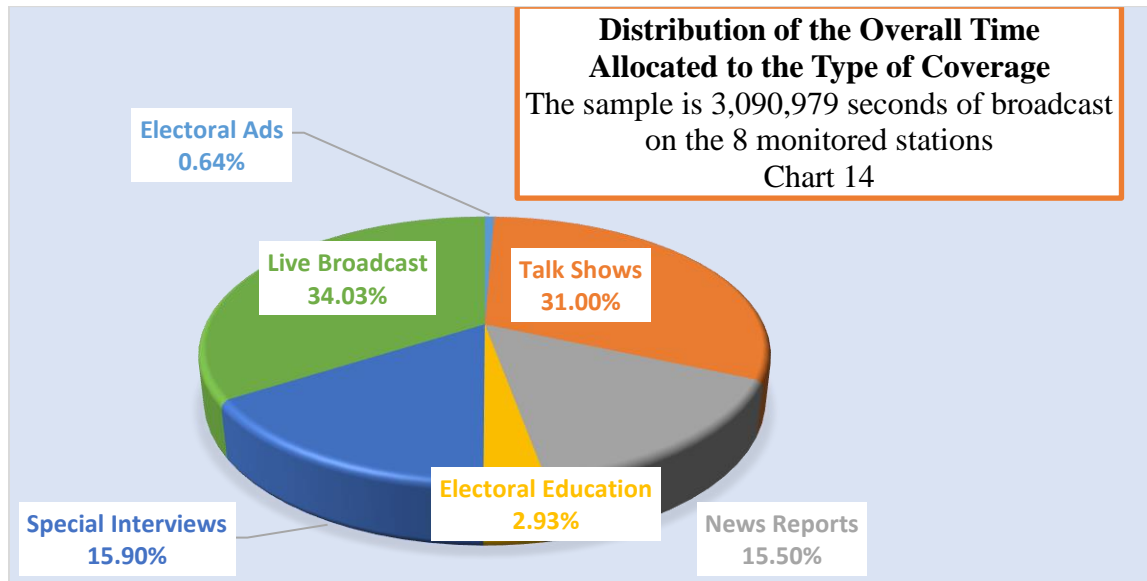


The rate of female candidates' access is distributed according to the coverage topic out of the total coverage: miscellaneous activities and positions 5.38%, electoral campaigns 4.40%, human rights 1.24%, legislation and public policies 0.94%, while the other topics were almost at 0%.

Second: On Television

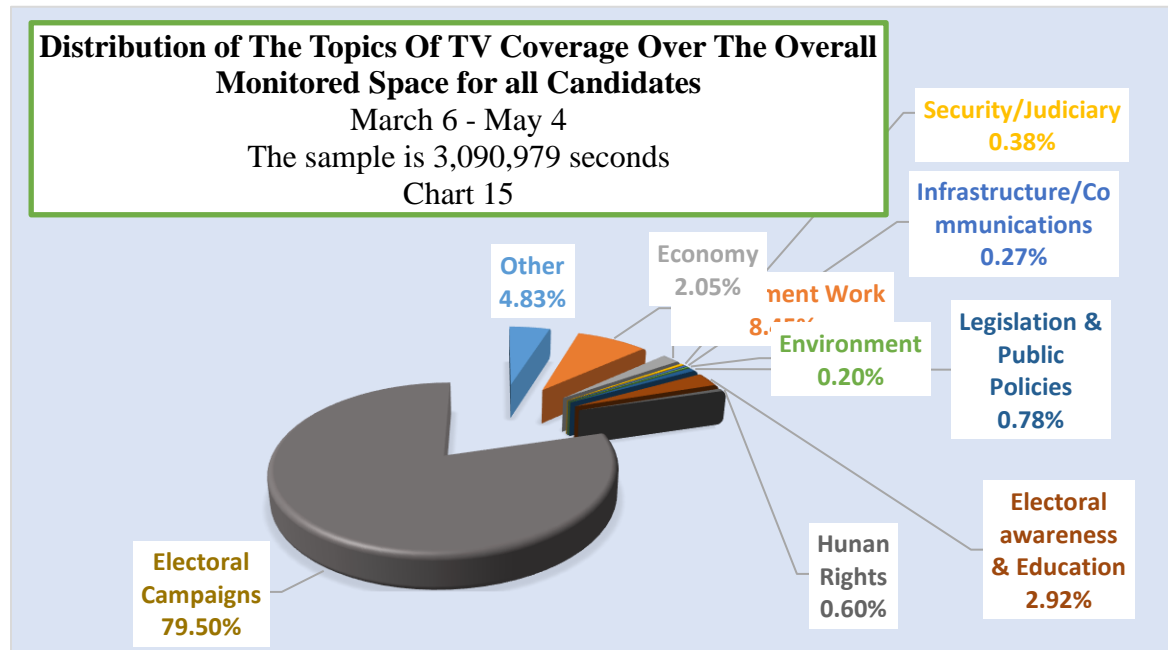
A. Coverage, Distribution

1- Distribution of the Overall Time Allocated to the Type of Coverage on TV Stations



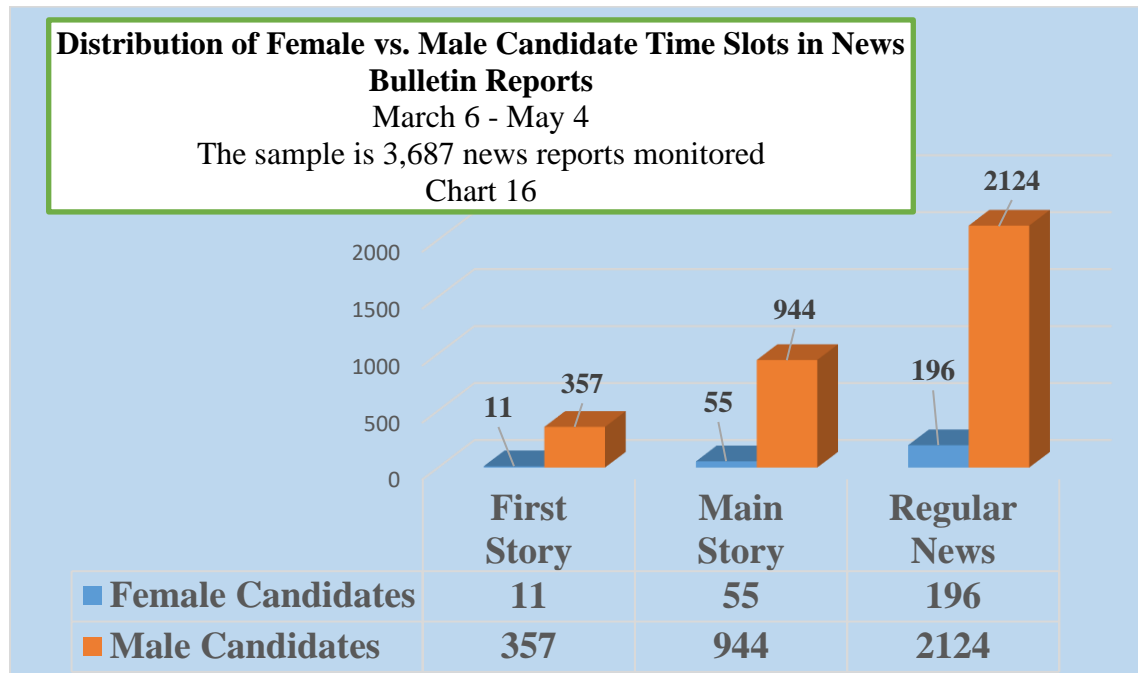
The time rates according to the type of coverage were closely divided between live broadcast 34.03% and talk shows 31% on one hand, and between special interviews 15.9% and news reports 15.5% on the other. The time rate for electoral education was negligible at 2.9%. Talk shows and live broadcast together accounted for slightly over half of the total overall time.

2- Distribution of the Topics of TV Coverage over the Overall Monitored Space



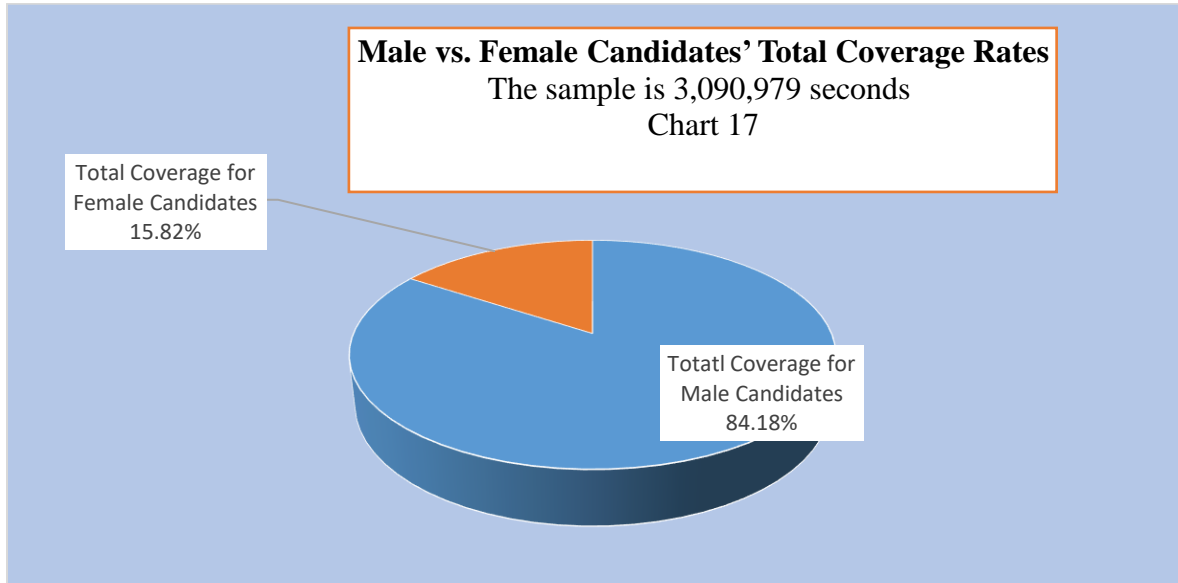
Television coverage of electoral campaigns (for two months) reached 79.50% of the overall coverage. The monitoring revealed that 12% of coverage was about the different candidates doing their ministerial, parliamentary or general activities through conferences and workshops. In other words, no more than 2% of candidates benefited from a 12% overall television coverage which was supposed to benefit 592 candidates belonging to the different lists, only because of their government jobs and their positions in the public political life.

3- Distribution of Female vs. Male Candidate Time Slots in News Bulletin Reports



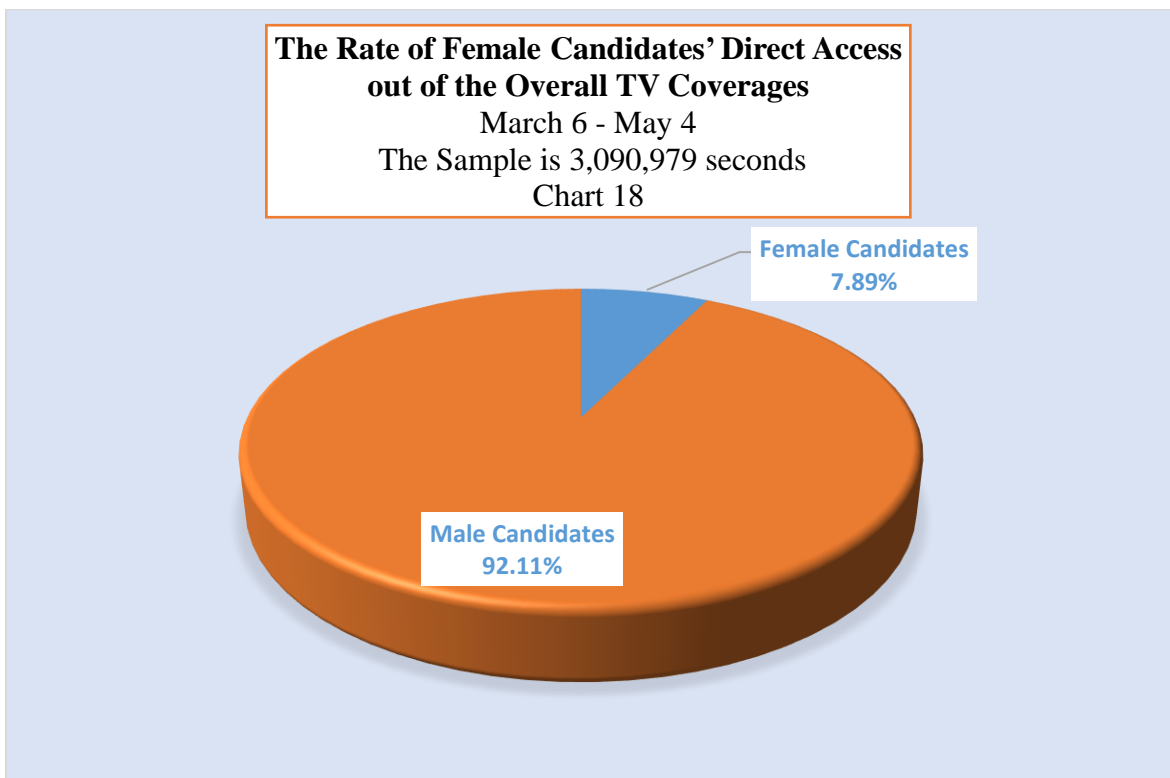
Out of 3,687 different news reports, female candidates benefited from 11 instances of coverage as first news, or 0.3%, compared to 357 instances for male candidates, or 9.7%. The percentage of regular news reports was 57.60% for male candidates and 5.31% for female candidates. The disparity between female and male candidates was evident in all the time slots of news reports.

4- Male vs. Female Candidates' Total Coverage Rates



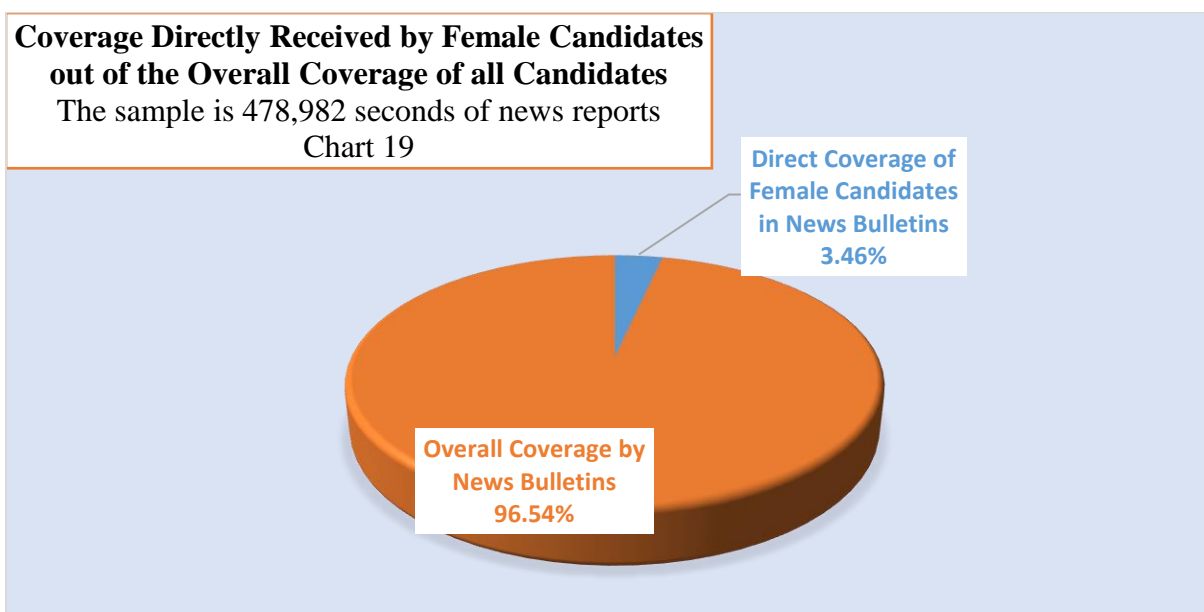
The total coverage between Male and female candidates was in favor of men who had 84.1% as opposed to women 15.8%.

5- The Rate of Female Candidates' Direct Access out of the Overall TV Coverages



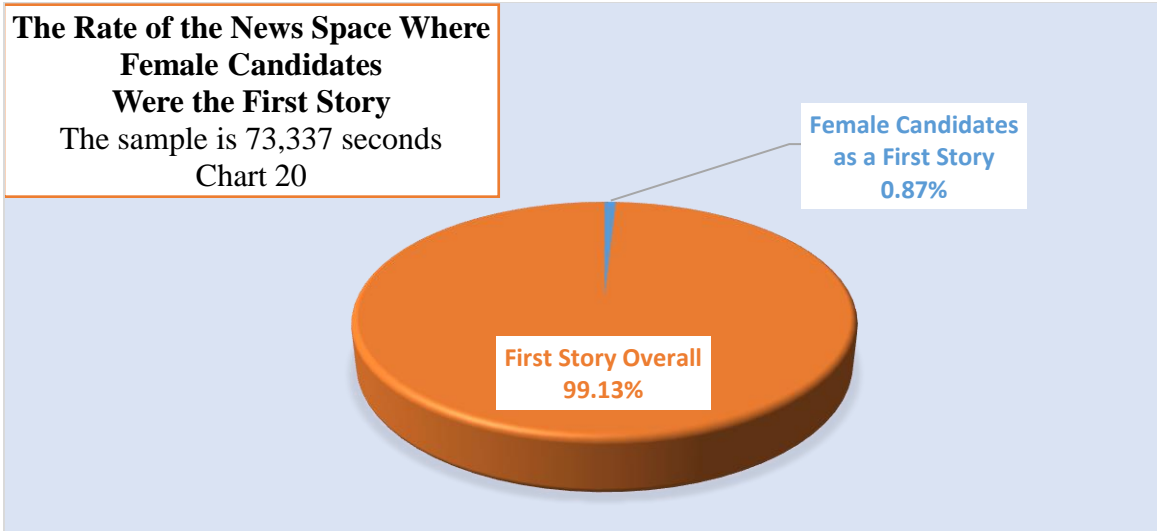
Female candidates' direct access out of the overall television coverages was 7.89%, a very small percentage compared to the space given to male candidates. This means that female candidates didn't have an adequate opportunity to directly address public opinion through a medium that is highly important and a cornerstone for electoral campaigns.

6- Coverage Directly Received by Female Candidates out of the Overall Coverage of all Candidates



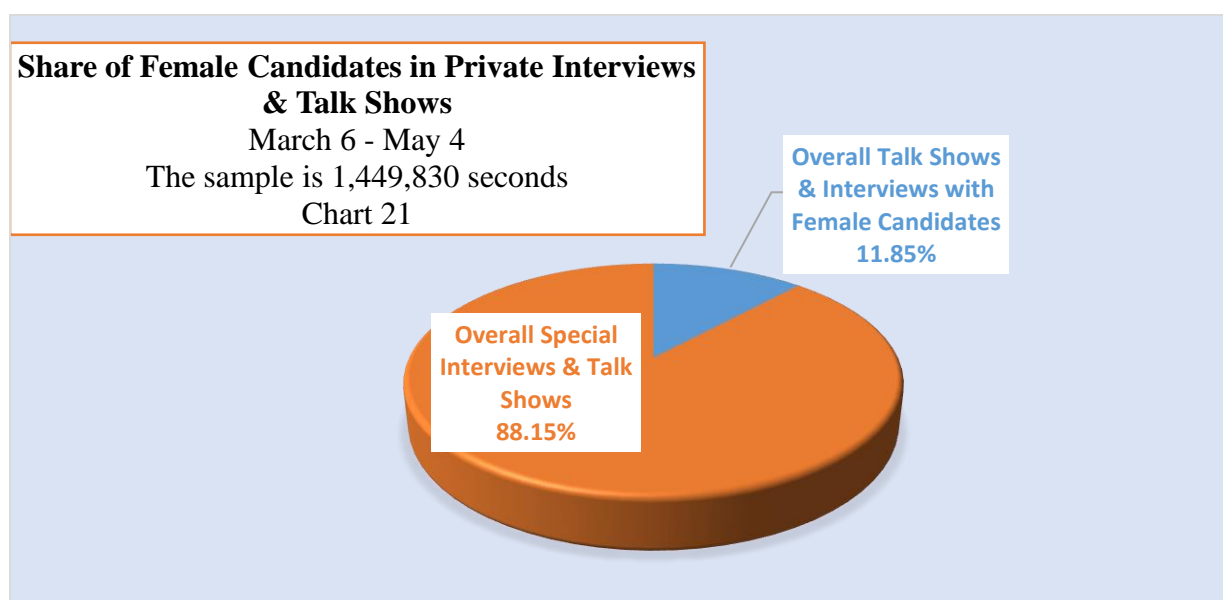
The direct coverage of female candidates in news bulletins was 3.46% out of the overall coverage of all candidates. The previous chart already showed the female candidates' direct access out of the overall television coverages, which was 7.89%. These percentages reflect the small space acquired by female candidates in the central means used for electoral campaigns, i.e. television, and in its main segment, i.e. the news bulletin.

7- The Rate of the News Space Where Female Candidates Were the First Story



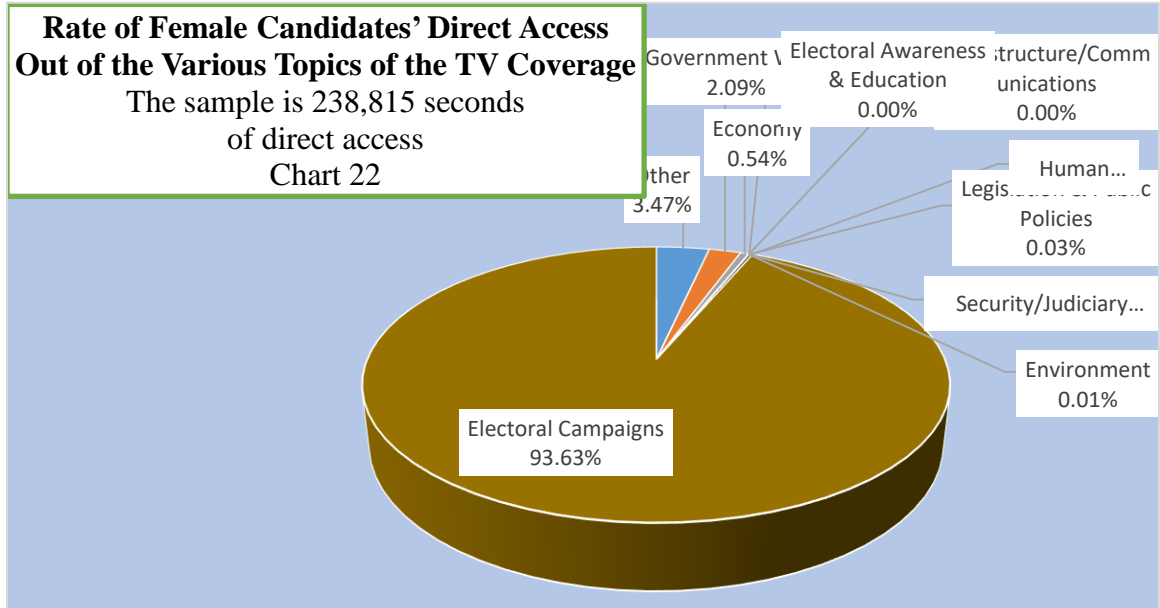
The space occupied by female candidates as a first story in TV news was almost nonexistent at 0.87% compared to the space dedicated to male candidates at 99.13%. Chart 9 showed a higher rate of press stories where women were the main topic of the coverage (8%).

8- Share of Female Candidates in Private Interviews and Talk Shows



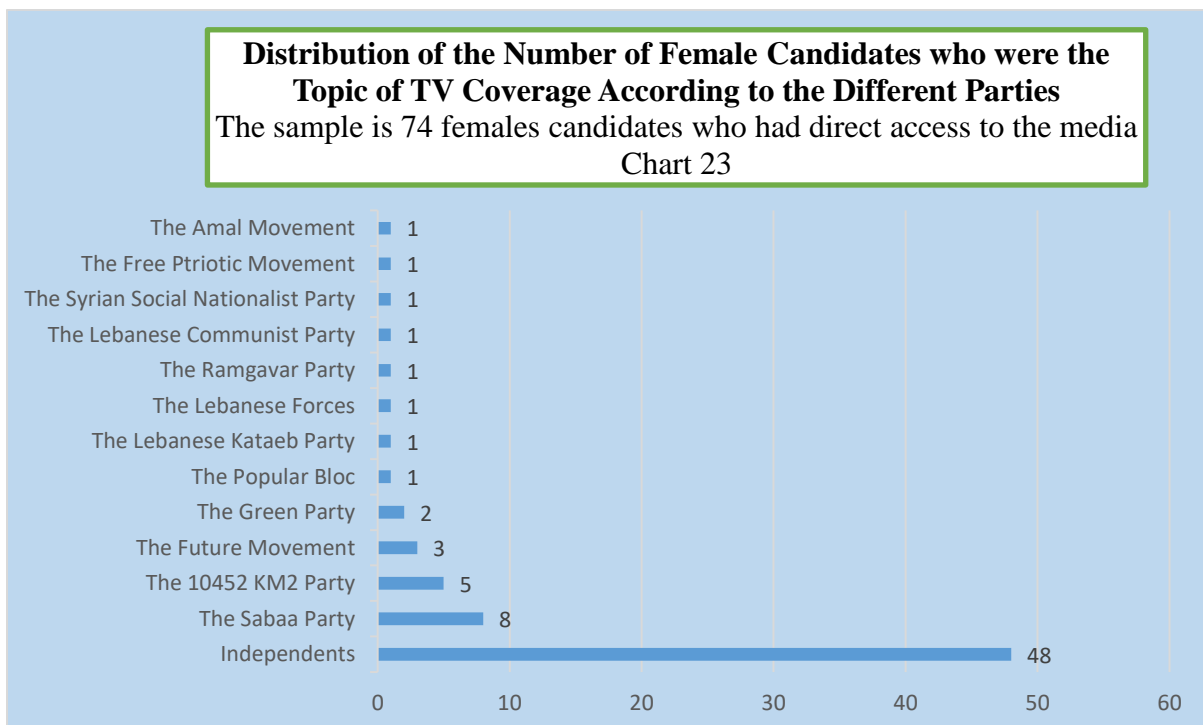
The share of female candidates in private interviews and talk shows was a low 11.85%, but it was still higher than the 3.46% of direct coverage they received in news bulletins.

9- Rate of Female Candidates' Direct Access Out of the Various Topics of the TV Coverage



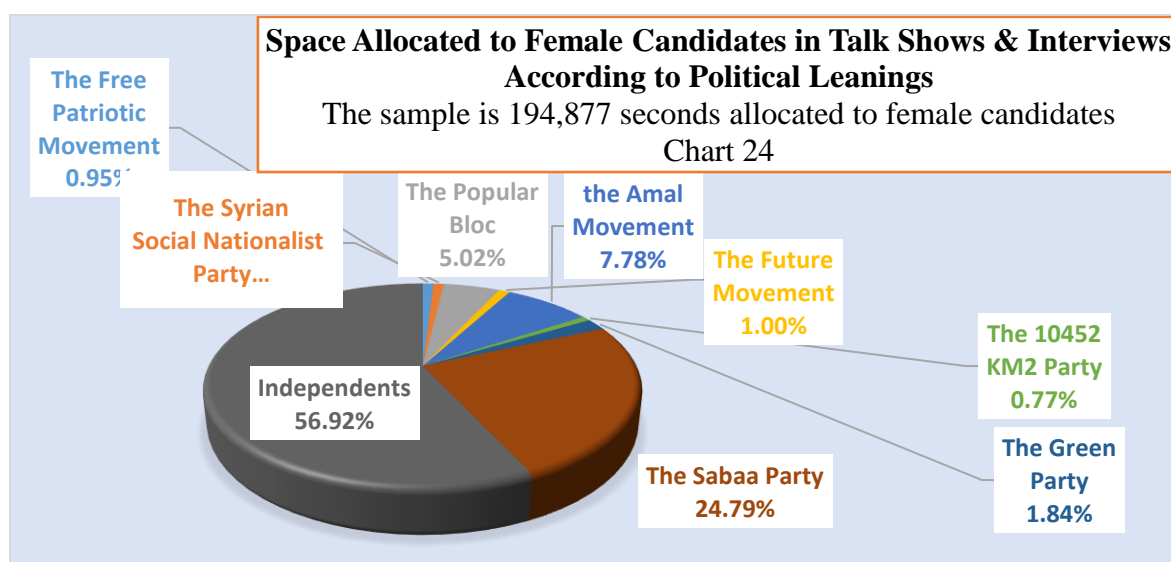
The highest, almost total percentage, goes to the topic of electoral campaigns.

10- Distribution of the Number of Female Candidates who were the Topic of TV Coverage According to the Different Parties



48 out of 74 independent female candidates had direct access to the media, i.e. 64.86% which is the highest percentage, followed by female candidates of the Sabaa Party at 10.8%, 6.75% for the 10452 KM2 Party, 4% for the Future Movement, 2.70% for the Green Party and 1.35% for each of the remaining parties.

11- Space Allocated to Female Candidates in Talk Shows and Interviews According to Political Leanings

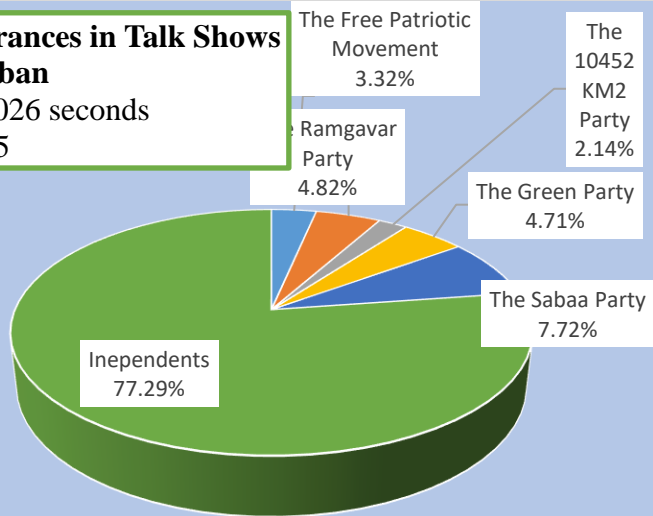


Independent women received the highest percentage of television coverage 55.53% in talk shows and special interviews on various private TV stations and Télé Liban, followed by 24.79% for the Sabaa Party female candidates, and the rest was divided among the other parties' female candidates.

The following two charts detail the results received by female candidates on Télé Liban and private stations.

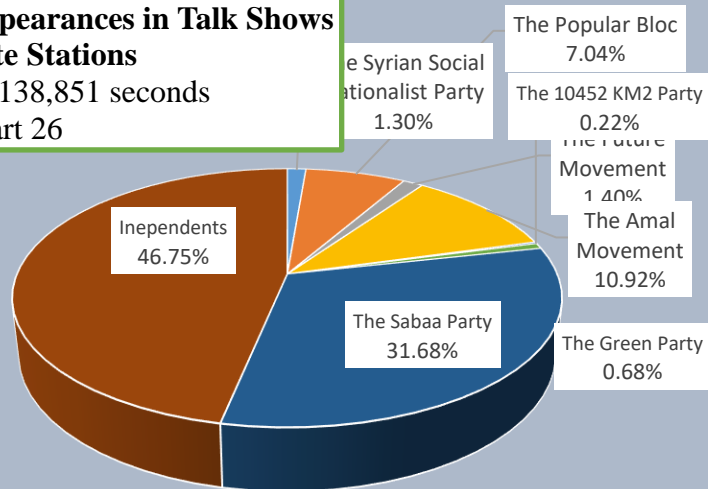
Female Candidates' Appearances in Talk Shows on Télé Liban

The sample is 56,026 seconds
Chart 25

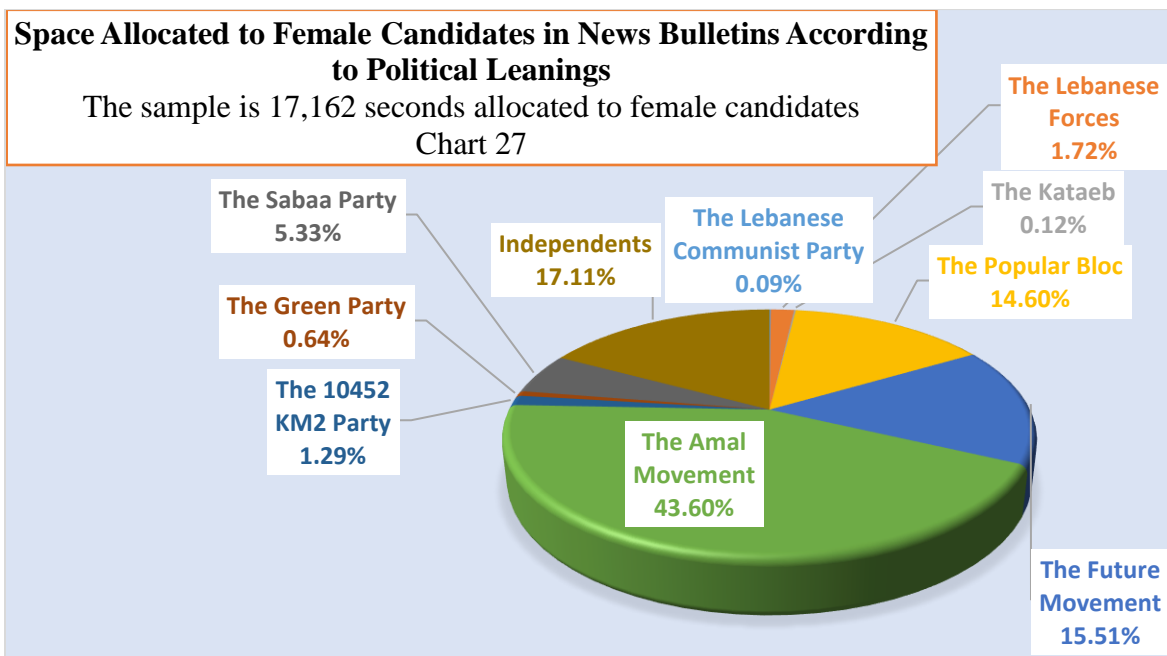


Female Candidates' Appearances in Talk Shows on Private Stations

The sample is 138,851 seconds
Chart 26



12- Space Allocated to Female Candidates in News Bulletins According to Political Leanings



The Amal Movement female candidates received the highest percentage of allocated space in news bulletins 43.60%, followed by independent female candidates 17.11%, the Future Movement female candidates 15.51% and the Popular Bloc female candidates 14.60%. The remaining percentages, ranging between 5% and 0%, were divided among the other political leanings. Interestingly, the Amal Movement nominated one female candidate who took up nearly half of the public space.

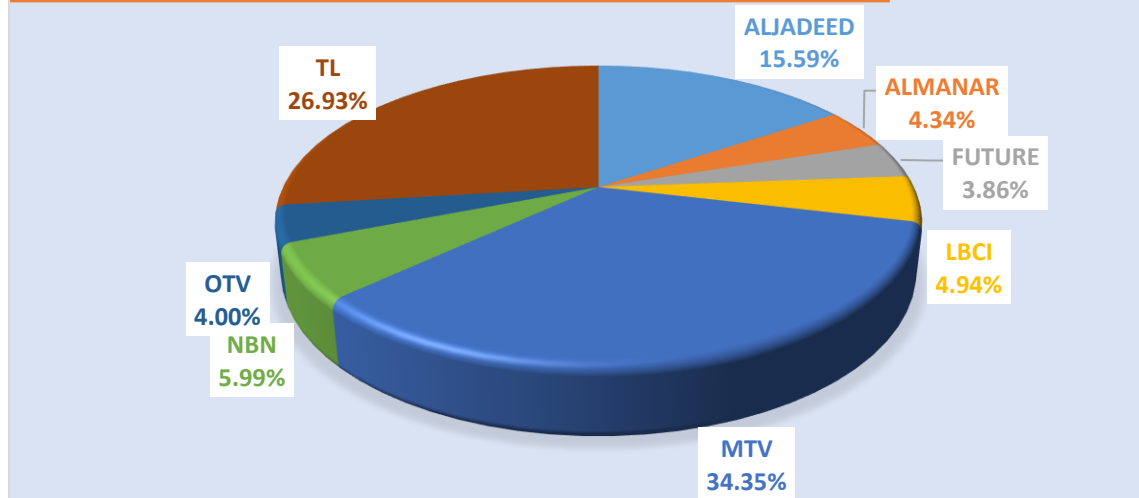
13- The Rate of Female Candidates' Direct Access According to TV Stations

The Rate of Female Candidates' Direct Access According to TV Stations

March 6 - May 4

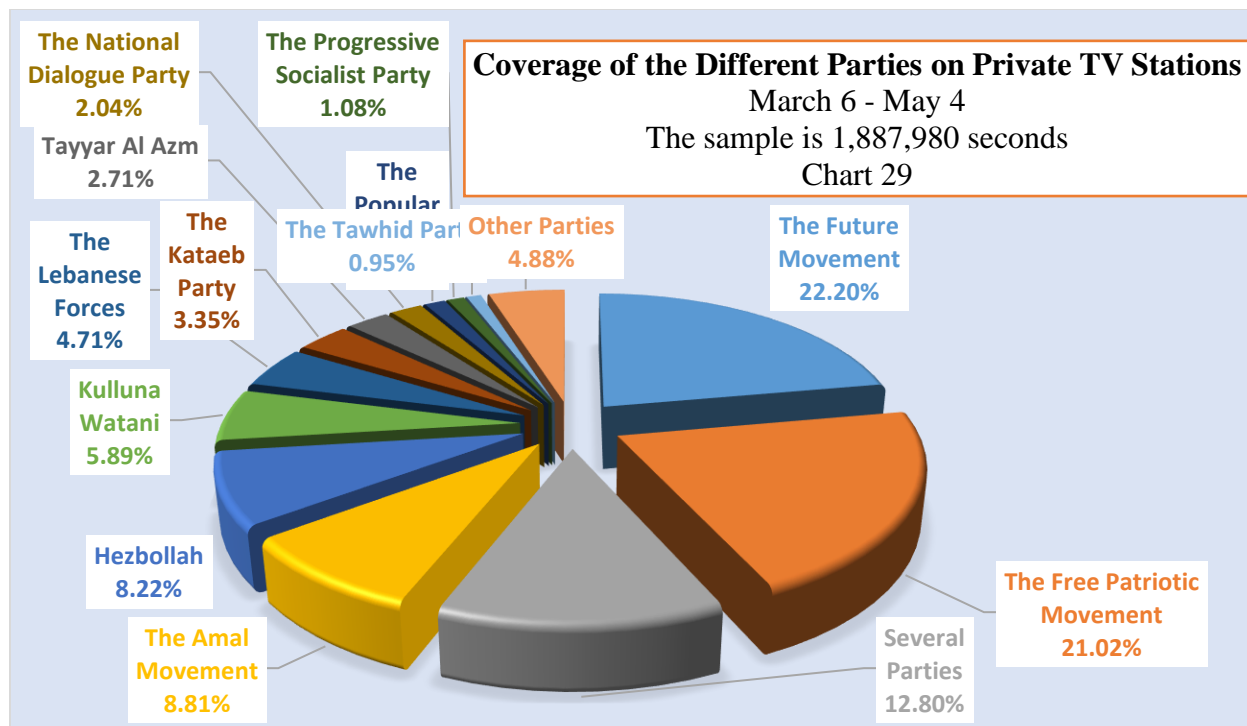
A total of 234,961 seconds

Chart 28



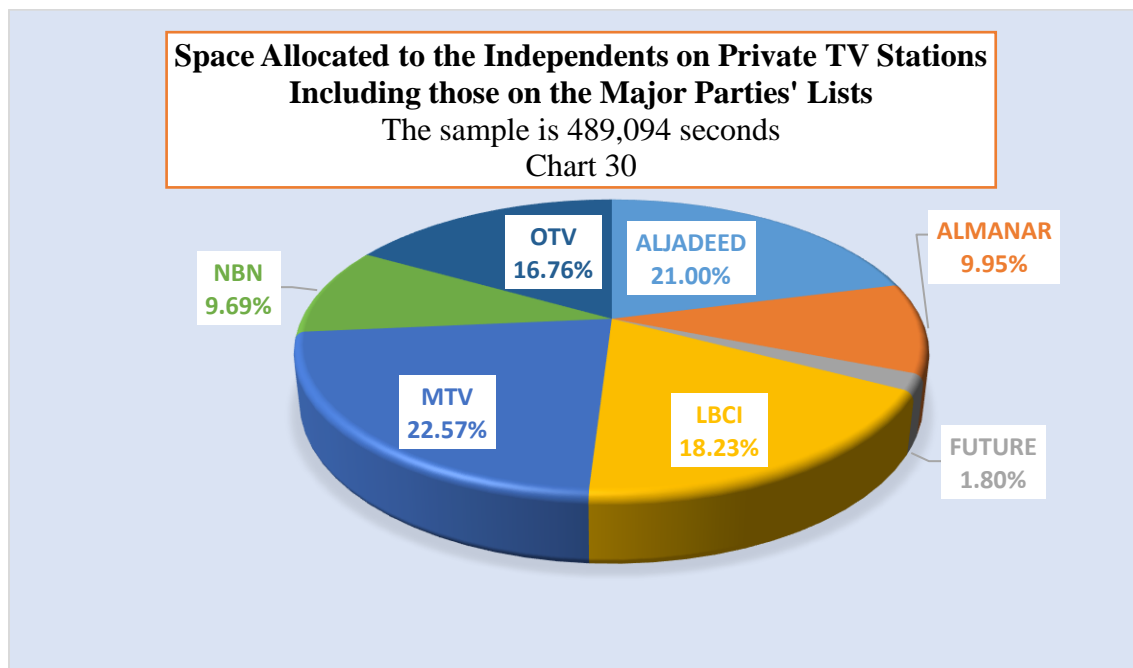
Female Candidates' Direct Access was 34.3% on MTV, followed by 26.9% on Télé Liban and by 15.5% on Al Jadeed. These three TV stations made up 76% combined while the remaining percentages were 5.9% on NBN, 4.9% on LBCI, 4.3% on Al-Manar, 4% on OTV and 3.8% on Future TV.

14- Coverage of the Different Parties on Private TV Stations



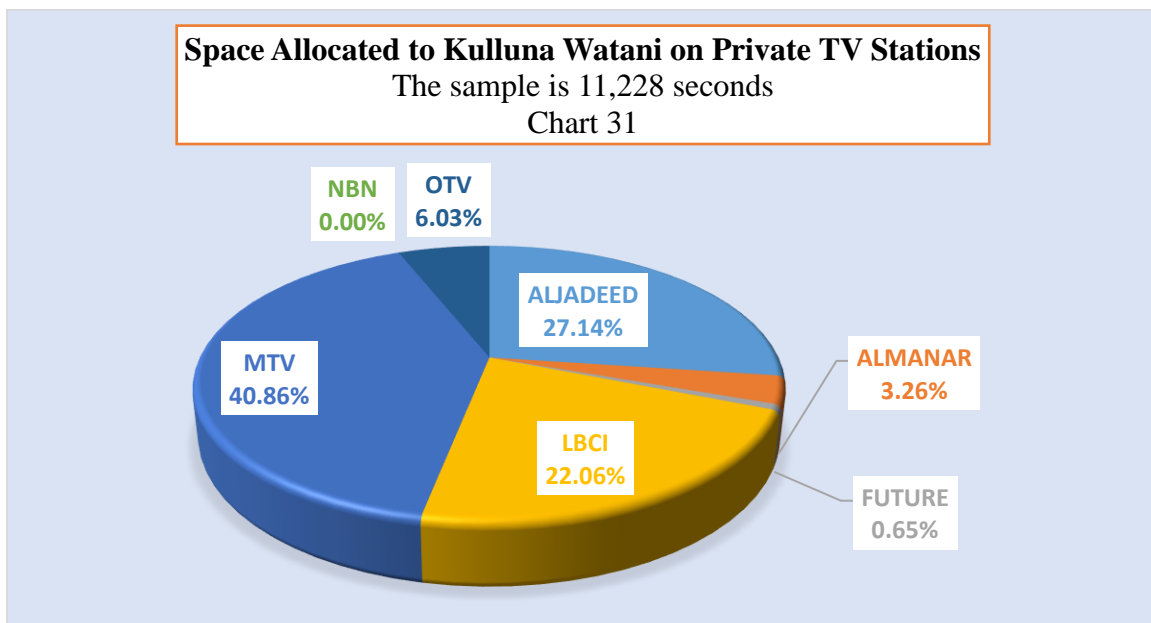
The Future Movement received the highest coverage 22.2%, closely followed by the Free Patriotic Movement 21%. Hezbollah and the Amal Movement also had close rates with 8.2% and 8.8% respectively. The same with the Lebanese Forces 4.7% and the Kataeb Party 3.3%. Kulluna Watani had a coverage rate of 5.8%.

15- Space Allocated to the Independents on Private TV Stations



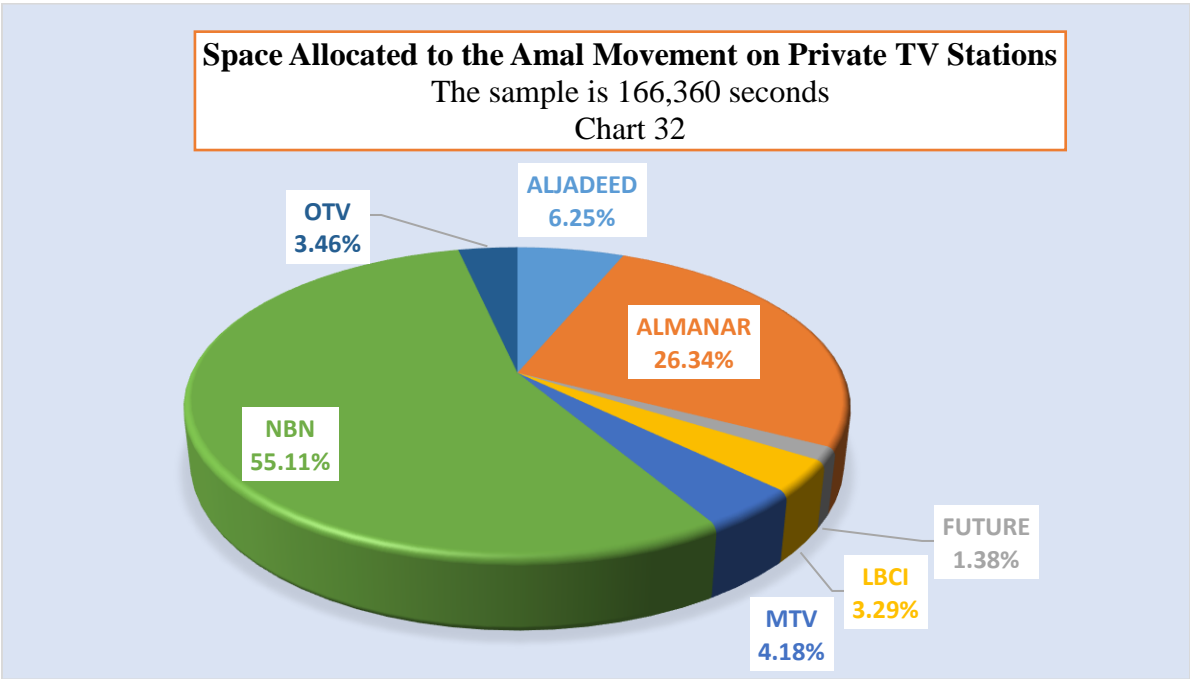
The largest space allocated on private TV stations to the independents, including those on the major parties' lists, was 22.5% by MTV, closely followed by Al Jazeera with 21%, then LBCI 18.2% and OTV 16.7%. Al-Manar and NBN had similar rates, 9.9% and 9.6% respectively. Future TV had the lowest rate.

16- Space Allocated to Kulluna Watani on Private TV Stations



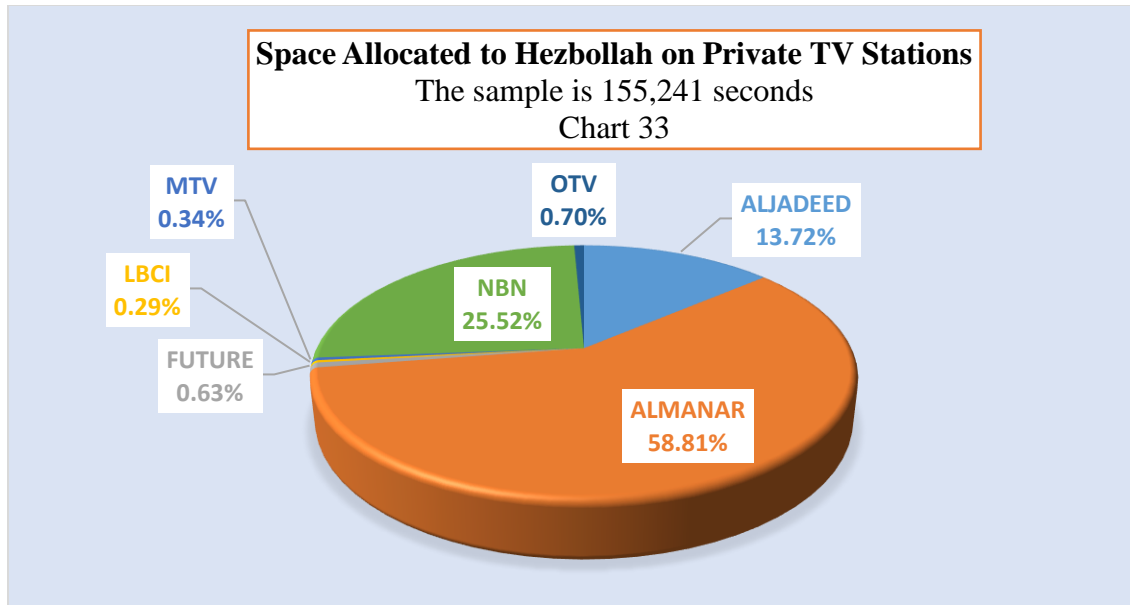
The largest space allocated to Kulluna Watani on private TV stations was on MTV 40.8% followed, with a large gap, by Al Jadeed and LBCI 22%. The two were similarly followed with a large gap by OTV 6% and Al-Manar 3.2%. Future TV had the lowest percentage 0.6%, while NBN had none at all.

17- Space Allocated to the Amal Movement on Private TV Stations



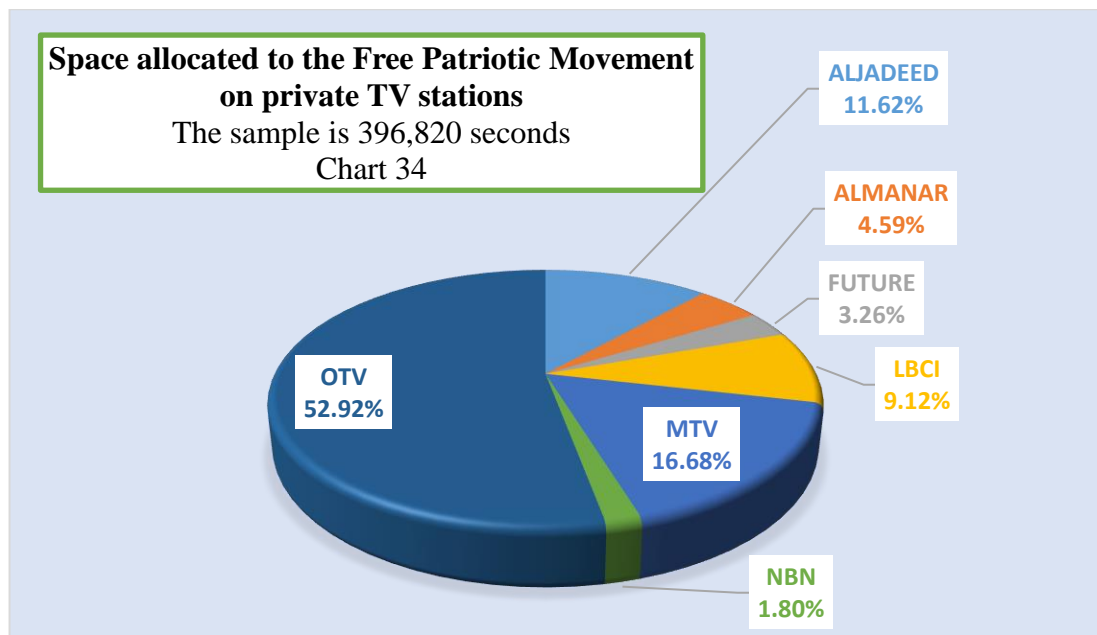
As expected, the space allocated to the Amal Movement on private TV stations was 55.1% on NBN, followed by Al-Manar 26.3%, then the remaining stations led by Al Jadeed with 6.2%.

18- Space Allocated to Hezbollah on Private TV Stations



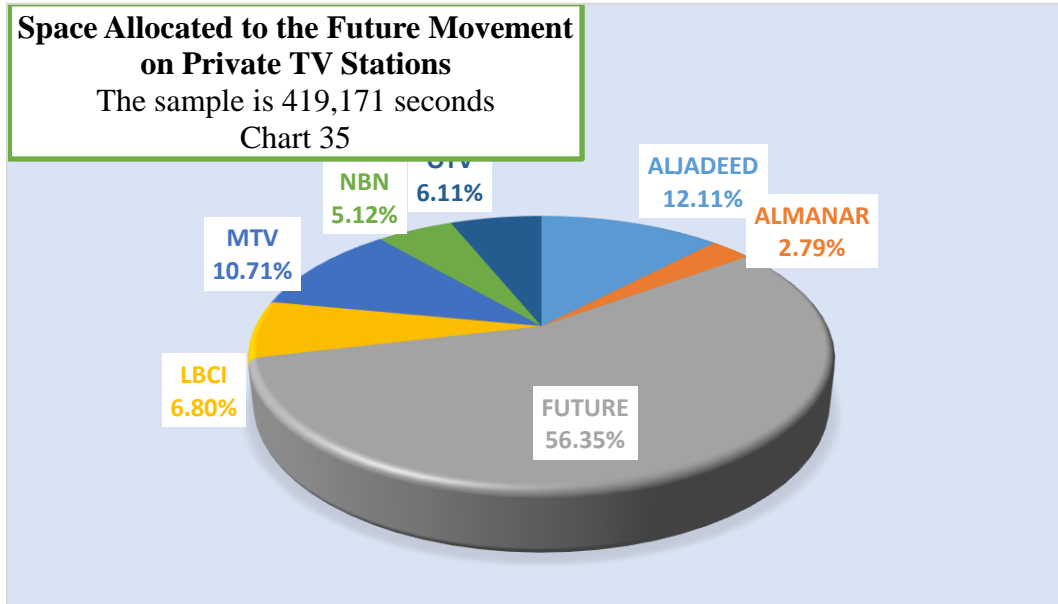
As expected, the space allocated to Hezbollah on private TV stations was 58.8% on Al-Manar, followed by NBN 25.5%, then the remaining stations led by Al Jadeed with 13.7%, which is a higher percentage than that of the space it allocated to the Amal Movement as shown in the previous chart.

19- Space Allocated to the Free Patriotic Movement on Private TV Stations



As expected, the space allocated to the Free Patriotic Movement on private TV stations was 52.9% on OTV, followed respectively by: MTV, Al Jadeed, LBCI and NBN, where NBN scored the lowest percentage.

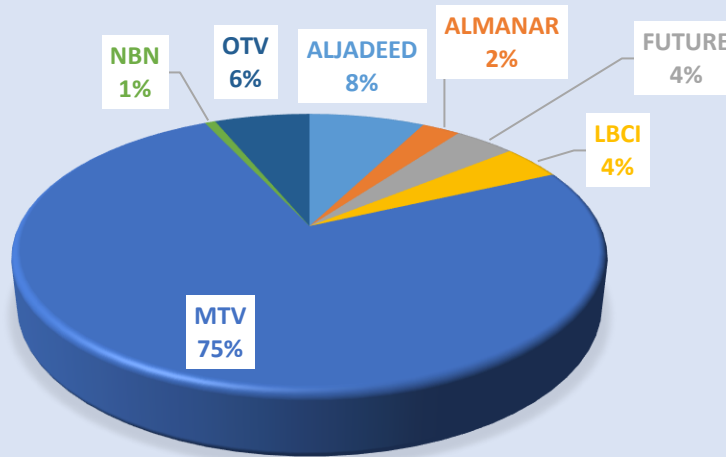
20- Space Allocated to the Future Movement on Private TV Stations



The space allocated to the Future Movement on private TV stations was 56.3% on Future TV, followed respectively by: Al Jadeed, MTV, LBCI, OTV, NBN and Al-Manar.

21- Space Allocated to the Lebanese Forces on Private TV Stations

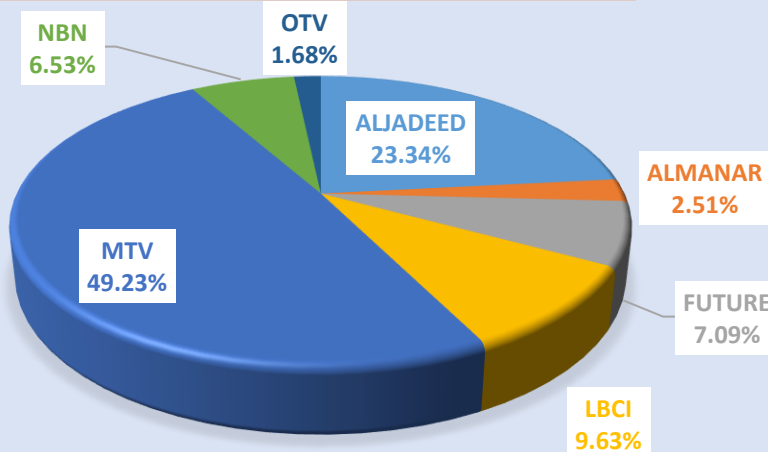
Space Allocated to the Lebanese Forces on Private TV Stations
The sample is 89,007 seconds
Chart 36



The space allocated to the Lebanese Forces on private TV stations was 75% on MTV and ranged between 8% and 1% on the other stations.

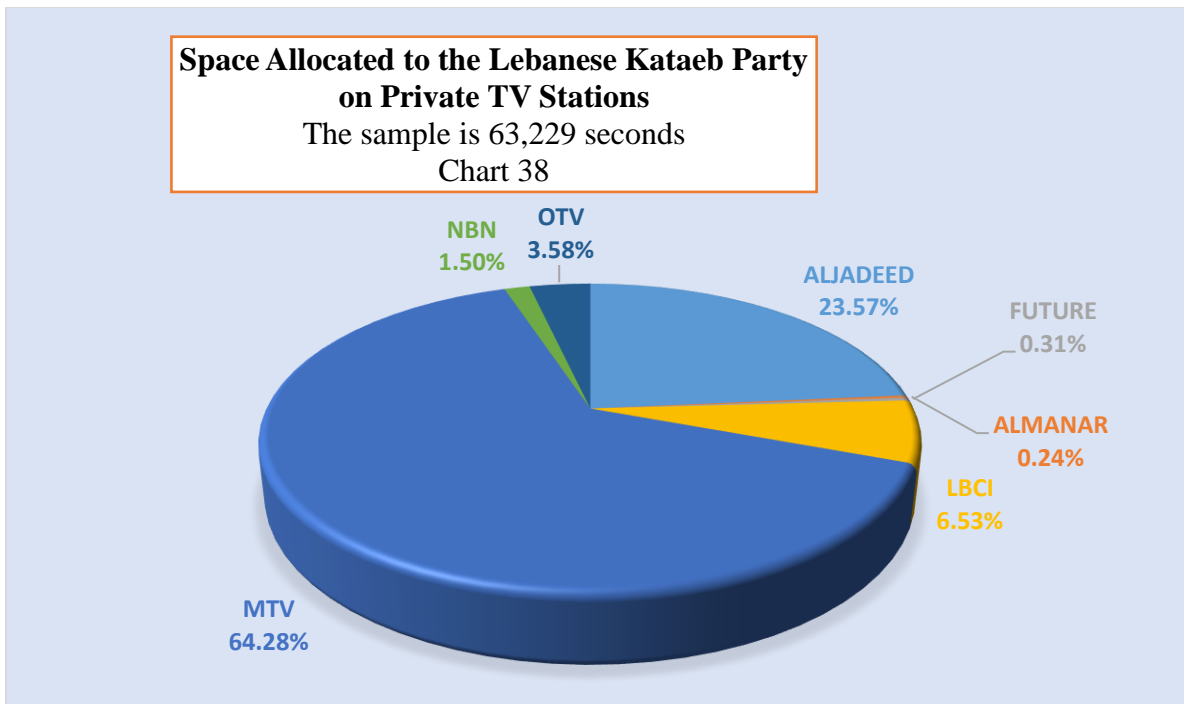
22- Space Allocated to the Progressive Socialist Party on Private TV Stations

Space Allocated to the Progressive Socialist Party on Private TV Stations
The sample is 20,367 seconds
Chart 37



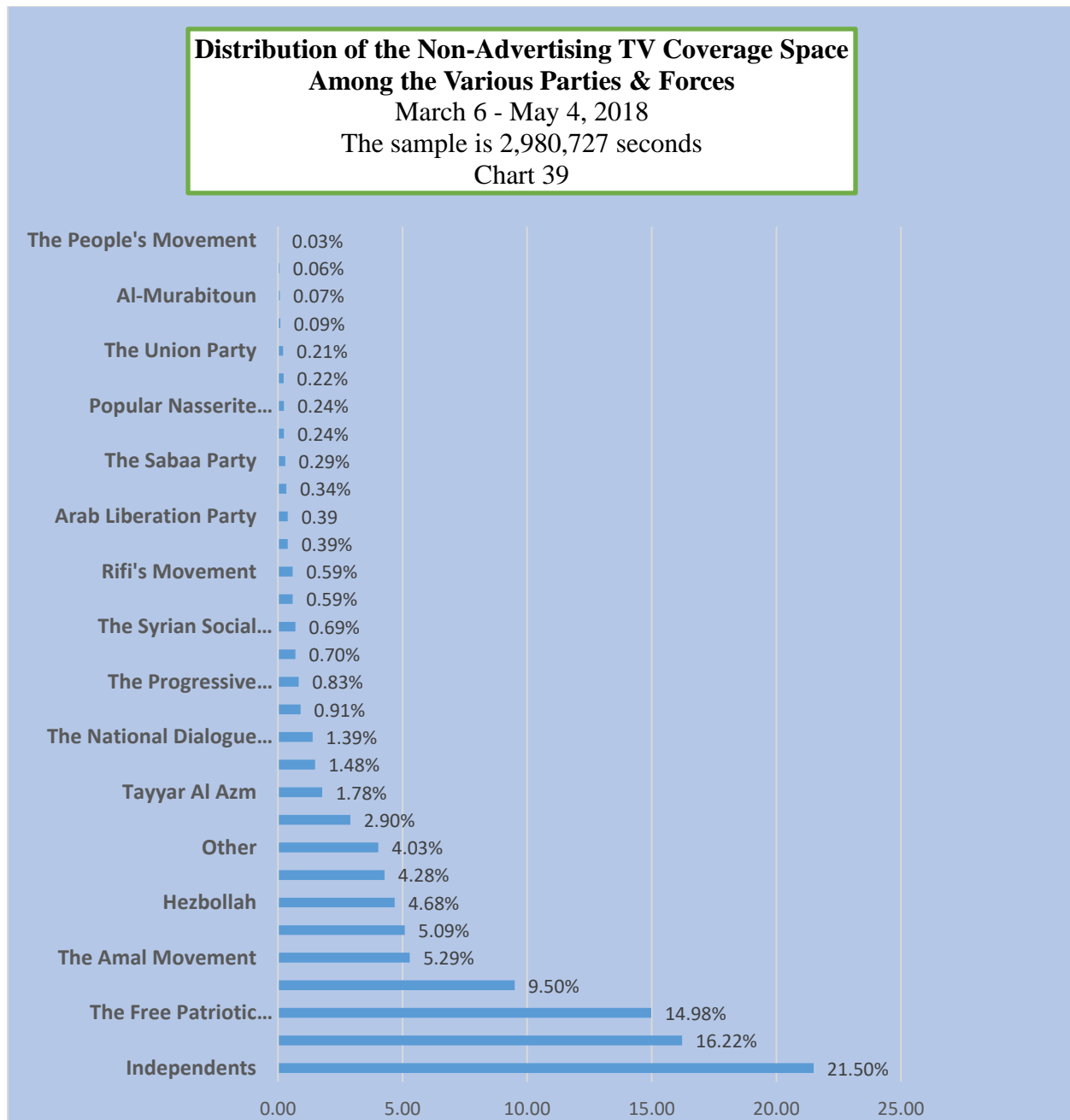
The space allocated to the Progressive Socialist Party on private TV stations was 49.2% on MTV, followed by Al Jadeed 23.4% then the remaining stations. OTV had the lowest percentage 1.6%.

23- Space Allocated to the Lebanese Kataeb Party on Private TV Stations



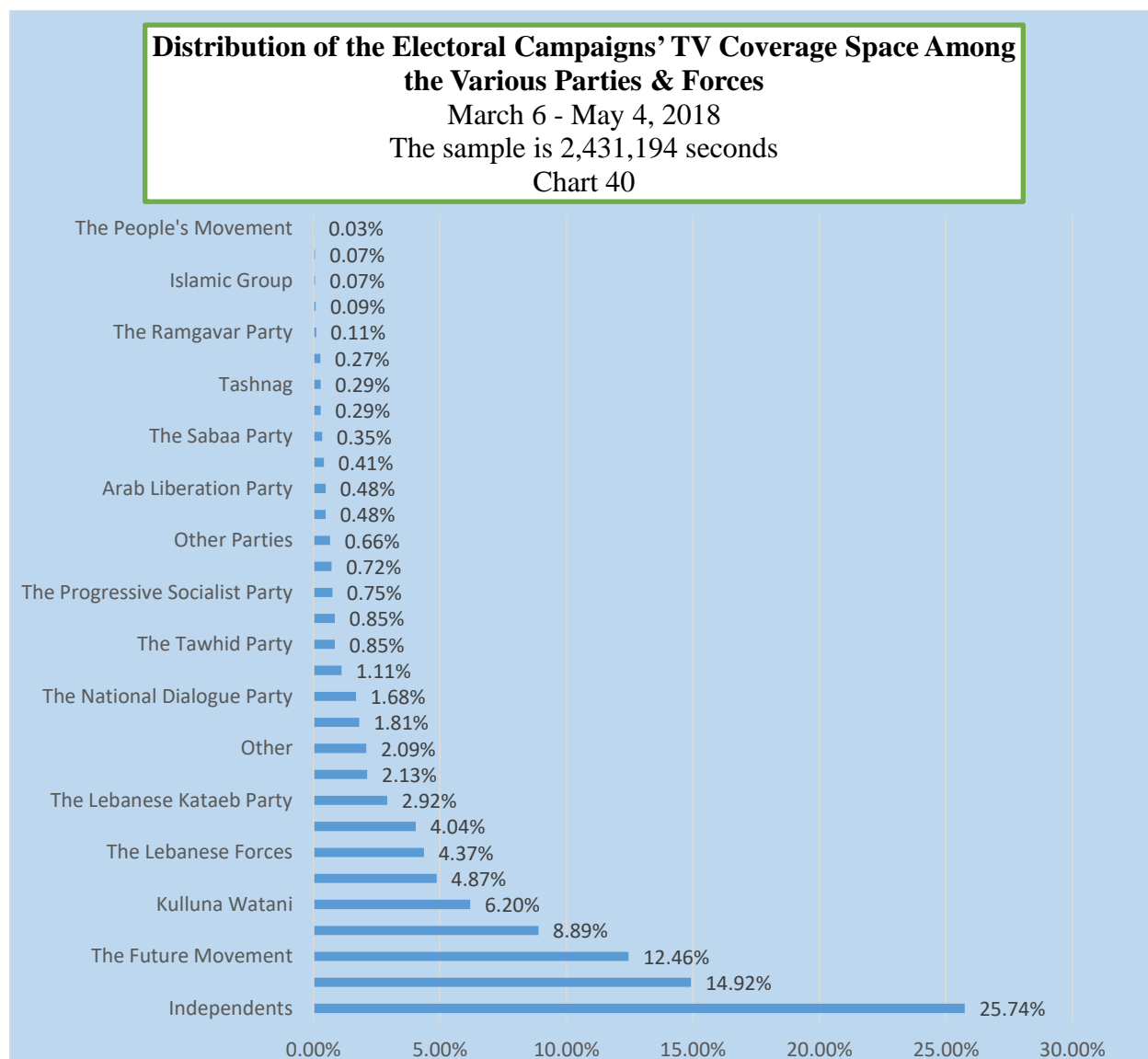
MTV provided the largest space among private TV stations to the Lebanese Kataeb Party 64.2%, followed by Al Jadeed 23.5% then the remaining stations. Al-Manar and Future TV had the lowest percentages at 0.2% and 0.3% respectively.

24- Distribution of the Non-Advertising TV Coverage Space Among the Various Parties and Forces



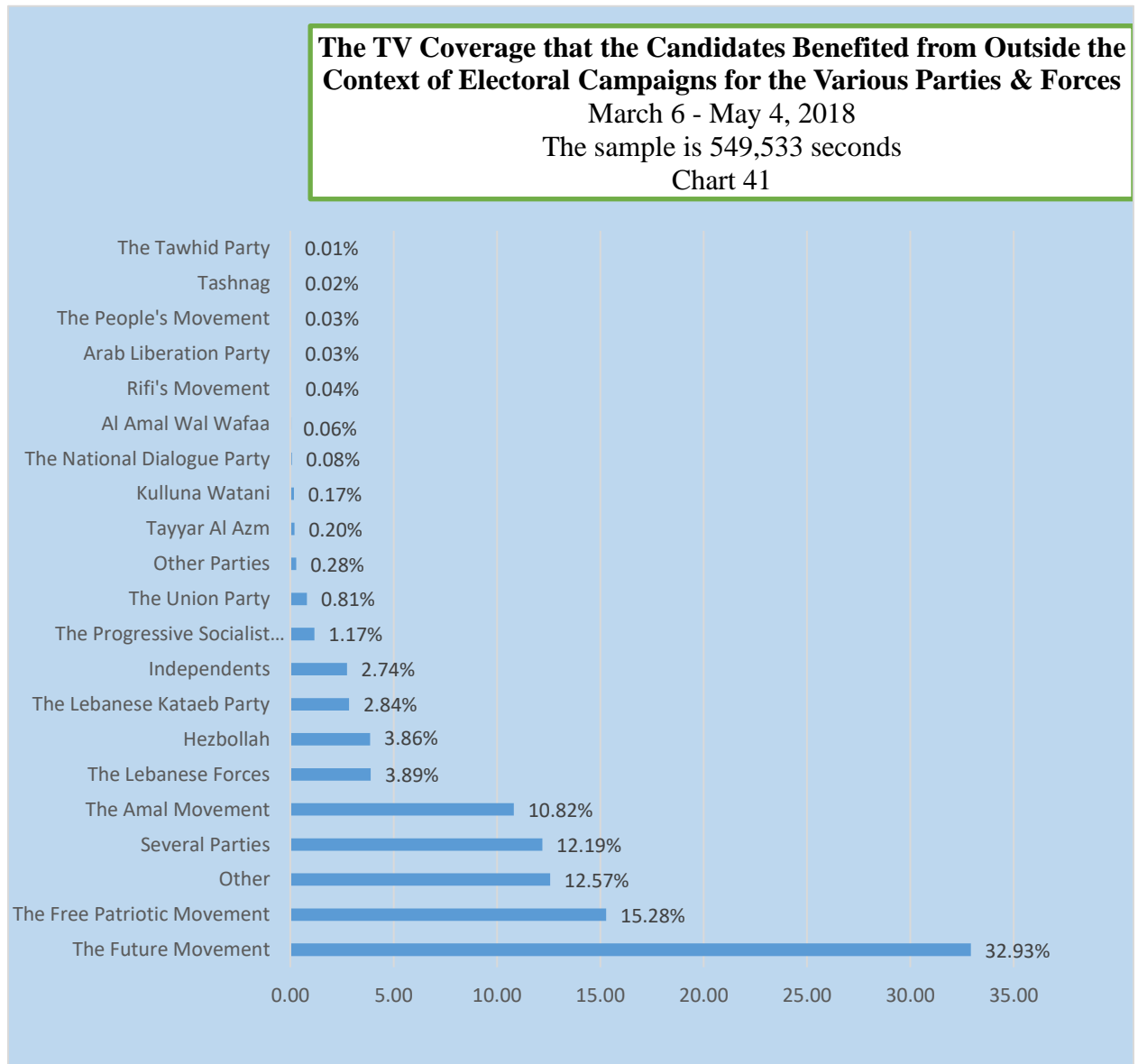
For the distribution of the non-advertising TV coverage space among the various parties and forces, the highest percentages were those of the independent candidates 21.5%, followed by the Future Movement 16.2% and the Free Patriotic Movement 14.9%. The rates were close between the Amal Movement 5.2%, Kulluna Watani 5%, Hezbollah 4.6% and the Lebanese Forces 4.2%.

25- Distribution of the Electoral Campaigns' TV Coverage Space Among the Various Parties and Forces



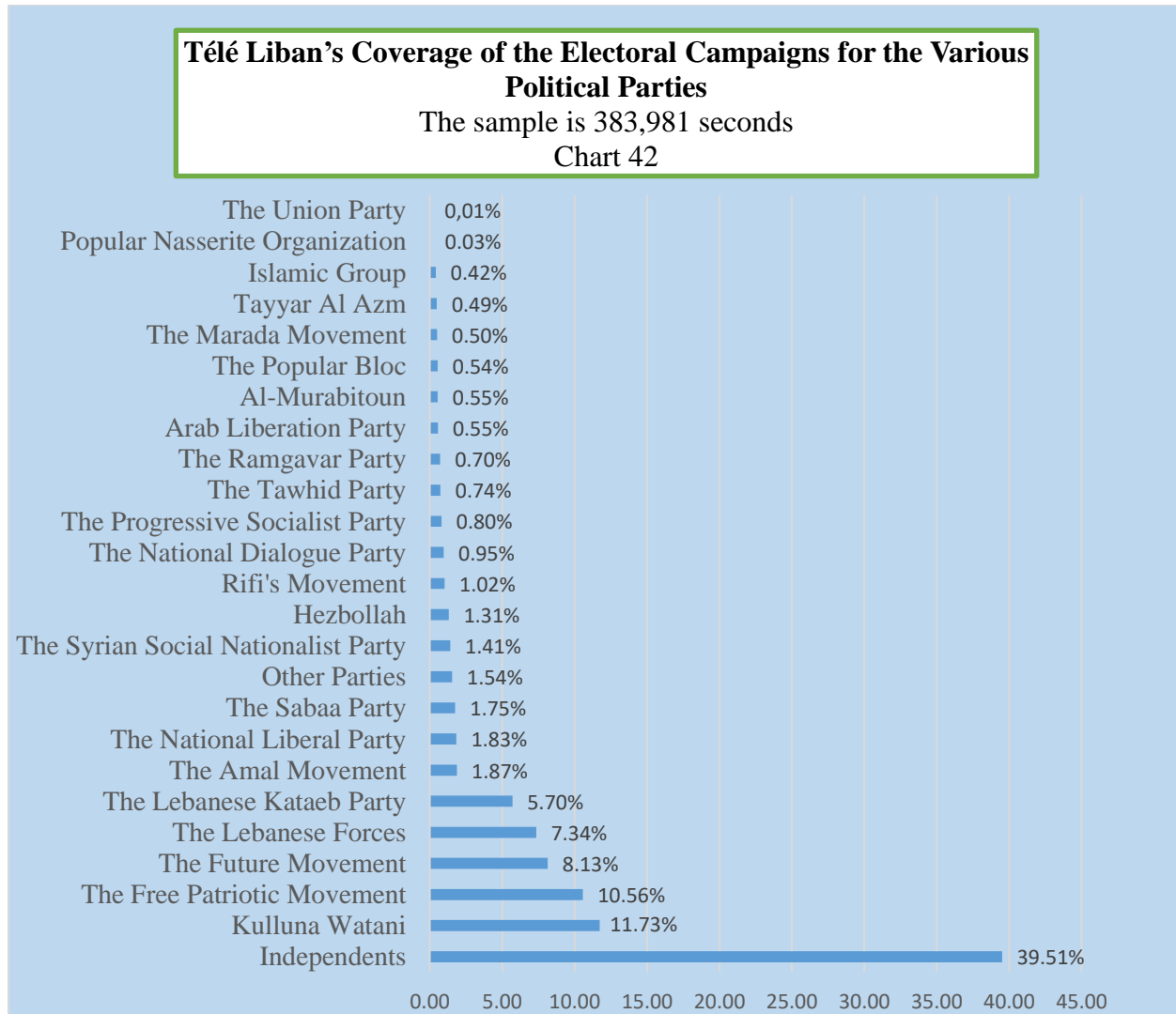
The distribution of the television coverage space for electoral campaigns among the various parties and forces was almost similar to the distribution of the non-advertising TV coverage space among the various parties and forces: independent candidates 25.7%, followed by the Free Patriotic Movement 14.9% and the Future Movement 12.4%. Then, Kulluna Watani 6.2%, Hezbollah 4.8%, the Lebanese Forces 4.3% and the Amal Movement 4% at close rates.

26- The TV Coverage that the Candidates Benefited from Outside the Context of Electoral Campaigns



The television coverage that the candidates benefited from outside the context of electoral campaigns for the various parties and forces was led by the Future Movement 32.9%, followed by the Free Patriotic Movement 15.2% and the Amal Movement 10.8%. The rates were close between the Lebanese Forces 3.8%, Hezbollah 3.8%, the Lebanese Kataeb Party 2.8% and the independents 2.7%.

27- Télé Liban's Coverage of the Electoral Campaigns for the Various Political Parties



Télé Liban's coverage of the electoral campaigns for the various political parties was as follows: The independents in the lead at 39.5%, Kulluna Watani 11.7%, the Free Patriotic Movement 10.5%, the Future Movement 8.1%, the Lebanese Forces 7.3% and the Lebanese Kataeb Party 5.7%. The rates ranged between 1% and 0% for the remaining parties.

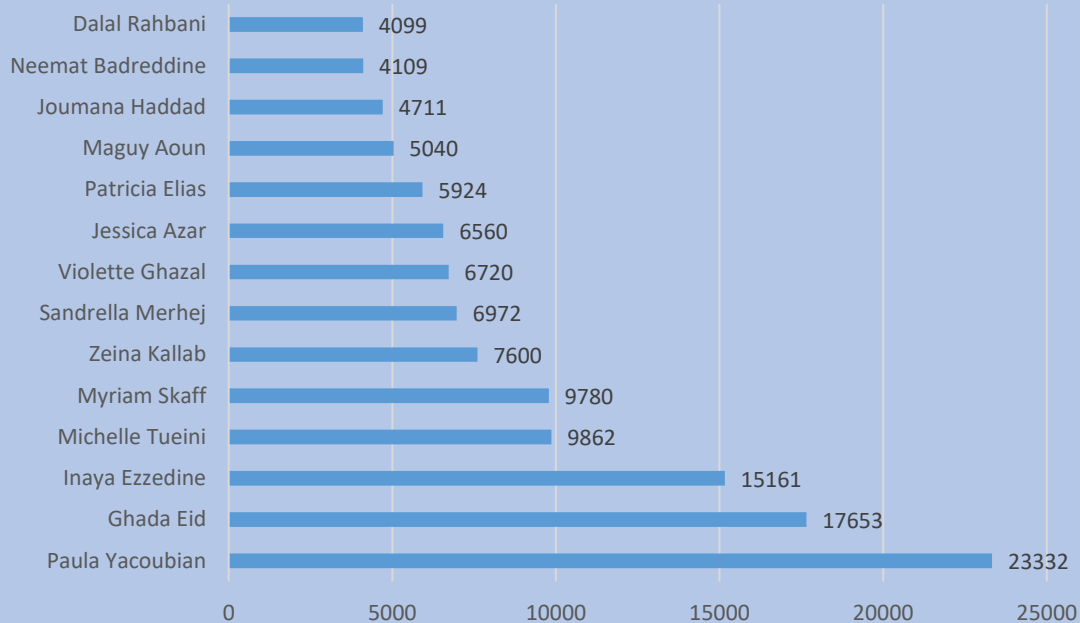
28- Female Candidates who Appeared the Most in Talk Shows and Special Interviews

Female Candidates who Appeared the Most in Talk Shows & Special Interviews

The figures refer to the monitored seconds

The total sample is 188,517 seconds

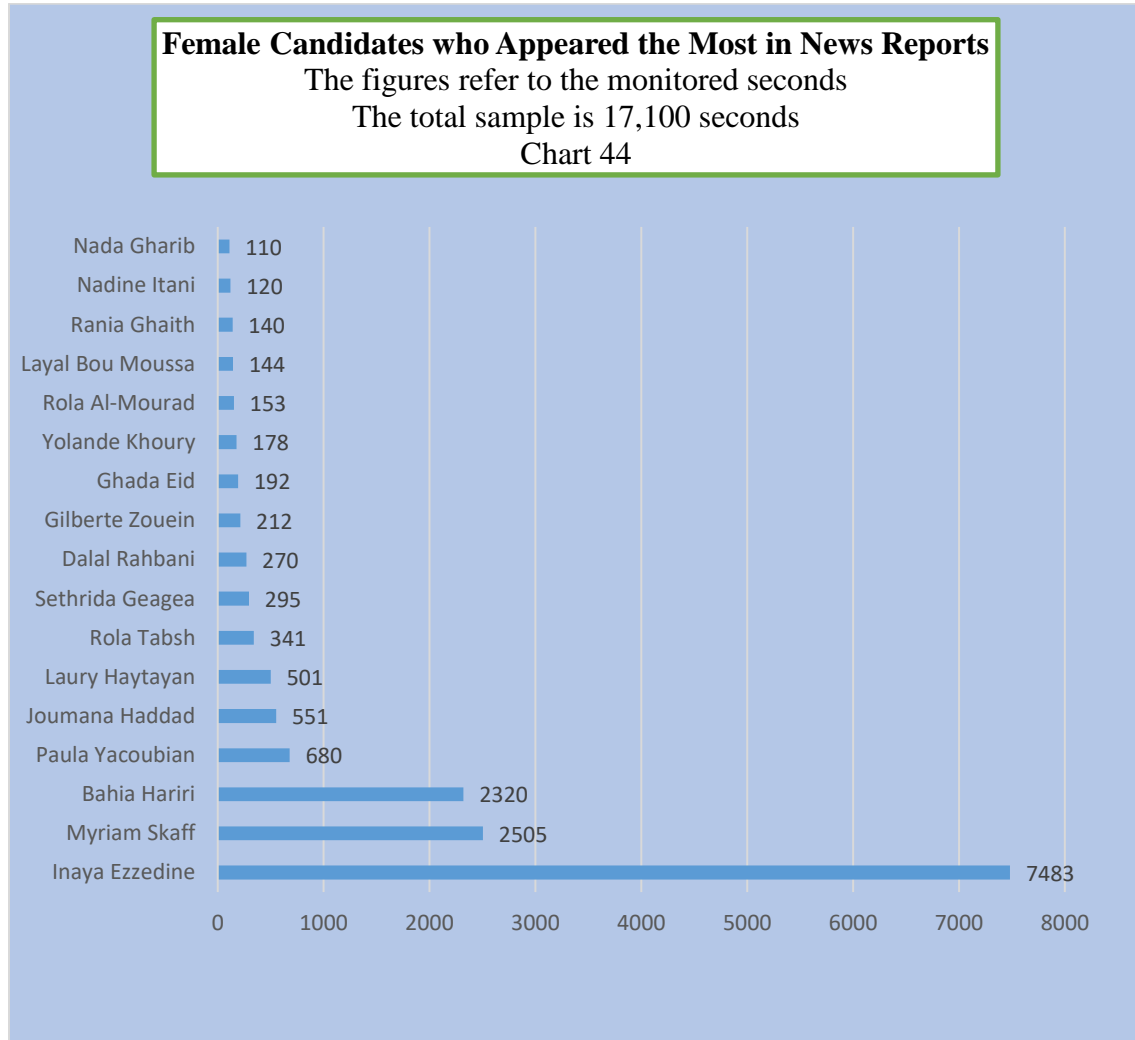
Chart 43



Female candidates who appeared the most in talk shows and special interviews: Paula Yacoubian 12.3%, followed by Ghada Eid 9.3%, Inaya Ezzedine 8%, Michelle Tueini 5.2% and Myriam Skaff 5.1%.

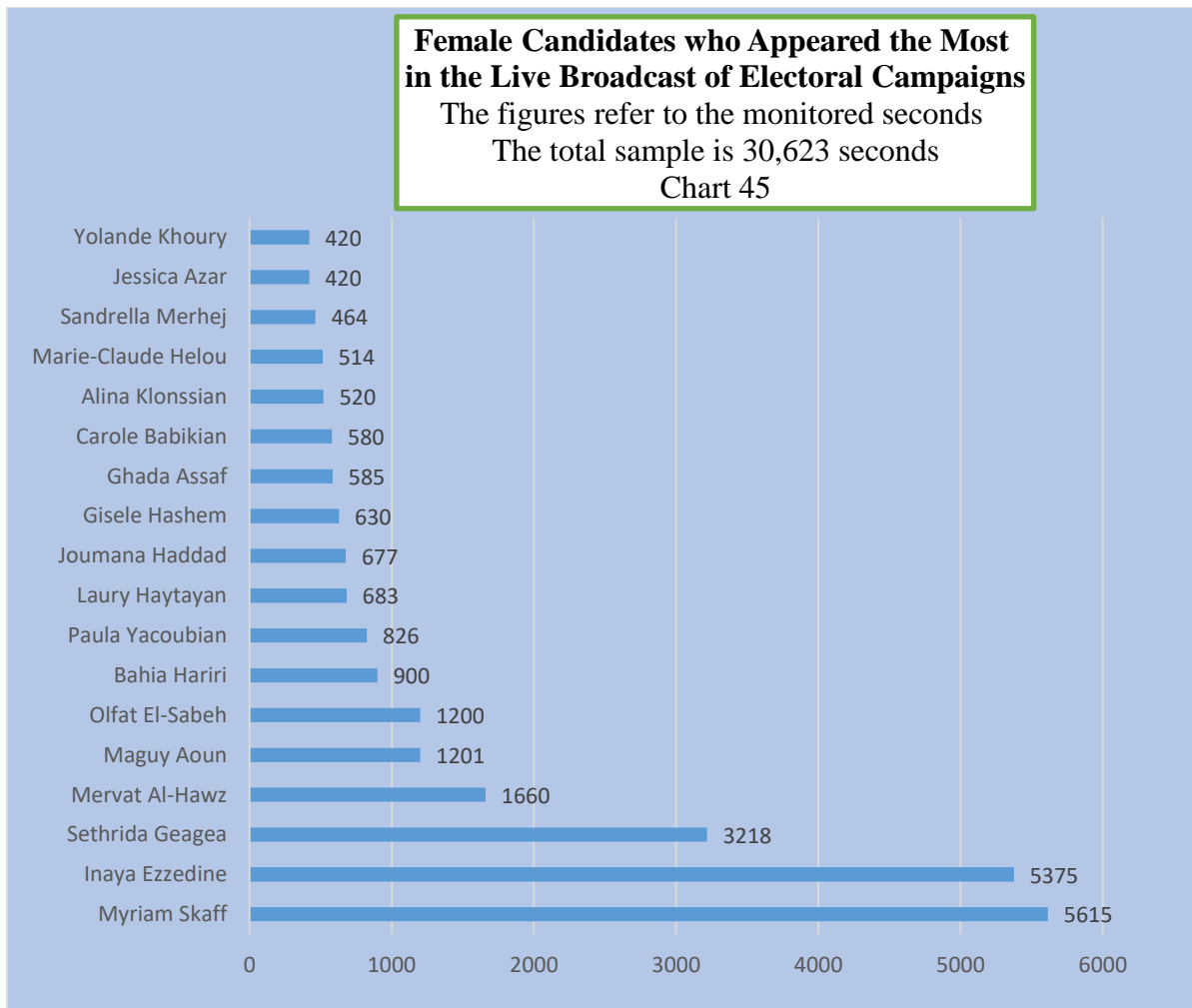
Neemat Badreddine and Dalal Rahbani had the lowest percentage, each at 2.1%.

29- Female Candidates who Appeared the Most in News Reports



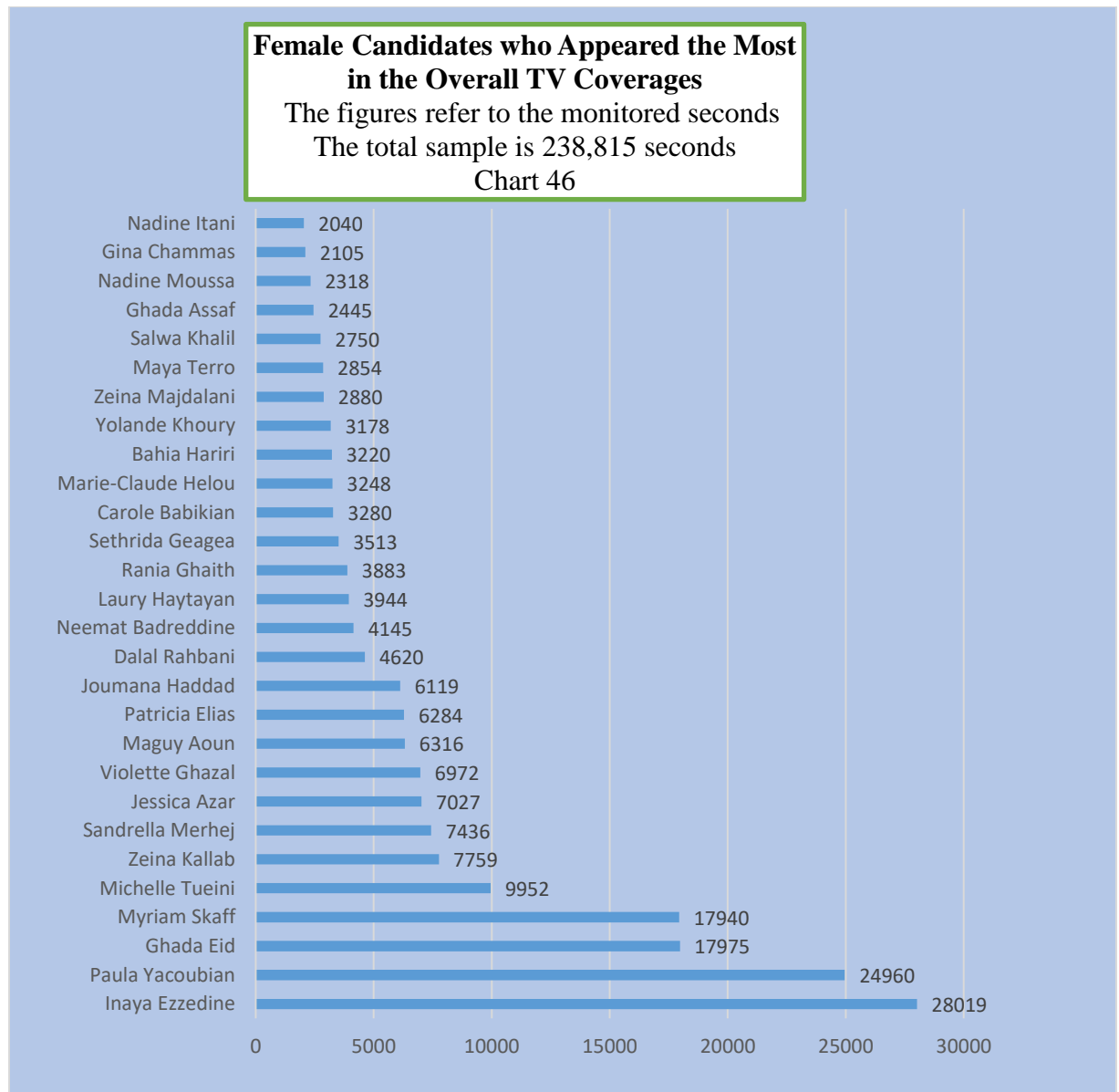
The most prominent female candidate in news reports was Inaya Ezzedine 43.7%, followed with a large gap by Myriam Skaff 14.6%, then Bahia Hariri 13.5%, followed with another large gap by Paula Yacoubian 3.9%. Joumana Haddad scored 3.22%, Rola Tabsh 1.99% and Sethrida Geagea 1.7%. The lowest percentage was for candidate Nada Gharib 0.6%.

30- Female Candidates who Appeared the Most in the Live Broadcast of Electoral Campaigns



The female candidates who appeared the most in the live broadcast of electoral campaigns are Myriam Skaff, followed by Inaya Ezzedine with a 240-seconds (or 4 minutes) difference, then Sethrida Geagea with a 2,397-seconds (or 39.95 minutes) difference from Skaff.

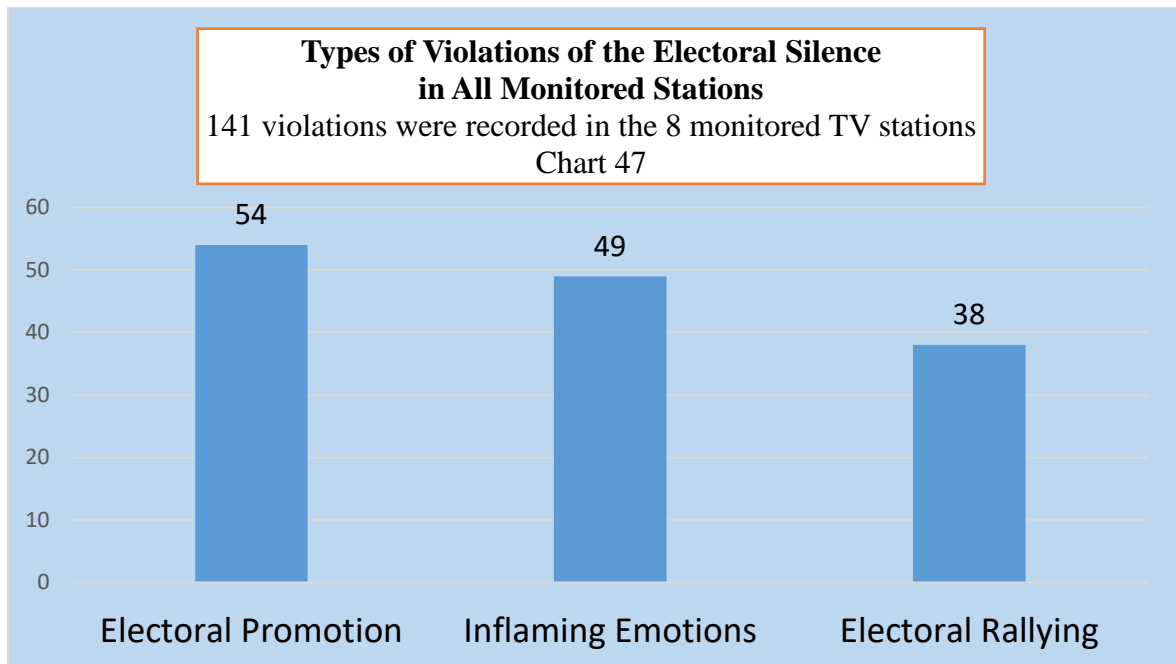
31- Female Candidates who Appeared the Most in the Overall TV Coverages



Inaya Ezzedine was the leading female candidate who appeared the most with a small difference between her and Paula Yacoubian, followed by Ghada Eid and Myriam Skaff with an insignificant difference between the two.

B - Electoral Silence on TV Stations

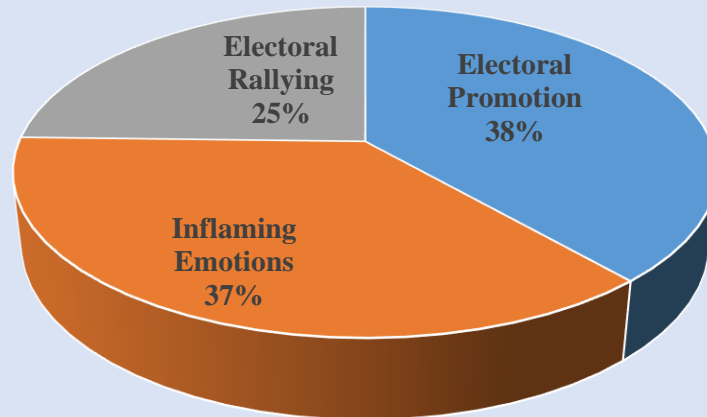
1- Violations of the Electoral Silence in All Monitored Stations



Out of the 141 violations recorded during the electoral silence, the rates were led by electoral promotion, followed closely by inflaming emotions and electoral rallying.

2- Violations of the Electoral Silence in TV Stations by Space Allocated

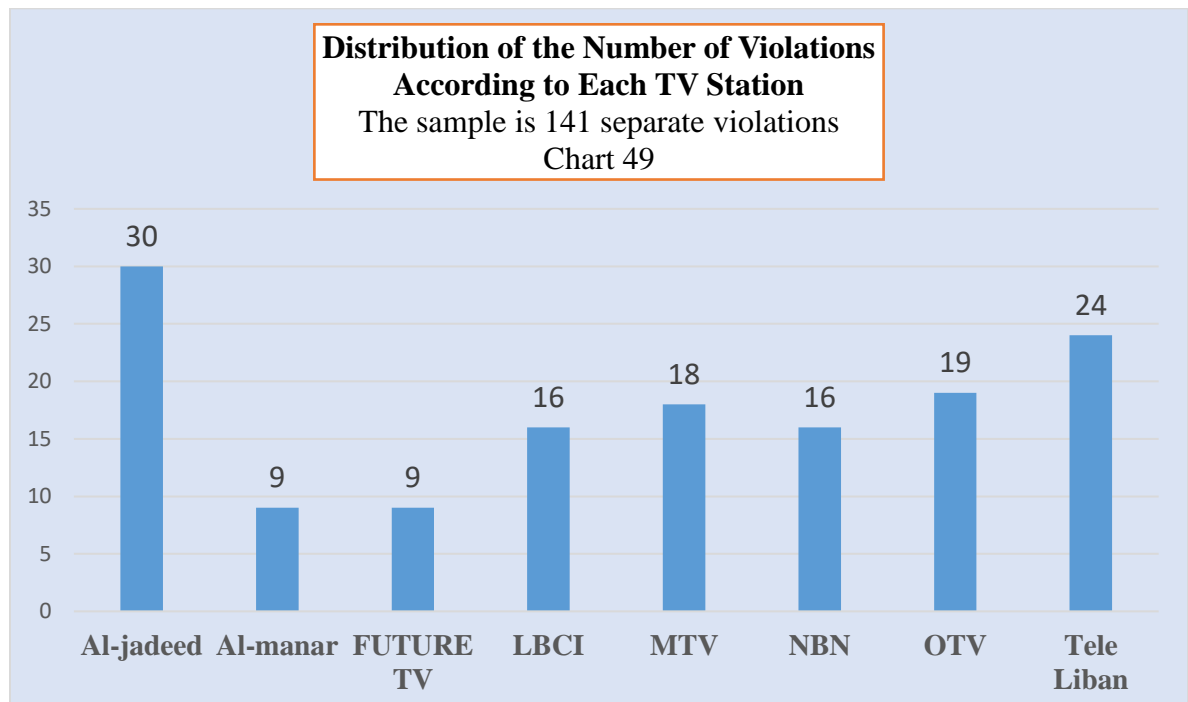
Violations of the TV Electoral Silence by Space Allocated
The overall time of the total violations was 22,700 seconds
Chart 48



Electoral promotion and inflaming emotions shared almost equal percentages of 38% and 37% respectively, followed by electoral rallying 25%.

3- Distribution of the Number of Violations According to Each TV Station

Distribution of the Number of Violations According to Each TV Station
The sample is 141 separate violations
Chart 49

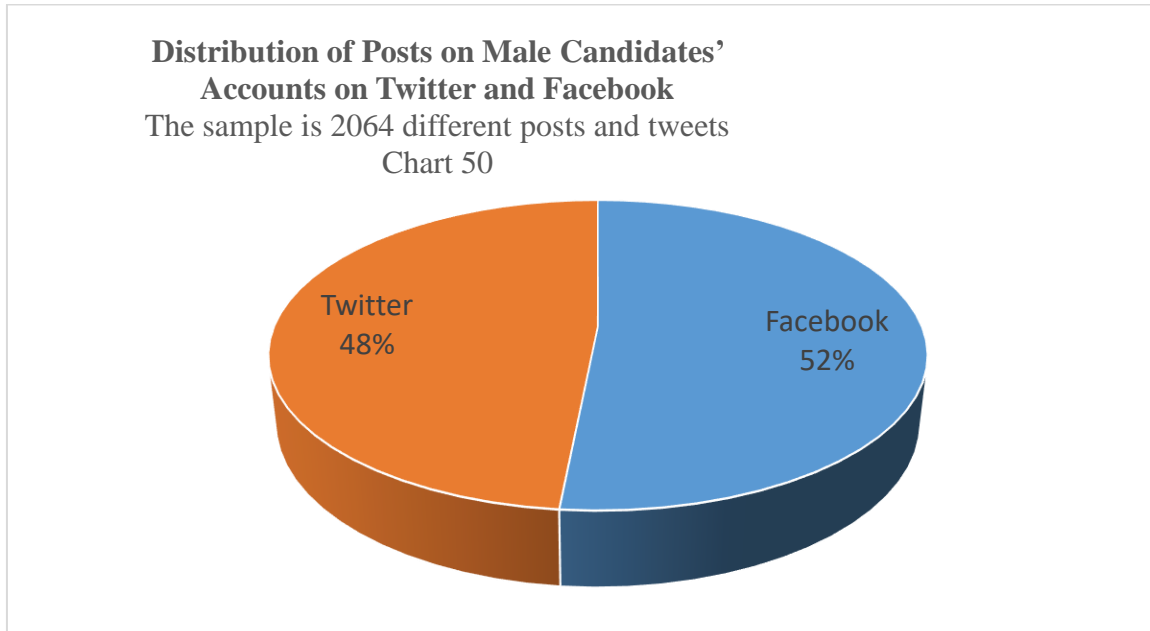


Al Jadeed ranked first in the number of violations with 21.27%, followed by Télé Liban 17%, OTV 13.4%, NBN 12.7%, MTV and LBCI with 11.3% each, then Future TV and Al-Manar with 4.2% each.

Third: On Social Media

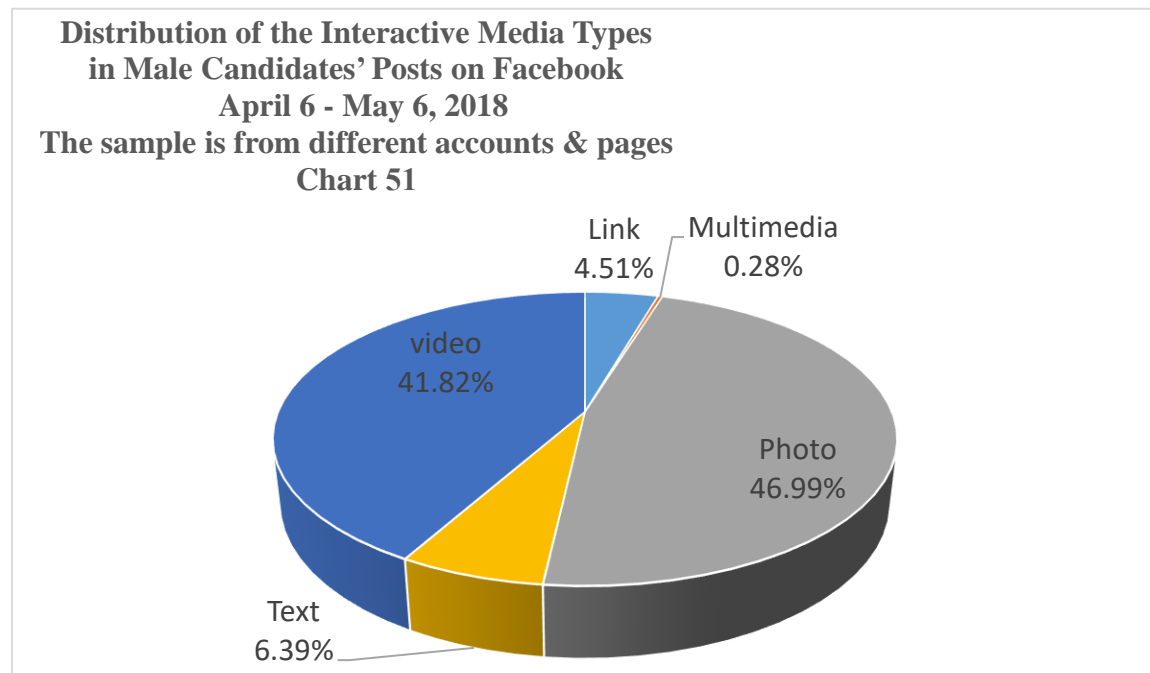
A- Male Candidates' Posts

1- Distribution of Posts on Male Candidates' Accounts on Twitter and Facebook



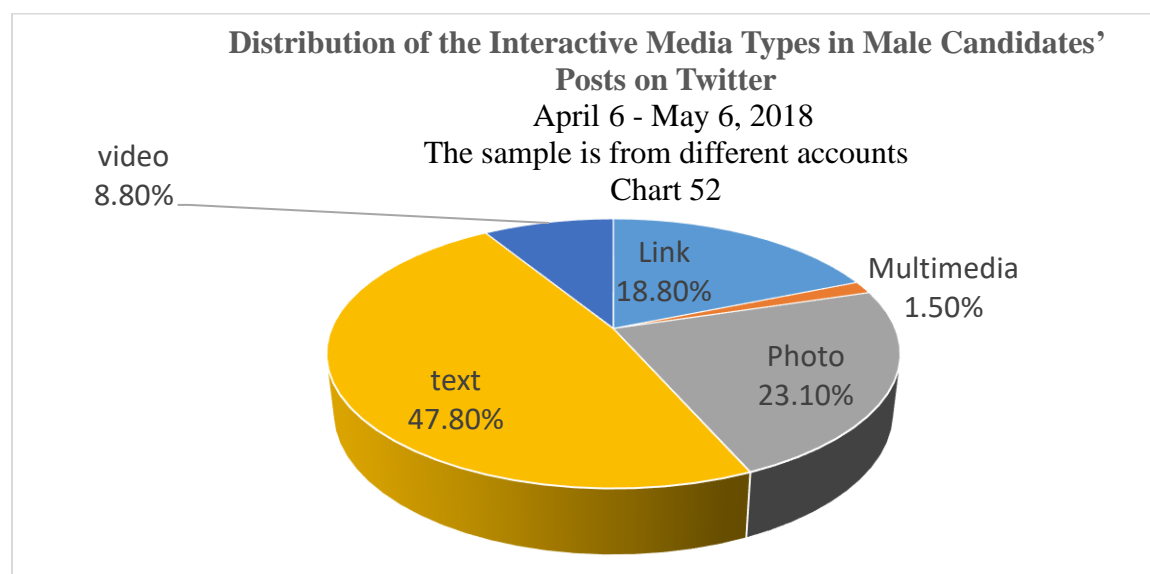
There was a slight difference of 4% in the distribution of male candidates' posts, with 52% on Facebook and 48% on Twitter.

2- Distribution of the Interactive Media Types in Male Candidates' Posts on Facebook



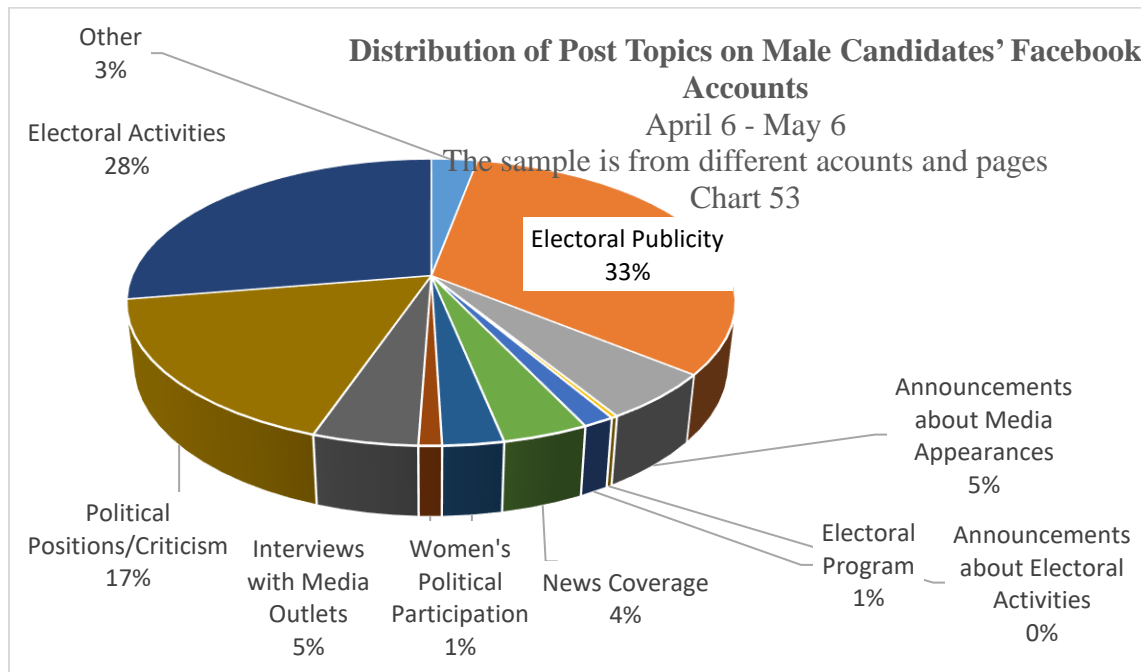
Concerning the type of media used, pictures came first 46.9%, followed closely by videos 41.8%, then with a wide gap by texts 6.3% and links 4.5%.

3- Distribution of the Interactive Media Types in Male Candidates' Posts on Twitter



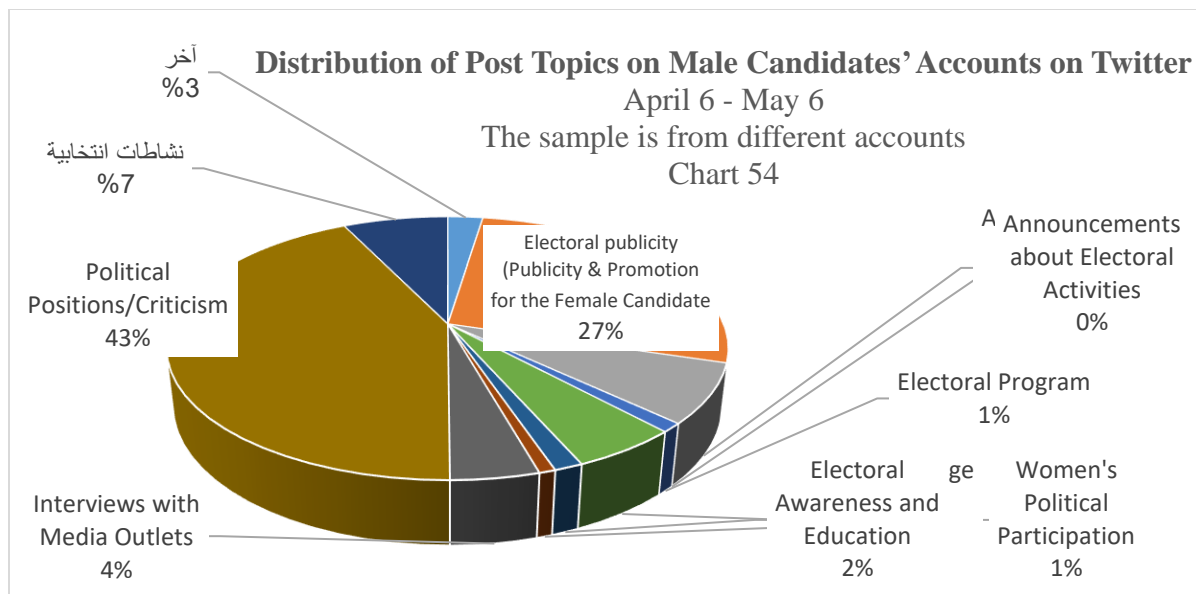
On Twitter, texts were in the lead with 47.8%, almost half of the overall space, followed by pictures 23.1%, links 18.8%, videos 8.8% and multimedia 1.5%.

4- Distribution of Post Topics on Male Candidates' Facebook Accounts



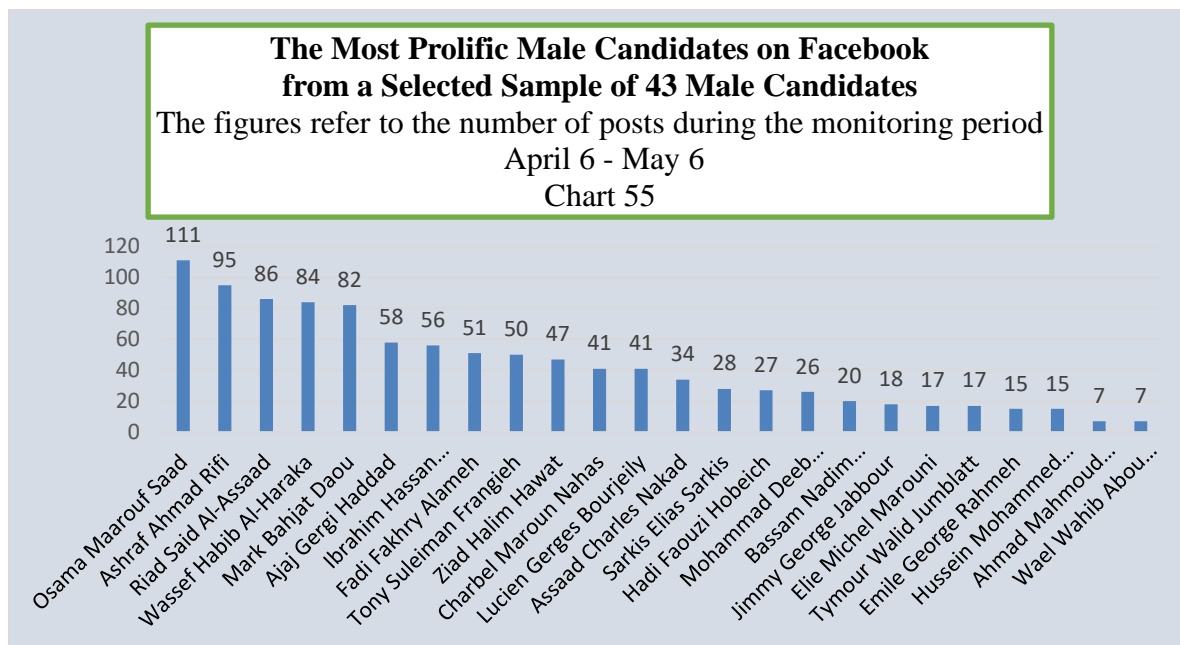
Concerning the topics of posts on male candidates' Facebook accounts, electoral publicity came in first with 33%, followed by electoral activities 28%, political positions 17%, and the rest was divided among the remaining topics. But it should be noted that women's political participation occupied 1% of the topics while electoral awareness and education took up 3%.

5- Distribution of Post Topics on Male Candidates' Accounts on Twitter



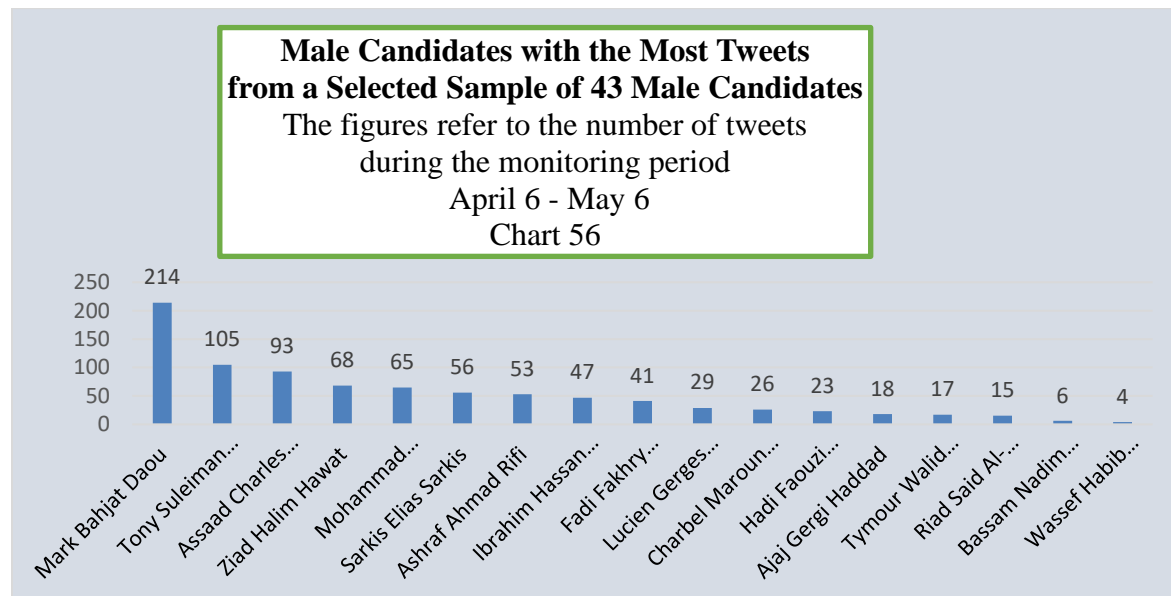
On Twitter, political positions had the highest rate 43%, followed by electoral publicity 27%. Women's political participation occupied 1% of the topics here as well, while electoral awareness and education had 2%, with the electoral program receiving 1% on both Twitter and Facebook.

6- The Most Prolific Male Candidates on Facebook from a Selected Sample of 43 Male Candidates



The chart shows the most prolific male candidates on Facebook: Osama Saad posted the most, followed closely by Ashraf Rifi, then Riad Al-Assaad and Wassef Al-Haraka. The least prolific were Ahmad Omran and Wael Abou Faour.

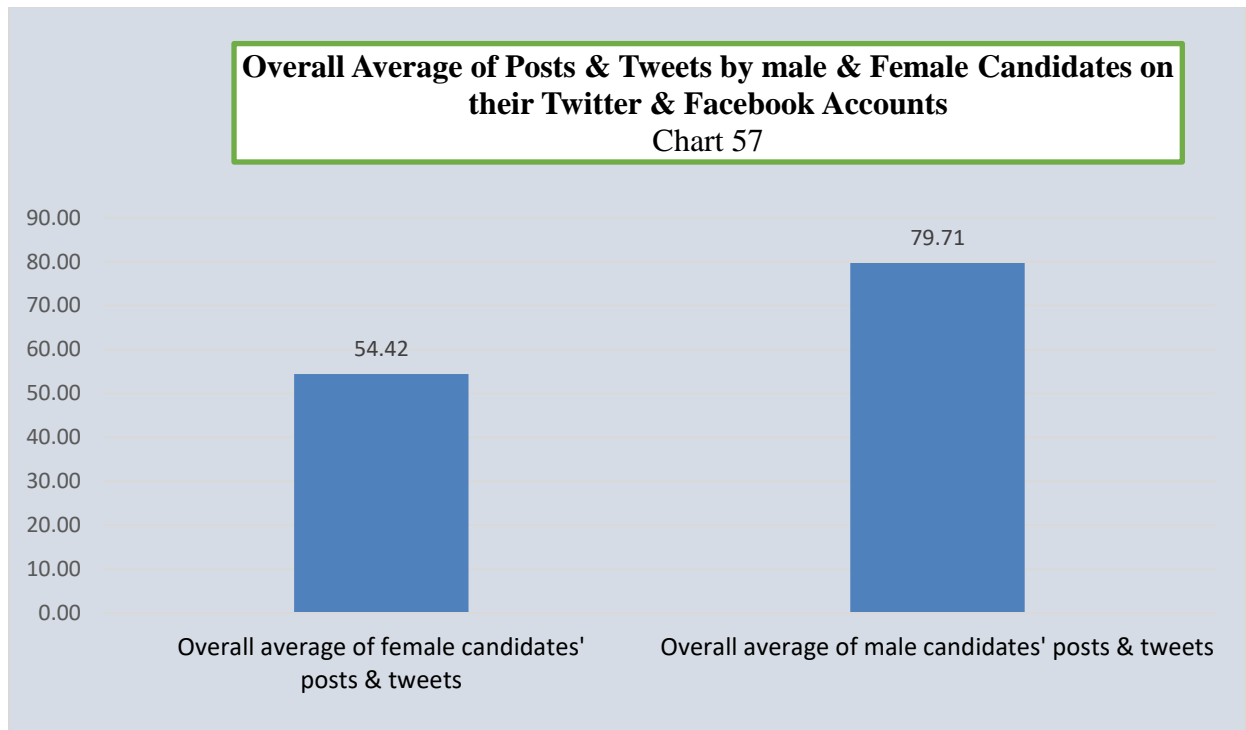
7- Male Candidates with the Most Tweets



The male candidates with the most tweets were Mark Daou, Tony Frangieh, Assaad Nakad, Ziad Hawat and Mohammad Nasrallah. The least tweeting male candidates were Bassam Ghantous and Wassef Al-Haraka.

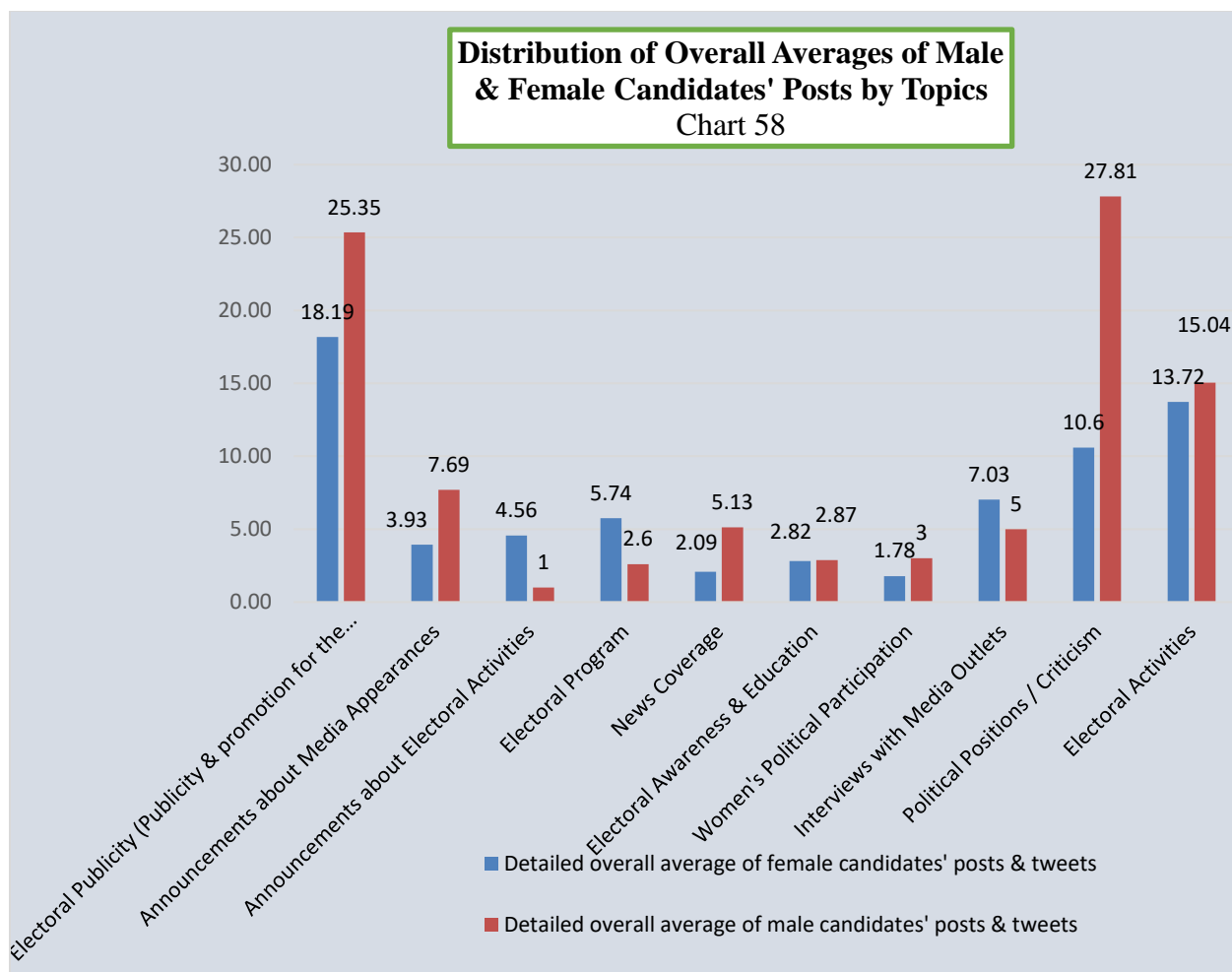
Wassef Al-Haraka was active on Facebook but the least active on Twitter, while Ashraf Rifi was active on Facebook but not at all on Twitter.

8- Number of Posts of Male Candidates vs. Female Candidates



Male candidates seem to be more active on Facebook and Twitter, with an average of 79.7 posts and tweets per candidate, compared to 54.4 for each female candidate, with a 25.29-point difference.

9- Post Topics of Male Candidates vs. Female Candidates



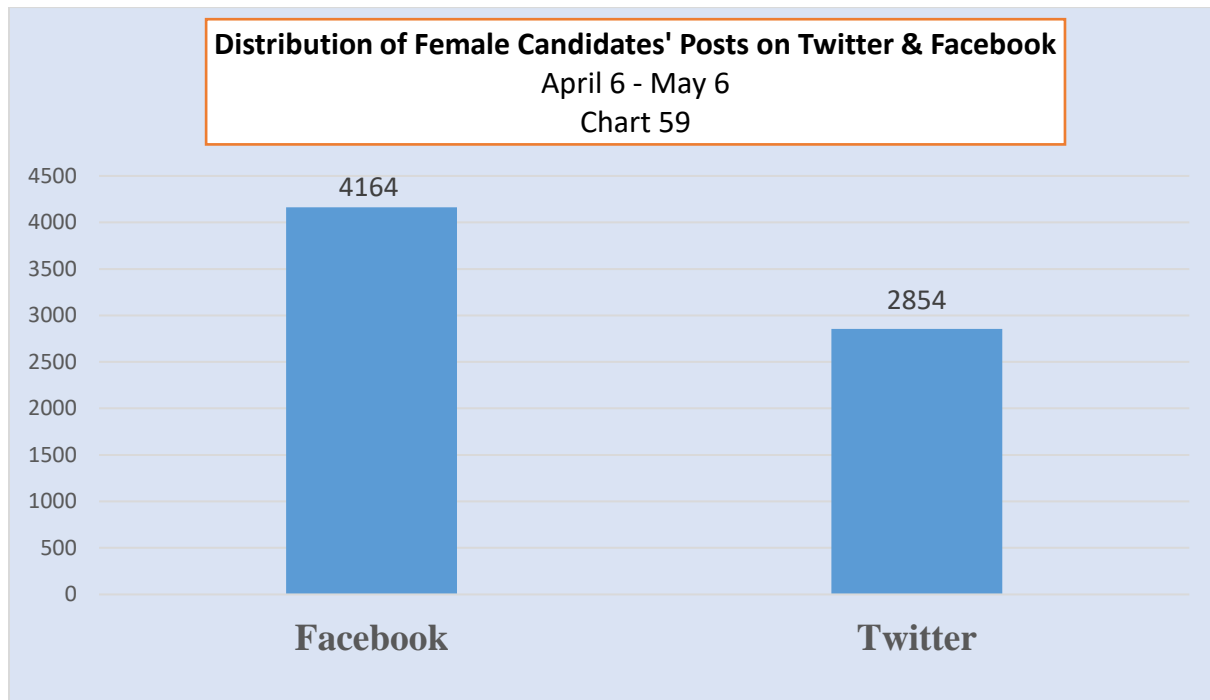
In the distribution of overall averages of posts and tweets by male and female candidates, political positions come first for male candidates 27.8%, as opposed to electoral publicity for female candidates 18.1%.

Interestingly, female candidates posted more announcements about electoral activities 4.5% than their male counterparts 1%, and posted more about their electoral programs 5.7% than their male counterparts 2.6%.

Paradoxically, the number of posts about women's political participation was higher among male candidates at 3%, compared with 1.7% for female candidates. The topic of electoral awareness and education received 2.8% on both sides.

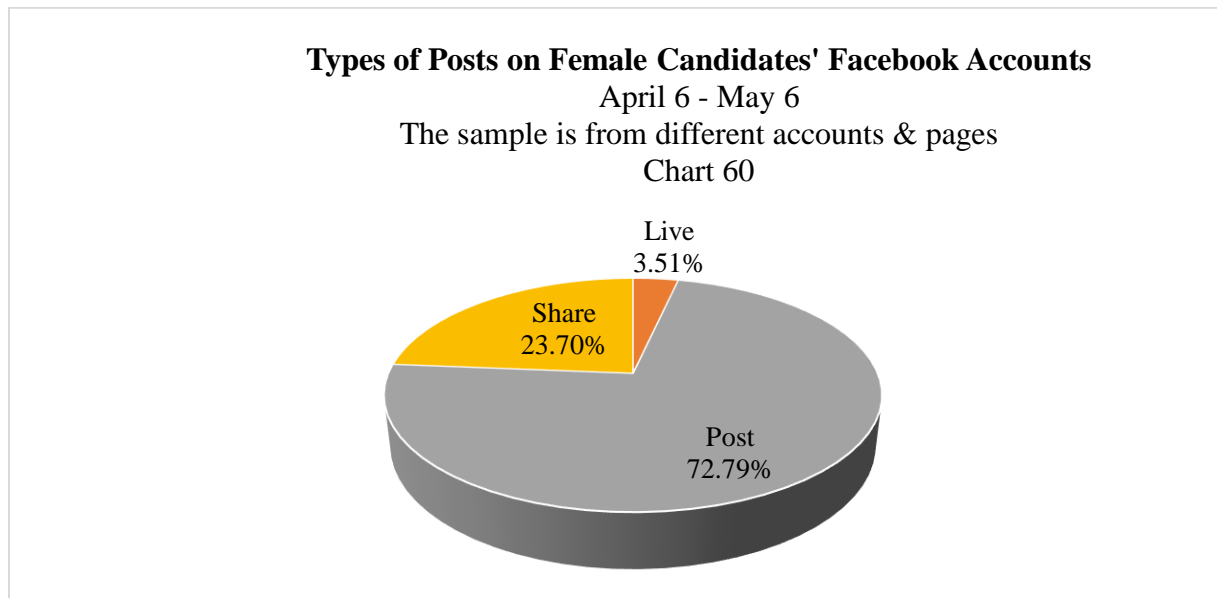
B- Female Candidates' Posts

1- Females Candidates' Posts on Twitter and Facebook



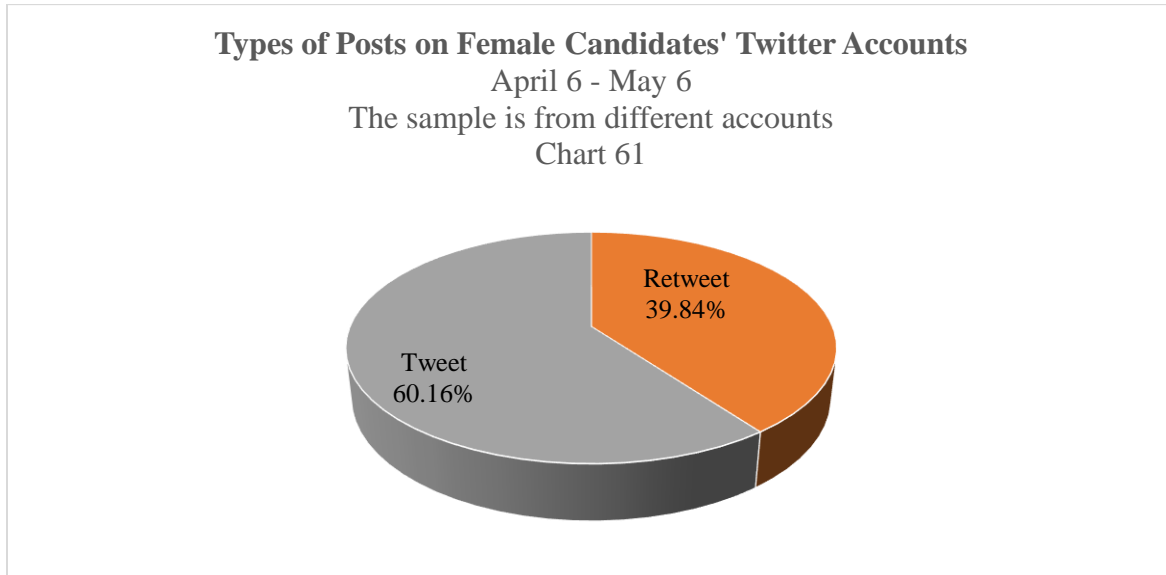
The chart shows that female candidates were more active on Facebook than they were on Twitter, with an 18.67 points difference between the two platforms: 59.33% for Facebook and 40.66% for Twitter out of the 7018 total posts.

2- Female Candidates' Posts on Facebook



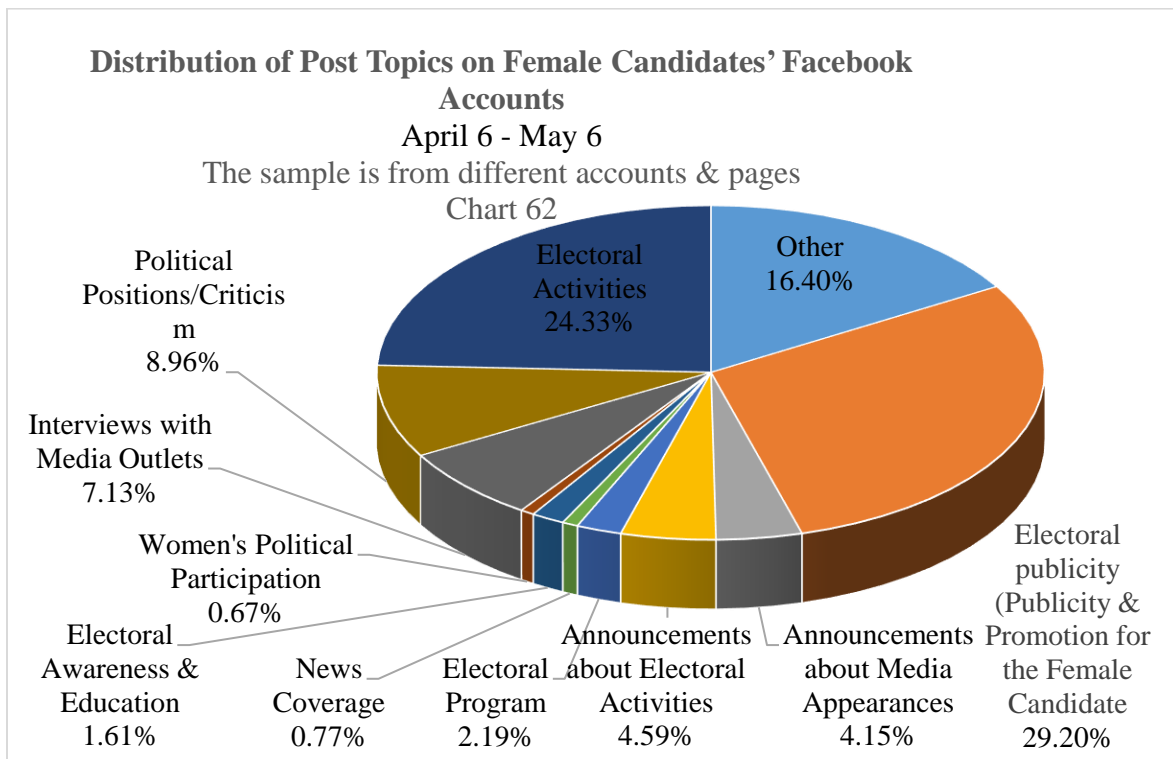
Posts came in first at 72.7% while Facebook Live came in last at 3.5%.

3- Females Candidates' Posts on Twitter



Tweets came in first at 60.1%.

4- Distribution of Post Topics on Female Candidates' Facebook Accounts

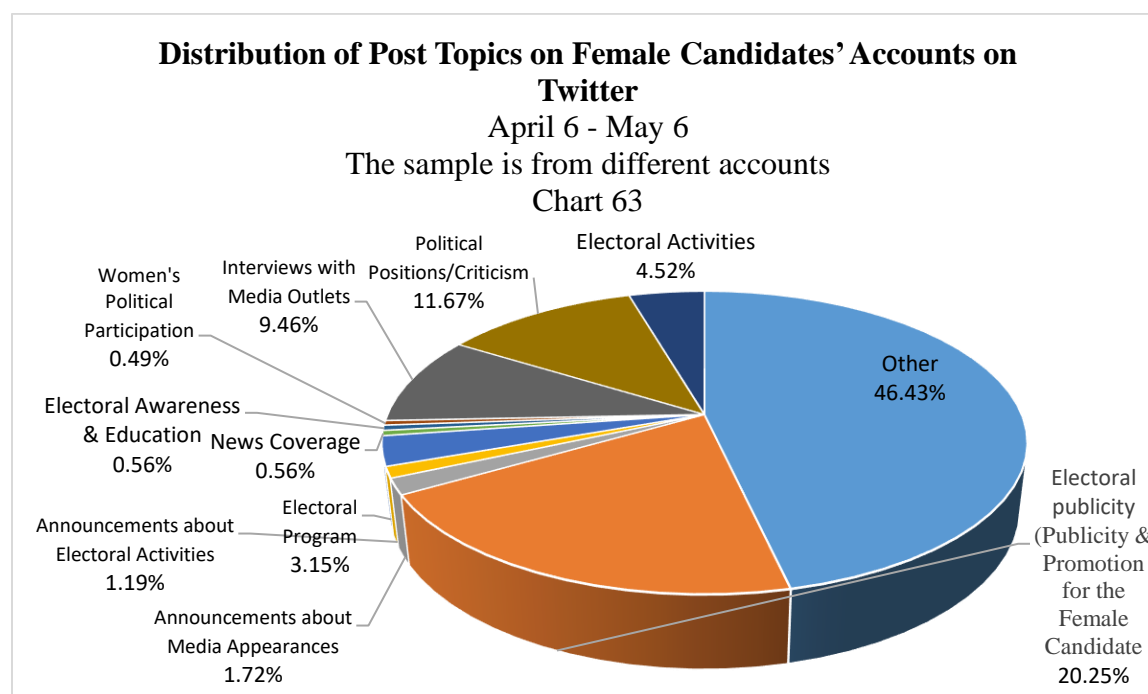


Concerning the topics of posts on Facebook, electoral publicity came in first at 29.2% followed by electoral activities at 24.3%.

Facebook posts on political criticism was at 17% for male candidates and at 8.9% for female candidates.

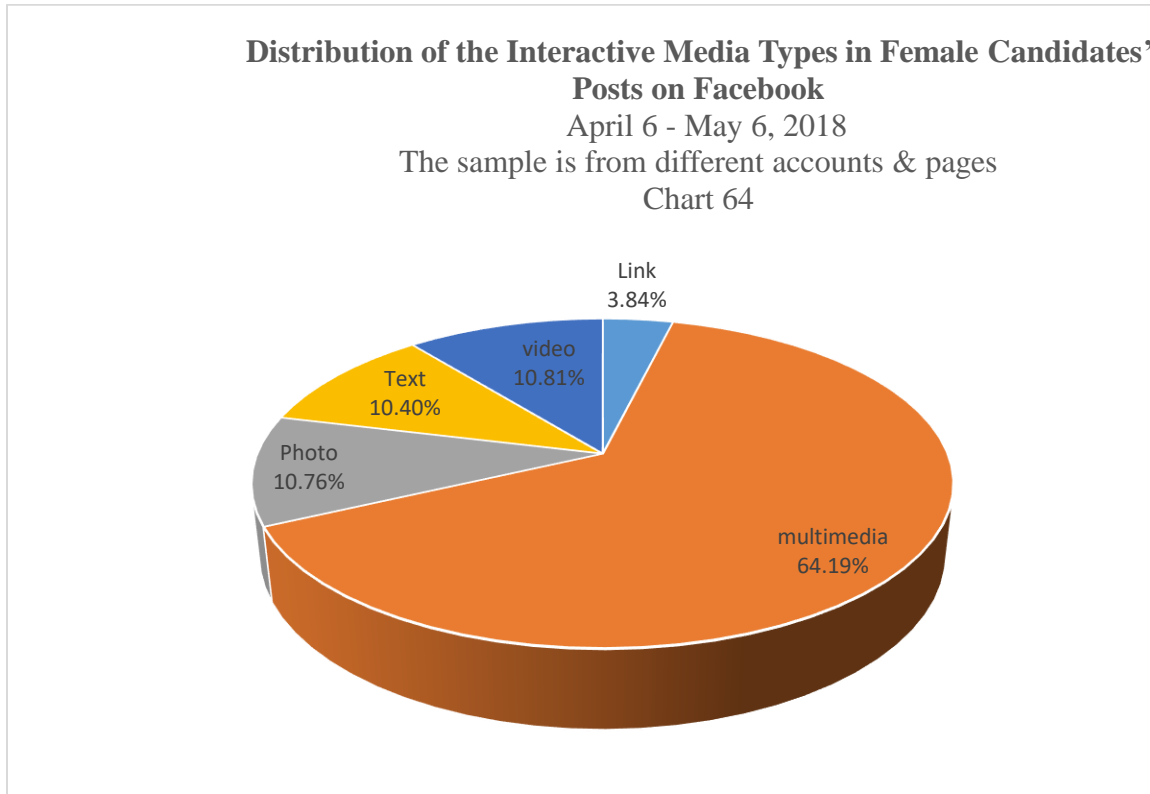
The lowest rate was for women's political participation which was almost nonexistent at 0.6%. Electoral awareness and education was at 1.6%.

5- Distribution of Post Topics on Female Candidates' Accounts on Twitter



The chart shows that electoral publicity was leading with 20.2% and that women's political participation was last with 0.4%. The topic of electoral awareness and education was also almost nonexistent at 0.5%.

6- Distribution of the Interactive Media Types in Female Candidates' Posts on Facebook



The types of interactive media in female candidates' posts on Facebook: Multimedia in the lead with 64.1%, videos, pictures and texts shared nearly the same rate at approximately 10%. Links came in last at 3.8%.

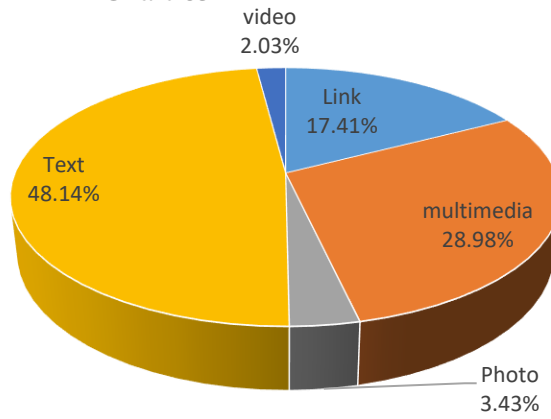
7- Distribution of the Interactive Media Types in Female Candidates' Posts on Twitter

Distribution of the Interactive Media Types in Female Candidates' Posts on Twitter

April 6 - May 6, 2018

The sample is from different accounts

Chart 65



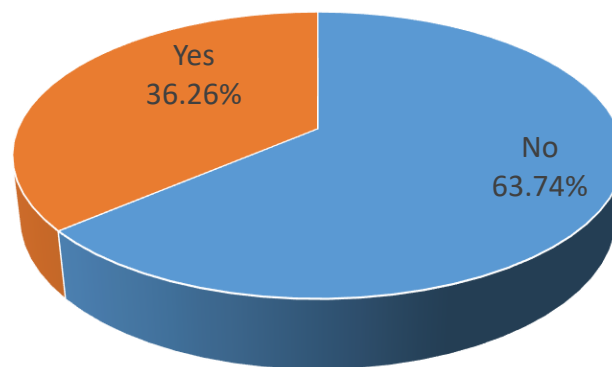
In the distribution of the types of interactive media in female candidates' posts on Twitter, texts were in the lead 48.1%, followed by multimedia 28.9% and links 17.4%. Pictures and videos had close rates at 3.4% and 2% respectively.

8- Adding Tags to Facebook Posts on Female Candidates' Accounts

Adding Tags to Facebook Posts on Female Candidates' Accounts

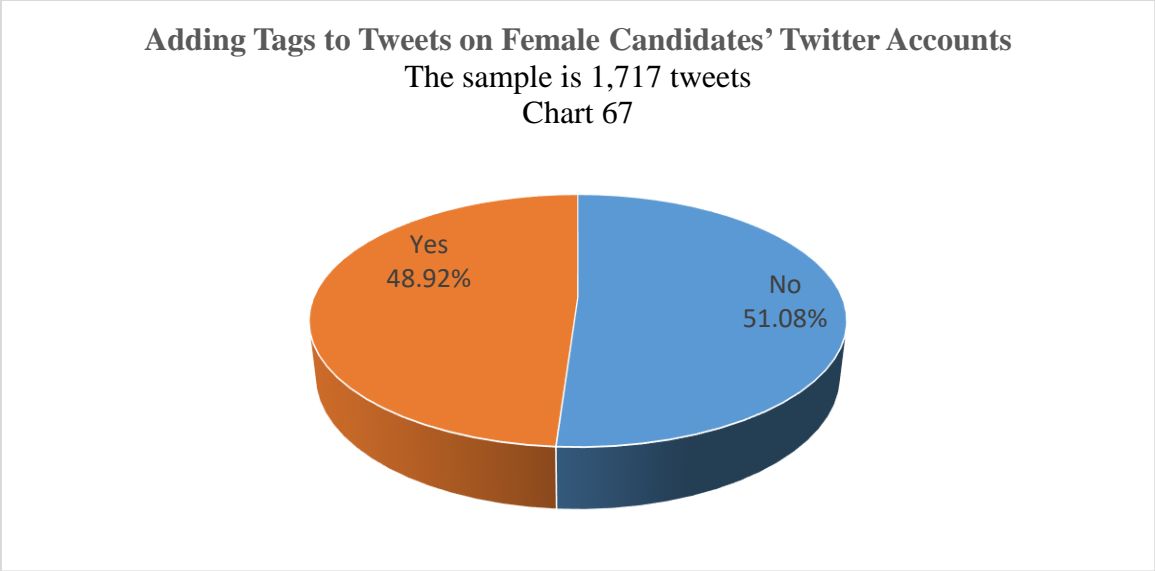
The sample is 4,164 posts

Chart 66



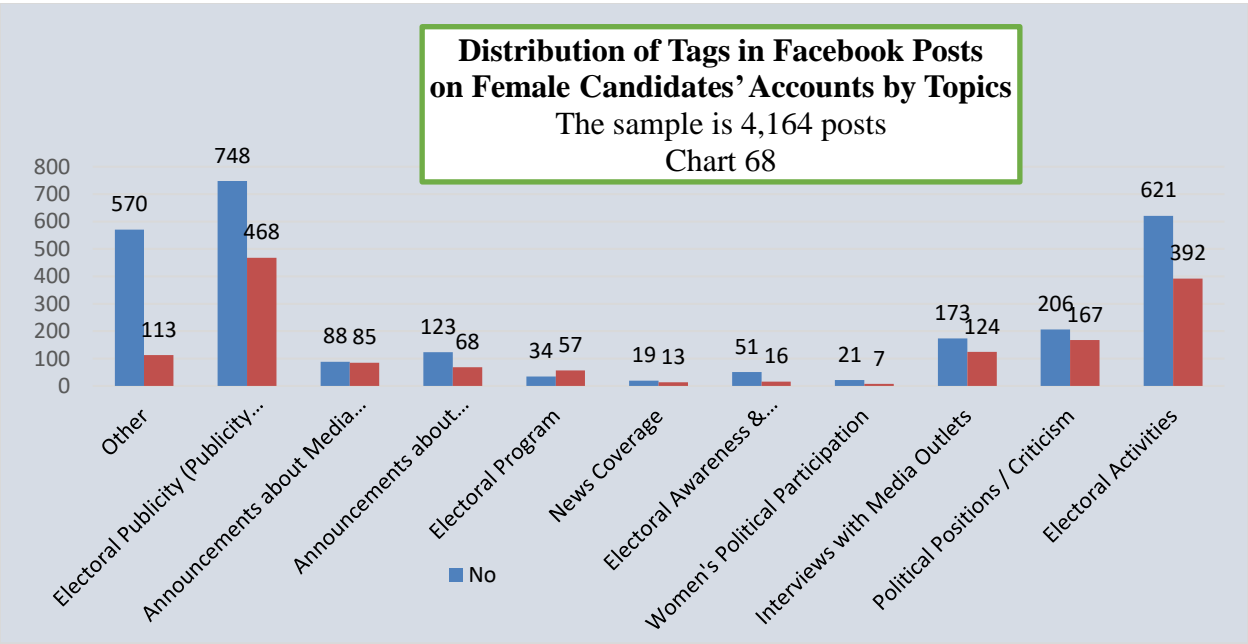
63.7% of female candidates didn't include tags in their posts while 36.2% did.

9- Adding Tags to Tweets on Female Candidates' Twitter Accounts



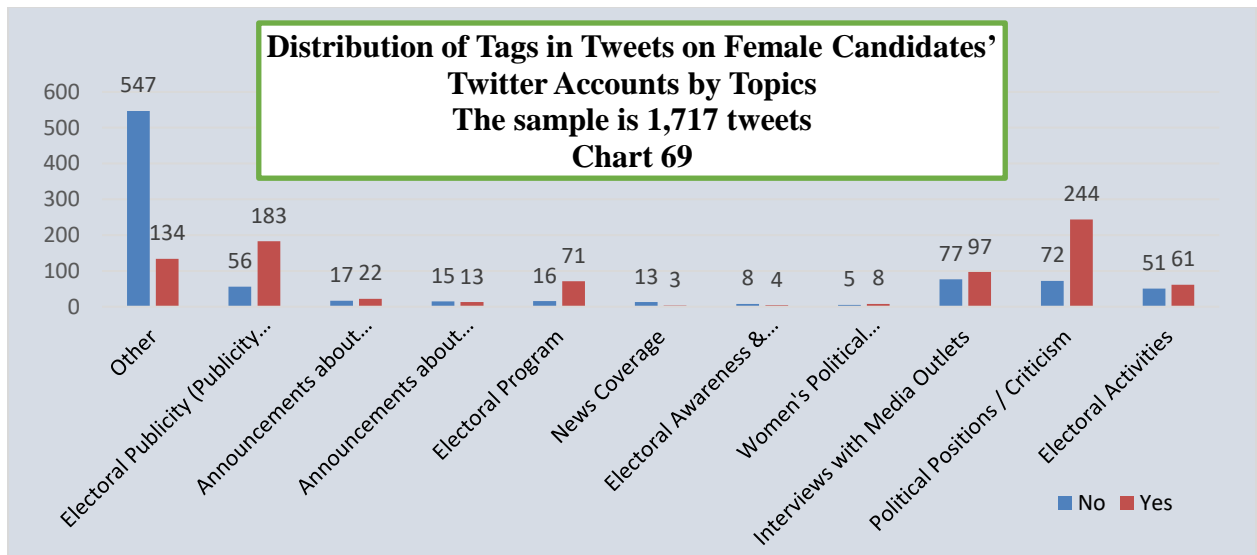
The rates of adding tags to tweets were split almost in half between “yes” and “no” with a negligible difference: 51% no and 48.9% yes.

10- Distribution of Tags in Facebook Posts on Female Candidates' Accounts



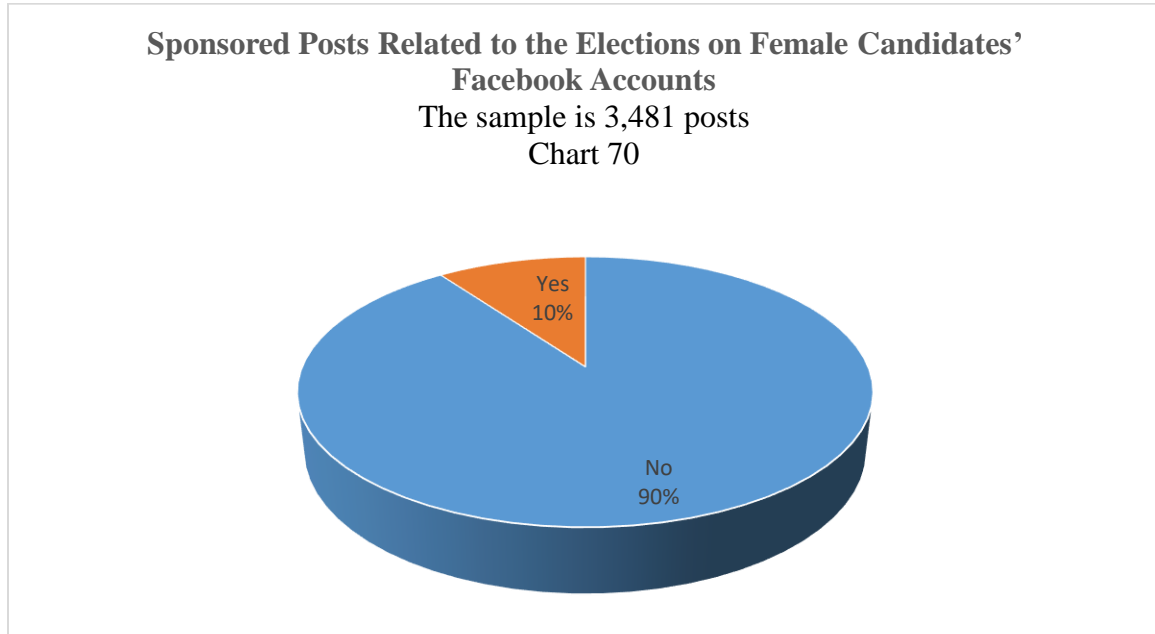
The chart shows that using tags on Facebook for electoral publicity (yes) was in the lead at 11.2%, followed by electoral activities (yes) at 9.4%.

11- Distribution of Tags in Tweets on Female Candidates' Twitter Accounts



Using tags on Twitter to allow people to easily follow topics that interest them were mostly used by female candidates in political positions 14.2% (yes) followed by electoral publicity 10.6% (yes).

12- Sponsored Posts Related to the Elections on Female Candidates' Facebook Accounts



Sponsored Posts on Facebook accounted for 10% of all the female candidates' posts.

Part III

Content Analysis

The third part relies on the quantitative results of the second part to analyze them and deduce their implications. The monitoring showed that female candidates' direct access was 3.42% in newspapers and 7.89% on television as a total average in all programs, a rate that dropped to 3.46% in news bulletins.

Press coverage of electoral education and awareness was almost nonexistent with an overall rate of 0.19%. It performed slightly better on television but the rate was still a negligible 2.93%. The percentage of posting about political positions and criticism on social media was lopsided in favor of male candidates at 43% as opposed to female candidates at 11.67%.

The biggest disparity though was in the distribution of press coverage between male and female candidates, where the men took up most of the space of course with about 95% compared to 5% for women. On television, men received 84.18% coverage while women received 15.82%.

The content analysis aims to investigate the media's performance toward women in their coverage and to highlight the areas of deficiency in order to propose solutions that help provide a media practice that fosters gender equity.

1- Examining the Number of Female Candidates who Won

Before getting into the results of the media coverage, a glimpse at the number of female candidates who won suggests that the low number of votes for women indicates that the mentality isn't progressing at the same pace as the law which allowed women to vote and stand for a seat in parliament since 1953. The stereotype about women which hinders their social participation still largely affects both men and women's civil performance.

Thus, when it came to female candidates, voters chose women who belong to political parties and not independent candidates. Therefore, out of the six female winners, five women belong to political parties and one is an independent woman who ran on the civil society's list. In general, even though the proportional representation law strongly supports non-traditional forces to win, none of the civil society candidates managed to achieve results that meet expectations, not even those who have been long-established political references in many circles, such as Botros Harb and Fares Said. The current study isn't concerned with discussing this issue, however we can quickly note two indicators:

- Civil society's candidates and independents barely made a dent
- The voter turnout was low at 49.20%, down from 54% in 2009.

We can also quickly deduce that beside the fact that Lebanese citizens haven't yet grasped the new law, they've lost trust in the traditional powers on one hand, without being convinced of the ability of civil society and independents to meet their ambitions and bring about change on the other hand.

As for women, the low number of winners showed that Lebanese citizens are still very reluctant to allow women to represent them, in spite of the diverse constituencies and supportive parties, and even though there were independent and civil society female candidates.

In this regard:

- It's necessary to point out the cultural factor related to how women are perceived generally and politically, in representation and legislation specifically, be it by female or male citizens and voters. If a little more than half the voters were females, then that means that female citizens didn't elect women, whether they were supported by civil society or parties or whether they were independent. And of course, neither did male citizens. (Women constituted 50.8% of registered voters according to the UN)³¹.
- Both male and female voters preferred the traditional forces represented by their traditional men. Interestingly, the parliament saw, at once, the fresh faces of traditional leaders easily gaining the trust of male and female voters.

³¹ "Meet the Only Six Women Who Won in the Lebanese Elections," 8/5/2018
<https://arabi21.com/>

- This result raises the question: is it easier for citizens to accept a woman appointed in the executive authority than willingly choose a woman to represent them in the parliament? If the answer is yes, then that means that between what citizens do by their own volition and accepting what's imposed on them, there's either a long conceptual path or one that hasn't been forged yet.

The result was that a very small number of women won considering that the number of female candidates was the highest in Lebanon's history. Among the six women who won:

- Two were previously members of parliament, Sethrida Geagea and Bahia Hariri, and both hail from political families. Sethrida Geagea is the wife of the Lebanese Forces' leader, Samir Geagea. It's her third victory after two consecutive victories in 2005 and 2009³².
- For the sixth time since the first legislative elections after the war (1975-1990) in 1992, Bahia Hariri also succeeded. She's the sister of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the paternal aunt of current Prime Minister, Saad Hariri³³.
- Dima Jamali and Rola Tabsh Jaroudi won for the first time and both are from the Future Movement.
- Minister Inaya Ezzedine, member of the Amal Movement Political Office for 40 years and appointed Minister of State for Administrative Reform in the current government since December 2016,³⁴ also won, becoming the first Shiite woman in the parliament.

³²"She received an overwhelming number of votes that exceeded 6,500 preferential votes out of the 37,000 votes received by her list, placing her in the lead in the district of Bsharri backed by partisan votes." Sherif Dima "How Six Women Managed to Get into the Lebanese Parliament," 5/11/2018

<http://www.aljazeera.net/>

³³"Like Sethrida Geagea, Hariri received in her Saida district the highest percentage of votes adding up to 13,700 preferential votes out of the 16,000 votes that her list received." Ibid.

³⁴"Ezzedine received less than half the votes received by list leader Nabih Berri (18,850 preferential votes out of the 134,000 total votes for the list as a whole) but she came in fourth and was ahead of two of the permanent candidates on Hezbollah and the Amal Movement lists." Ibid.

"Ezzedine relied on the votes of her party, the Amal Movement, and her victory was almost guaranteed since the district she ran for didn't have a serious competition to her list." Ibid.

- The only independent candidate who won is media personality and talk show host Paula Yacoubian. She'd ran with the coalition Kulluna Watani in Beirut's First District.³⁵ Yacoubian is a well-known face, having been in the media for over twenty years where she interviewed some of the most prominent politicians in the country. For a long time since 2006, she trained politicians and public speakers for television appearances, eloquent speaking and mastering persuasion skills.³⁶ It should be noted that she had launched her electoral campaign early on.

We can also draw from the results that:

- The majority of female winners are from the Future Movement, with 3 out the 6 women (Hariri, Jamali and Jaroudi), despite the decline of its presence in the parliament.
- Although the Amal Movement and Hezbollah won the majority of seats in the South, Baalbeck, Hermel and Shiite seats generally, through an allied bloc of over 26 deputies, there was only one woman (Ezzedine).
- Civil Society achieved a female breakthrough with the victory of Yacoubian, from the Sabaa Party.³⁷
- Two women won in Beirut (in the first and second districts).

2- Mrs. Male Deputy: Feminizing the Language

Referring to women who won seats in parliament in the masculine form (nayeb), because the feminine form (nayeba) has a negative connotation, leads us to think

³⁵Yacoubia received 2,500 preferential votes out of the 6,500 votes her list received, a number considered good in this low turnout district.

It's also a fairly competitive district, with a list backed by the Free Patriotic Movement, another backed by the Lebanese Forces and three independent list, including Kulluna Watani. Ibid.

³⁶Hawi Zainab, "Paula Yacoubian: Training Public Speakers for the Art of Television Appearance," As-Safir, 27/3/2012.

³⁷"6 women in the New Parliament... Is the Number up to the Expectations and Ambitions?" 8/5/2018

<https://www.newlebanon.info/lebanon-now/>

about feminizing the language. Language isn't immutable. It's constantly evolving based on social changes, hence the talk about feminizing the language.

In 2017, the French Academy set out to try and do just that.³⁸ After twenty years of not initializing or accepting to feminize the language, the Academy promised to take more steps toward feminizing titles and functions. Societal changes have triggered language modifications. It's a matter of significant implications. Language is adaptation as well.

In that respect, Le Monde newspaper decided since early 2018 to feminize certain names and functions.³⁹

It all started with a history textbook published by Hatier for CE2 students in France in 2017. It's the first book to be written in this form, using what's called inclusive writing « écriture inclusive » for names, for instance « les agriculteur.trice.s » i.e. by placing dots in the middle of the word to include both male and female forms. The objective: To dismantle the masculine form's precedence over the feminine form in French in order to combat stereotypes.

Language codifies our thinking and not only does it reflect it but it also guides it.⁴⁰ Hence the need to consider feminizing women's functions and roles in the public sphere to pave the way for a way of thinking that achieves gender equity.

3- The Coverage

As already mentioned, concerning the media coverage of the electoral campaign from a gender perspective, there was a significant disparity in the distribution of press coverage between male and female candidates in favor of men of course, at a rate of 95% for men and 5% for women (chart 5). On television, female candidates'

³⁸« Féminisation de la langue : l'Académie française prête à évoluer », 24/11/2017. www.rtl.fr

³⁹« La féminisation de la langue française dans "Le Monde" », 27/01/2018.

<https://www.rtl.fr/>

⁴⁰ Spiler Clémentine, « Écriture inclusive : pourquoi féminiser le français ? », 28 septembre 2017.

<http://www.nova.fr/ecriture-inclusive-pourquoi-feminiser-le-francais>

share in interviews and talk shows was about 11.85%. In the news, it didn't exceed 3.46%. (Charts 19 & 21).

3-1 A Small Space for Women

The meager space allocated to women in the media, considering the number of female candidates, has several indications:

- This disparity wasn't a surprise because it simply reflects the general approach toward women in the public sphere and in politics specifically. It's by far a man's world.
- In its coverage, the media worked according to a stereotypical agenda that established men's superiority. There was no equality with men in dealing with women's candidacy. This is supported by newspaper headlines and news bulletins' introductions which strongly highlighted, upon the closing of the nomination process, the number of female candidates (113 women). The number was a mere rhetoric meliorative that wasn't translated by the media approach into a serious perception of women as capable of fulfilling that role. Thus, women's presence in the headlines was limited to candidacy filing, then men returned to the main and most important space for the daily coverage of the electoral campaign. Women's presence was insignificant in press stories as a main topic of coverage and barely reached 8% (chart 9). Even in news bulletins, the direct coverage of female candidates was 3.46% out of the overall coverage of all candidates 96.5%.
- Additionally, traditional powers are deeply rooted in the political field, a factor which also makes it difficult for women to succeed. When a woman wins a seat because she's related to a known political man, it's hard to convince voters to elect women in general since, for decades, this was the only representation of women in parliament: she continues the work of the politician to whom she's related, and she's only there thanks to him. This voter perception is due to years of political history in the country which has never seen a significant female political movement—be it independent or even partisan—that allowed women to establish themselves outside the patriarchal family support. It should also be noted that it's even difficult for male

candidates to succeed because of the deeply rooted traditional powers, let alone women who face twice as many challenges.

- The media is controlled by a dual commercial and democratic logic. They're conflicting logics that make media outlets work simultaneously as a strong and vulnerable machine.⁴¹ To attract viewers and advertisers, the media is subject to the “traditional” market policy where men dominate in politics. Even though the media is one of the main pillars of democracy, it's also subject to mechanisms that control it and restrict its movement.⁴²

3-2- In Interviews and Talk Shows: The Situation is Better

In private interviews and talk shows, the coverage was slightly better for female candidates reaching 11.85% higher than the direct coverage 3.4% or the space they occupied as a first story 8% (chart 20). The low rate of direct coverage in news bulletins indicates that women, even in such an electoral event and despite the increase in the number of female candidates for the first time in Lebanon, aren't placed in the spotlight in most programs on every television station with a space that reflects preparation to exercise their work in politics.

It's interesting to note the support in interviews and talk shows for independent women who received the highest television coverage 55.53% as opposed to 24.79% for the Sabaa Party female candidates, while the remaining percentage was divided among female candidates from the other parties (chart 24). Télé Liban helped increase this percentage by giving 77.2% of space to independent female candidates, followed with a considerable difference by Sabaa Party 7.7% (chart 25). On private stations, however, female candidates' appearances in talk shows was 46.7% for independents and 31.6% for the Sabaa Party (chart 26). The high rate on Télé Liban is in line with article 73 of the new Election Law which allows any candidate or list to use the official media for free.

⁴¹Patrick Charaudeau, « Analyse de discours et communication. L'un dans l'autre ou l'autre dans l'un ? », Revue SEMEN 23, Sémiotique et communication. État des lieux et perspectives d'un dialogue, Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, Besançon, avril 2007., 2007, sur le site de *Patrick Charaudeau - Livres, articles, publications*. URL: <http://www.patrick-charaudeau.com/Analyse-de-discours-et.html>

⁴²See in this regard the book

Charaudeau P., *Le discours d'information médiatique. La construction du miroir social*, Paris, Nathan / Institut national de l'audiovisuel (coll. « Médias-Recherches »), 1997.

Télé Liban was also interesting in the coverage of the electoral campaigns for the various political parties, which was in favor of independents 39.5%, followed by Kulluna Watani 11.7% then the remaining movements and parties: the Free Patriotic Movement 10.5%, the Future Movement 8.1%, the Lebanese Forces 7.3% and the Lebanese Kataeb Party 5.7%. The rates ranged between 1% and 0% for the remaining parties (chart 42). What explains these figures on Télé Liban is that most private stations already represent the political forces in the government, so they don't need the official station's support.

The coverage of the different parties on private TV stations (chart 29) also reflects the size of the ruling and active political forces. The Future Movement was in the lead with the highest coverage 22.2%, closely followed by the Free Patriotic Movement 21%, while Kulluna Watani received a coverage rate of 5.8%, a very low percentage compared to the coverage received by the traditional parties combined.

The largest space allocated on private TV stations to the independents, including those on the major parties' lists (chart 30), was 22.5% by MTV, closely followed by Al Jadeed with 21%, then LBCI 18.2% and OTV 16.7%. Al-Manar and NBN had similar rates, 9.9% and 9.6% respectively. Future TV had the lowest rate. Even if the rates were insignificant on Future TV and low on NBN and Al-Manar, at least these dedicated stations allocated some space for independents, while MTV recorded the highest rates among private TVs.

The distribution of the TV coverage space for electoral campaigns among the various parties and forces was almost similar to the distribution of the non-advertising TV coverage space among the various parties and forces: independent candidates 25.7%, followed by the Free Patriotic Movement 14.9% and the Future Movement 12.4%. Then Kulluna Watani 6.2%, Hezbollah 4.8%, the Lebanese Forces 4.3% and the Amal Movement 4% at close rates (chart 40). This means that independent candidates, the Sabaa Party and Kulluna Watani make up 32.2% of the total coverage while traditional parties share the bulk of the coverage.

For the non-advertising TV coverage space (see chart 39), Kulluna Watani, the Sabaa Party and the independents had 26.7%. The significance of these rates must be tied in with the topic of women. Most of the media outlets still give the largest space to the traditional forces without completely dismissing the new movements.

And since parties didn't nominate many women, the marginalization included anything outside the traditional frame.

Offering a space for independents and civil society on Télé Liban and private stations—even if the rates were disproportionate—is still considered a way in to help give increasingly more space to women as diversity begins to break through the rigid traditional scene, albeit slowly.

4- Women's Social Representations

In light of this data—the figures and their connotations—and based on the terminology used in the media coverage, it seems that the mechanism of the social discourse toward women is still dominated by antiquated representations of women and men.

The man is strong, rational and affirmative while women are weak, emotional and passive. This is due to old cultural, religious and biological representations. “Within this ‘biological’ or quasi-biological data, we find one of the oldest and simplest mechanisms, a mechanism of ideological justification whereby the system of cultural human hegemony is turned into an eternal natural system.”⁴³ Because there's a “masculine domination” as Pierre Bourdieu calls it, stating that “All the conditions for the full exercise of male domination are thus combined. The precedence universally accorded to men is affirmed in the objectivity of the social structures and the productive or reproductive activities, based on a sexual division...”⁴⁴

This negativity extends to the public sphere which excluded women in thought and language before excluding her from the public sphere itself.

These representations were clearly and directly reflected through the 94.9% of positions in the Lebanese media which didn't address the topic of female candidates' political participation and their equality with their male counterparts in assuming

⁴³ See Ben Salama Raja, “Women's Eligibility to Political Participation in the Contemporary Religious Discourses,” *Women in Contemporary Arab Discourse*, Bahithat, Book Nine, 2003-2004.

⁴⁴ Bourdieu Pierre, *Masculine Domination*, Translated to Arabic by Kaafarani Salman, Centre For Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2009.

public responsibilities, as opposed to the 4.49% of positions in favor who mainly addressed this issue (chart 10).

5- Women (didn't) speak

Today, many Lebanese politicians, regardless of their sect, have begun addressing the audience or recipient with the plural feminine form as well as the masculine. In other words, it's become clear to the speaker, by looking at their audience, that women constitute more than half. So, it's necessary to address that half by acknowledging them.

But simply acknowledging that half the audience is women doesn't mean that problems have been fixed as this didn't translate into setting the place for women so that they can also be half of the speakers. They're the half who only listens, at least so far.

Women can't exist outside the discourse, outside the narrative and outside the first person "I." Since 1929, Virginia Woolf called women to "write all kinds of books, hesitating at no subject however trivial or however vast"⁴⁵ and she told them how: To be able to write, a woman must have a "room of her own" and financial independence. Her book "A Room of One's Own" was considered a landmark of feminist thought in the early 1900s. Women cannot be liberated without being part of the narrative.

5-1 Numbers Indicate Absence

The figures show that women in the media didn't speak, at least not in a way that reflects representation of women who are half the voters or in a way that reflects the proportion of female candidates out of the total number of candidates. Women spoke through direct statements, i.e. what they personally reported as candidates during the press coverage, 3.4% of the direct access space allocated to female candidates out of the total press coverage (chart 6). On television, the total percentage of all the programs was 7.89%. It decreased to 3.46% in news bulletins (chart 18). The media didn't give them the floor sufficiently to encourage them to run, on one hand, and to encourage the voter to trust them, on the other hand. Not to mention the power of

⁴⁵Woolf Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*, Hogarth Press, First published on 24 October 1929.

words and the connection of speech with authority. How can women be powerful if their direct access to the media isn't significant?

5-2 Direct Access

We start off with the rate of female candidates' direct access in news bulletins 3.46% (chart 19) compared to the rate of their direct access in talk shows and special interviews 11.85%. The average rate for female candidates' direct access in the different TV coverages was 7.89% (chart 18).

The largest share of direct access among the already low rates was for familiar faces:

- Female candidates who appeared the most in the overall TV coverages (chart 45): Inaya Ezzedine in the lead with a small difference between her and Paula Yacoubian, followed by Ghada Eid and Myriam Skaff with an insignificant difference between the two.
- The female candidates who appeared the most in the live broadcast of electoral campaigns are Myriam Skaff, followed by Inaya Ezzedine with a 240-seconds (or 4 minutes) difference, then Sethrida Geagea with a 2,397-seconds (or 39.95 minutes) difference from Skaff (chart 44).
- The most prominent female candidate in news reports was Inaya Ezzedine 43.7%, followed with a large percentage gap by Myriam Skaff 14.6%, then Bahia Hariri 13.5%, followed with another large percentage gap by Paula Yacoubian 3.9% and Sethrida Geagea 1.7%. The lowest percentage was for candidate Nada Gharib 0.6% (chart 44).
- It's also interesting that the most prominent female candidates in talk shows and special interviews are Paula Yacoubian 12.3% and Ghada Eid 9.3% up front, followed by Inaya Ezzedine 8%, Michelle Tueini 5.2%, Myriam Skaff 5.1%, Neemat Badreddine 2.1% and Dalal Rahbani 2.1% (chart 43).

In other words, the first and second place in talk show appearance went to media personalities who excel at dialog management (Paula Yacoubian and Ghada Eid) and have years of expertise in television, making them famous on a public level.

As for the overall television coverages, Minister Inaya Ezzedine and Paula Yacoubian hold the first two positions. In news reports: Inaya Ezzedine and Popular Bloc leader Myriam Skaff. During live broadcast, the first two positions were also shared by Inaya Ezzedine and Myriam Skaff. The media effort wasn't directed

toward new faces and it seemed faster and easier to mainly and simultaneously cover women the public already knows than risk the viewer ratings.

Another noteworthy result is that independent women received the highest percentage of television coverage 55.53% in talk shows and special interviews on various private TV stations and Télé Liban, followed by 24.79% for the Sabaa Party female candidates, and the rest was divided among the other parties' female candidates (chart 24).

Talk shows relatively made up for the inadequacy in news bulletins and overall coverage. This might also motivate the media in general and the news bulletins in particular to allocate more space to women in public affairs, especially since encouraging independent female candidates helps enhance confidence in women who succeed without having to be related to a male politician, regardless of the ability of women who had won this way yet have proven themselves worthy.

It should be noted here that for the topic of television coverage according to the different parties, 48 out of the 74 independent female candidates had direct access to the media, i.e. 64.86%, the highest percentage, followed by the Sabaa Party female candidates 10.8% (chart 23).

On the fringe of these figures, out of 3,687 different news reports, female candidates benefited from 11 coverages as a first story compared to 357 for male candidates, i.e. 0.3% of the total coverage versus 9.7% for male candidates.

The direct coverage of female candidates in news bulletins was 3.46% out of the overall coverage of all candidates (chart 19).

The space occupied by female candidates as a first story in TV news was almost nonexistent 0.87% compared to the space dedicated to male candidates 99.13% (chart 20). The Amal Movement female candidate received the highest percentage of allocated space in news bulletins 43.60% (chart 27).

Direct coverage gives women a chance to express themselves and speak for themselves. During the electoral campaign, the study showed that women weren't given enough space to be persuasive by directly addressing the public in general, and the voters in particular, with their own words. The numbers point to male hegemony over direct access, i.e. speech, while the self, any self, needs to narrate, to speak in the first person. Silencing the other is a silent violent act.

5-3 The Erased Role

For the access content, i.e. the topics that the female candidates discussed, it was mostly the electoral campaign 92.13%. The study showed an almost nonexistent mention of topics related to legislation, public policies, economy, security, infrastructure, pensions, etc. (Chart 7). This indicates that women are primarily preoccupied with their own electoral campaigns, haven't yet been able to handle these topics in depth in order to discuss them and/or haven't had the opportunity to do so, so they stuck to promoting.

The rate of female candidates' access according to the coverage topic out of the total coverage was: miscellaneous activities and positions 5.38%, electoral campaigns 4.40%, human rights 1.24%, legislation and public policies 0.94%, while the other topics were almost at 0% (chart 13).

The relatively high access rate (direct speech or literal text of what female candidates stated through press coverage) in the written press compared to the direct access rate on television should be carefully weighed. L'Orient le Jour alone contributed to the highest percentage of direct access for female candidates at 56%, followed by Al-Mustaqbal at 30%, then very low and close rates recorded by An-Nahar 5%, Al Joumhouria 4% and Al Akhbar 3% (chart 8). L'Orient le Jour's high rate is due to having allocated periodical interviews to both female and male candidates (the same questions were asked, plus the question of whether or not they were deputies before) while Al-Mustaqbal hadn't published any interviews. In spite of its importance, L'Orient le Jour's contribution that addresses a specific segment of the population is restricted to this category.

On television, the three stations MTV 34.3%, Télé Liban 26.9% and Al Jadeed 15.5% combined made up 76% of direct access for the female candidates, while the remaining percentages ranged between 5.9% for NBN, 4.9% for LBCI, 4.3% for Al-Manar, 4% for OTV and 3.8% for Future TV (chart 28). Here also, Télé Liban played a significant role in allowing female candidates to directly address the public. Finally, the lag in discussing topics directly related to the event, that is themes and contents which constitute the core of speeches during electoral campaigns and based on which the voters presumably select their candidates, points to a lag in the female

candidates' grasp of their own files and of the media game, because that requires experience as well. As for the female media personalities, the role changed here as well and along with it the reaction of the recipient who became a voter.

6- Using Social Media Platforms

Female candidates also used social media to access the voters. But here too they talked about and promoted the electoral campaign while male candidates were primarily focused on establishing their political positions. And male candidates even outperformed their female counterparts in discussing the topic of women's candidacy. Being more powerful in the political equation, mentioning women's candidacy in their discourse is an added credit to the values they're promoting, which in turn reinforces their image as male democratic candidates who are open to equality. However, this is inconsistent with the percentage of women nominated by political parties and female candidates' media coverage, where men also have the lion's share in owning, managing and working in media organizations, and managing their news bulletins and talk shows. Therefore, it seems that talking about women's participation is just that, talking, or it's used as a promotional tool to win over female voters.

There was a small difference between posts on Facebook 52% and tweets 48% by the male candidates (chart 50). Concerning the topics of posts on male candidates' Facebook accounts, electoral publicity came in first with 33%, followed by electoral activities 28% and political positions 17%. The rest was divided among the remaining topics. But it should be noted that women's political participation occupied 1% of the topics while electoral awareness and education took up 3% (chart 53). On Twitter, political positions had the highest rate 43%, followed by electoral publicity 27%. Women's political participation occupied 1% of the topics here as well, while electoral awareness and education had 2%, with the electoral program receiving 1% on both Twitter and Facebook (chart 53).

As for the topics of female candidates' posts on Facebook, electoral publicity 29.2% and electoral activities 24.3% took up top positions (chart 62), while their tweets

were about electoral publicity in the lead with 20.2% and about women's political participation last with 0.4% (chart 63).

Twitter is more often used for political posts than Facebook. The study showed that male candidates used this platform to mostly express their political positions, while female candidates used both Facebook and Twitter for the same purpose: electoral publicity.

In the distribution of overall rates of posts and tweets by male and female candidates, female candidates posted more about their electoral programs 5.7% than their male counterparts 2.6% (chart 58). The rates are undoubtedly low for both but it reflects the female candidates' interest in playing the role: announcing the program, making promises, proposing solutions.

7- Justifying Women's Candidacy

Regarding the topics of statements and interventions by female candidates, of note was their discourse about the motives for running, the mission and role. As a candidate, she needed to explain the reasons why, while he simply was a candidate. The explanation wasn't just about the program, as it's usually the case with democracies, but she also had to state her right to be one of the decision makers, so she tried to convince through the narrow space given to her by the media to say "elect me." Keep in mind that women's discourse in 2018 is formed after 65 years of having the right to vote and stand for a seat in parliament. Therefore, it's important to not overlook the element of time where the discourse is slowly evolving.

In a narrative addressed to women, men, political parties, the state, legislators and the public opinion, the female candidates' discourse can be examined on several levels:

- A level that includes positive, urgent themes that are, at the same time, almost generic that transcend geographical boundaries and also constituted the contents of male candidates' discourses, such as: fighting corruption, supporting development, etc.
- An interesting level that caught our attention and includes women-related themes where they announce why they're running in the elections. Among

those reasons: A matter of struggle, proving themselves and the legitimacy of existence by demanding social recognition of their right to participate, self-reliance after the parties failed to keep their promises of nominating women, etc.

- A level where the female candidates' discourse goes beyond developmental issues and moves toward the political (i.e. domestic and foreign) though it's contested by another women-related discourse where their role is strictly educational and developmental.
- A level where women's traditional discourse about themselves is evolving, also contested by another female candidates' discourse that preserved the stereotypes about women.
- A level where female candidates' discourse about human rights and eliminating all forms of discrimination (against women) is evolving, along with women's right to be decision-makers in public affairs, their right to participate and their right to an equal share (half the parliament).

Among the reasons for nominating women, some male candidates and players stressed the importance of women in the parliament.

It's interesting though that even when women's discourse evolved toward the political, i.e. toward implementing her tasks in the legislative and executive authorities after the elections, this same discourse reproduced traditional roles and stereotypical images that restrict women's role in public affairs within education and development. It also attributed women's nomination to their abilities as housewives managing their homes, mothers raising their children, teachers educating their students, etc.

Consequently, the discourse was pulled in opposite directions; one progressive, geared toward human rights and seeks to break the stereotype and the other traditional, conservative and reinforces women's inferiority to men in their ability to play all the different roles in politics.

By analyzing the female candidates' discourse, we can highlight main themes that were the common axes for the motive of taking on that role:

- Parties' Shortcomings

“What encourages us more to run for the elections is the parties’ failure to keep their promises about the number of female candidates” (Lina Hamdan, Al Jadeed, 7/3/2018).

- **Half of Society, Half of the Parliament**

“Women are partners in the nation and we aspire to constitute half of the parliament” (Rola Al-Mourad, Télé Liban, 8/3/2018).

“Kulluna Watani is for equal rights and duties for all male and female citizens” (the declaration of Kulluna Watani's list in Mount Lebanon’s third district - Baabda, Télé Liban, 4/4/2018).

“Women are partners in the public opinion and we will be partners in spreading electoral awareness” (Inaya Ezzedine, Tyre and Tayr Debba NBN 7/4/2018).

“Women constitute half of society and must engage in all the various fields” (Inaya Ezzedine, NBN, 2/4/2018).

“Supporting women isn't a formality: half of society, half of the parliament” (electoral awareness and education, Future TV, 8/3/2018).

“The women of the Metn will show how much they’re able to support women and be proud of them, because if I was able to succeed today it would be a victory by them for all of them. Women are half of society. If they help me succeed, it would be a victory for them as well” (Jessica Azar, MTV, 4/5/2018).

“I’m not on the list as decoration. I’m neither a decoration nor a pretty flower. Women belong here, in the heart of decision-making. This is your natural place as you are half of society. Every woman in Lebanon should elect a woman and we know how to get everyone their due rights” (Yolande Khoury, MTV, 9/4/2018).

“Women are half of society and yet they're not represented in some issues... And who can defend women issues the most but women themselves?” (Jamal Jarrah, OTV, 2/5/2018)

- **Participation and Equal Share**

“Because I believe that teamwork lies in the partnership between man and woman in decision-making, I'd like to stand as a candidate for Tripoli and Lebanon to speak for her and on her behalf.” “I want to work on developing

a sense of citizenship and addressing any obstacles hindering real representation of women's role” (Nariman Al Jamal, MTV, 7/4/2018).

“Without the quota system, we imposed ourselves on the scene [...] women can fight political battles and they don't push men out, but they share the space with them. We see it as a battle between authority and the opposition.” Nada Gharib, Télé Liban, 2/4/2018).

- **Keeping Pace with Progress**

“Women should be encouraged to get into the public sphere not because we're in danger of becoming one of the underdeveloped countries but because we might become unable to keep pace with other countries' progress.” “The next parliament must do women justice and prohibit any form of discrimination against them” (Inaya Ezzedine, Al-Manar, 7/3/2018)

- **Accessing Decision-Making Positions**

“I've always participated in the struggles to get women into decision-making positions.” “I represent an international organization with this competition.” “It's shameful to have such a low number of women in decision-making positions where they constitute only 3.1%.” “More than 30% of judges in Lebanon are women. Lebanon is very advanced in women's posts.” “I don't speak as a woman but as a competent human being” (Kholoud Wattar Kassem, OTV, 5/4/2018).

- **The Failure of Traditional Parties**

“As a civil society, this law won't allow us to carry out a coup but it will help us establish a new phase... If people don't elect us, I'm gonna tell them ‘stop complaining. It was your choice’.” “Whether we win or not, our national coalition established an opposition...” “It's not easy for 3 or 4 deputies from civil society to participate in the parliament. Each one of their voices is worth ten of those sleeping in there.” “Current deputies should know that they can't be corrupt anymore, they need to ride the wave of reform.” “The Free Patriotic Movement failed. It claimed reform and became corrupt like them.” “I fear that people have grown accustomed to this culture and reelected the same people. This is terrifying.” (Ghada Eid, MTV, 25/4/2018).

- **Women Are Empowered**

“A woman’s natural place is participating in the political decision.” “When I was a prime minister’s adviser or when Lebanon was heading the Security Council, I was deep in the political decision” (Yolande Khoury, MTV, 25/4/2018)

“Lebanese women have been leaders for as long as the left existed and they've proven that they can deal with the nation's concerns under any and all circumstances.” “We are more than half of society and we should defend our rights within the parliament (Waad Hussein Soukarieh, Télé Liban, 2/5/2018). “I’m a lawyer who’s experienced in commercial laws, women's rights and demanding children’s rights” (Rola Tabsh, Al Jadeed, 24/4/2018).

- **National Interest**

“The main motive for my candidacy is to shape the Lebanese citizen. There's no awareness for our responsibility as citizens working for the national rather than the personal interest” (Yolande Khoury, MTV, 24/4/2018).

- **Implementing Solutions**

“I decided to run because I want to start implementing the solutions to the problems we faced within associations.” “I want to tell women ‘You have the right to be more represented to be able to pave the way. Your duty is to start preparing now by electing women’” (Vanda Chedid, Télé Liban, 25/4/2018). “We have an opportunity to access a decision-making position. We know the solutions and we’re capable of implementing them, especially concerning incineration plants, dumps and building waste sorting plants near waste sources” (Nadine Moussa, Télé Liban, 4/4/2018).

- **The Program**

“The Baalbeck-Hermel region makes up a third of the country, yet it’s in ruins because most of its youth are emigrating.” “Legislating the cultivation of cannabis is an urgent matter because it's successful in the region and should be under the state’s supervision. At the same time, pharmaceutical factories should be built to prevent promoting the drug for immoral purposes” (Waad Hussein Soukarieh, Télé Liban, 2/5/2018).

“The fears of demographic imbalances because of [women] giving [their] nationality are unfounded.” “We have the most important castle in the world but no adequate roads or touristic hotels partly because the state doesn't control the region as it should.” My project is amending the Social Security Law to cover students and the elderly” (Waad Hussein Soukarieh, Télé Liban, 2/5/2018).

“The first draft I submit to the House of Representatives is giving women the right to give their nationality to their children” (Rola Tabsh, Al Jadeed, 24/4/2018).

- **Politics**

“There’s no justification for any illegal weapons” (Sethrida Geagea, MTV, 1/4/2018).

“Our defensive policy requires that the state alone be responsible for Lebanon's security. Therefore, security and military institutions must be restructured.” “We will fight the phenomenon of uncontrolled weapons.” “We want to resist the Israeli enemy using cultural, social, political and economic methods and this resistance can't be monopolized by anyone” (Laury Haytayan, Télé Liban, 3/4/2018).

“Our foreign policy implements the agendas of countries that have influence over us and treat us as subjects. Those countries aren't to blame; it's our fault because we're electing pawns.” “We're not sects, we're one people sharing the same plight.” “Every dividing policy and sectarian discourse make us easier prey.” “For four hundred years, we've been governed by ambassadors and consuls.” “The diaspora should know how to choose even if they follow them abroad.” “We should get our rights without having to feel indebted to anyone.” “Foreign regimes aren't charities; when they offer help, they want something in return.” “We need to stop reporting each other to foreign powers so that foreigners respect us.” (Paula Yacoubian, Télé Liban, 3/4/2018).

- **Not Against Men**

“Having 113 female candidates is an achievement for women. I hope most of them are elected. My dream is for women organizations to disappear because that would mean that women have gained their full rights.” I'm against the quota because it doesn't preserve women's dignity...” “We're not against men

but against narrow-minded ideas.” “I salute every woman who had the courage to run under this difficult law.” “Every woman must give her voice to a woman, that’s the only way to get as many women as possible in the parliament.” “Because there’s a huge shortcoming, I felt impelled to run” (Yolande Khoury, MTV, 25/4/2018).

- **Backing Women and Supporting the Quota**

“The idea behind our party (Rola Al-Mourad is the first Lebanese woman to establish and lead a Lebanese political party, the 10452) for five years has been to support women in decision-making positions.” “Our list consists of women only because we didn't want to wait for a signal from men to run.” “60% of voters in Akkar are women. The votes of Akkar women tip the scales.” “We're a political party that handles people's issues including women’s rights...” “We laid the foundation, changing the mentality is our greatest success” (Rola Al-Mourad, Télé Liban, 9/4/2018).

“During the episode, it was mentioned that women make up 14% of the candidates who don't belong to parties, but the chances of them winning are slim, therefore there must be a quota system.” (A program called Interviews hosted Raghida Dergham, Ahmad Fatfat and Mohamed Shams El-Din to discuss the latest developments about the elections, Future TV, 28/3/2018).

“We worked for a women’s quota and didn’t succeed but I have a project for my country, so I ran as a candidate” (Patricia Jean Elias, MTV, 5/4/2018).

- **Motivation Through Stereotyping**

“My cause is the family, I’m an ecclesiastical lawyer and my concern is the disintegration of the family due to economic pressure... Men no longer have a social life because they're too busy trying to make a living, which creates pressure... Of course, I care about women getting into the parliament to make a difference with their transparency...” “Women are capable of seeing things in a comprehensive way, like in their homes. They're good for the parliament” (Zeina Kallab).

“Women are generally the homemakers. They have tenderness, intelligence and endurance” (Lina Moukheiber, Télé Liban, 28/4/2018).

“I’m an educator at home and in school, I’m more suited to represent people...” “I’m a woman capable of representing the people of my region, both women and men” (Ghada Assaf, Télé Liban, 2/4/2018).

Behind every great nation a woman. She raises generations and we’re working on several laws, such as ending child marriage.” “We’ll work on social security so that women can cover their husbands” (Rania Bassil, MTV, 29/4/2018).

Among the opinions, an expression about two contradictory images of women, one that excludes them from the decision-making position and another that saves them from men's control: “One opinion says that they don't want to vote for women because they’ve never seen them in a decision-making position while another opinion says ‘I don't want to vote because I see women oppressed by men’” (A report about female voters backing female candidates, plus opinions sampled from the street along with several female candidates, Fatme Hamasni, Al Jadeed, 9/4/2018).

- **Breaking the Stereotype**

“I struggled for years on the street and heard people’s pained cries, now it's time for me to go where I can legislate.” “Why can’t it be me, you or anyone who’s worthy of being the Speaker of the Parliament? Plus, religion should be separated from the state” (Neemat Badreddine, Al Jadeed, 8/4/2018).

“Unfortunately, it’s because we weren't gonna be able to accomplish fundamental achievements in matters we believe in and we refused to compromise, so I dropped out. In addition to that, people said I don't represent traditional Beirut because I defend freedoms in various causes” (Nayla Geagea, withdrawing candidate, didn't want to run without agreeing with the National Coalition, LBCI, 27/3/2018).

- **Women's Issues and Marginalization**

“The current elections are an opportunity for women to access decision-making positions or to push male candidates to take women's issues into consideration and stop marginalizing them.” “It’s shameful for Lebanon to keep on violating women’s rights and dignity” (Inaya Ezzedine, NBN, 8/3/2018).

Defending Women's Rights

Defending her life: "The number of murdered women has reached unprecedented heights" (Zoya Jureidini, LBCI, 15/3/2018).

Nationality: "I'll be the voice of women in the parliament to defend their rights, first of which is their right to give their nationality to their children" (Rola Tabsh, Future TV, 9/4/2018).

Child Marriage: "I want to protect you from being married off at a young age, which deprives you from your right in education." "A woman is your daughter, mother, sister. She's the one who raised leaders and scientists, she's a pioneer and a leader." (Olfat El-Sabeh, Télé Liban, 31/3/2018).

- Looking up to Role Models

"Bahia Hariri paved the way for women's political participation: (Angel Khawand, first female candidate in Jezzine, Future TV, 10/4/2018).

- The Challenge

"I love a challenge because I believe in what I'm doing and in the project that I'm defending in the city" (Bahia Hariri, Télé Liban, 16/3/2018).

- Fighting Corruption

"I promise people that I'll expose all files from within the House of Representatives" (Ghada Eid, MTV, 9/4/2018). "We want a country that's free from corruption, deals and commissions" (Sethrida Geagea, MTV, 1/4/2018).

- Referring to Legislative Tasks

"I'll carry out my legislative tasks with the same sense of responsibility I have in my executive medical and ministerial work in order to be an added value in the House of Representatives." (Inaya Ezzedine, Al-Manar, 20/4/2018).

7-1 Candidacy Impediments

In their discourse, female candidates had obstacles preventing them from reaching a decision-making position and an active role in the public sphere. Among them, what they themselves mentioned, such as:

- Leaders

“It’s not about how people perceive women’s candidacy because Zgharta is an open-minded region. The problem is that there are no empty seats. They’re all reserved for the leaders.” “I ran for Kulluna Watani because it’s an alternative to the political tradition.” “Leaders have become such an intrinsic part of our lives that people don’t know how to move on from them.” “Some say to us ‘But we don’t know you.’ It’s enough that you know them.” “Our strength lies in the awareness of the Lebanese people’s.” “Media outlets, apart from TL, exclude us.” “Why push citizens to beg for employment instead of creating job opportunities?” “If only ten of the civil society made it into the parliament, every suspicious law will be exposed in the media.” (Antonia Ghamra, *Télé Liban*, 30/4/2018).

- Religion and Distortion of Women’s Image

“1400 years ago, Zainab Bint Muhammad was trusted with Islam, but today’s Islam distorts women’s image” (Inaya Ezzedine, *Al-Manar*, 20/4/2018).

- Patriarchy

“Raghida Dergham dropped out because the list she was running on didn’t respect the agreement and whom she called ‘male men’ started changing the names of the candidates” (A program called Interviews hosted Raghida Dergham, Ahmad Fatfat and Mohamed Shams El-Din to discuss the latest developments about the elections, *Future TV*, 28/3/2018).

7-2 Being Excluded

In addition to the obstacles related to patriarchy in general, there’s another dimension brought up by female candidates in their discourse that can be construed

as exclusion. In this case, they're on a par with their male counterparts who are equally excluded for the same reasons:

- Exclusion in Reference to Money

"There's no parity between us and the powerful money piranhas, but we have a good morale and a clean slate, unlike them. We have people's affection..." "We, in the Sabaa Party, are self-funded" (Ghada Eid, MTV, 25/4/2018).

- Exclusion in Reference to the Culture of War

"The absence of women from political life doesn't mean that they have no rights in Lebanon. It's because militias took control of the government and there were no women in those militias. Even independent men didn't stand a chance, just like women. But now, in civil society, men and women are equal" (Ghada Eid, MTV, 25/4/2018).

8- Reference and Distinction

In the discourses of female candidates, especially recurring ones, male references were mentioned, while independent female candidates and those belonging to the Sabaa Party, the 10452 KM2 Party and civil society, based their arguments on being distinct from traditional political and party formations.

8-1 Reference

8-1-1 Referring to the Leader or Politician

"What pride for Jebbit Bsharri without Samir Geagea and his wisdom and leadership?" (Sethrida Geagea, MTV, 1/4/2018).

"They want to parliamentarily weaken Saad Hariri in order to control the country" (Bahia Hariri, Future TV, 26/4/2018).

"They won't be able to cancel Rafik Hariri's project (Bahia Hariri, Future TV, 5/4/2018).

"Trying to bring me down in the elections to punish Rafik Hariri's approach" (Bahia Hariri, Al Akhbar, 13/4/2018).

"We must heavily participate in the elections if we love Beirut and Prime Minister Rafik Hariri" (Rola Tabsh, Future TV, 18/3/2018).

8-1-2 Referring to the Party

“The Amal Movement has always been on the side of the disadvantaged.” “As we succeeded in defeating the enemy and ending the strife, we will succeed in building prosperity” (Inaya Ezzedine during her electoral meetings in the South, NBN, 2/4/2018).

“The confidence given to us by Prime Minister Hariri encouraged us young people to get into politics.” “Yes, I elected the Future Movement’s list in 2009 and I take responsibility for my choice. That’s why self-criticism and the spirit of change are necessary” (Rola Tabsh, Al Jadeed, 24/4/2018).

“I didn’t nominate myself, the party did and I thank them for their trust in me” (Inaya Ezzedine, Al-Manar, 20/4/2018).

“I should commend Speaker Berri’s belief that women’s political role should be effectively exercised” (Inaya Ezzedine, Al-Manar, 20/4/2018).

8-2 Distinction by Moving Away from Traditional Parties

“We’re proudly taking advantage of our media positions for our campaign because we’re backing civil society and the people.” “Because of my combative media program, I won the support of people from outside my sect.” “There’s no need for me to put up my pictures on the roads; people are fed up with pictures.” “I don’t think pictures have a positive effect on voters. People know the candidate well, so what’s the use?” (Ghada Eid, MTV, 25/4/2018).

“My work in the media helped me get a closer look at the political structure” (Yolande Khoury, MTV, 25/4/2018).

9- Parties and Nominating Women

The relationship of parties with democracy is presented on two levels: the first is the democracy of the state enacted through the various political parties, otherwise it wouldn’t be called ‘democracy,’ and the second is the democracy of the party in terms of its internal practices.

This is where the correlation between parties and women’s candidacy bring up a problem about the extent of democratic practices and their mechanisms within the party itself. Some parties stated that they couldn’t nominate women and include

them on their lists stressing the obstacles such as the fierce competition and the fear of not securing the biggest bloc in the parliament after alliances are made.

When talking about discrimination against women, parties were promising to eliminate it and support women's candidacy, but most of them failed to do that when nominating their candidates. The discrepancy between the statement and the act raises questions related to the social and civil culture and points to a place that needs revamping to help with the solution, starting with the parties.

In their discourses, female candidates had already pointed out to the contentious relation between the party and nominating women who constitute a significant part of its councils, members and supporters:

“Circumstances prevented the Progressive Socialist Party from nominating women even though they make up 30% of the party’s members” (Progressive Socialist Party official, Future TV, 8/3/2018).

“We should start with 20-25 women in the parliament. Parties always promise to nominate women but fail to do so to satisfy regions and sects that aren't pleased with a female candidate. Some only nominated women to add them to the list and not because they stand a chance to win” (May Kahale, information advisor to former president Elias Hrawi discussing women's participation in the elections on International Women's Day, LBCI, 9/3/2018).

“In the Future Movement, we took many steps to reinforce women’s participation. In our office, we have a significant number of women participating. Today, we have faith in women’s ability in all sectors and we should get to a point where there's no discrimination because women have proven their worth and deserve to be there” (Rabih Hassouneh, Future TV, 18/4/2018).

“Women's efficiency in the Future Movement isn't less than men’s. I want to see women, especially young women, present in the political and executive office, no less present than men” (Report about the festival hosted by Prime Minister Saad Hariri for the Future Movement female candidates, Future TV, 20/4/2018).

Shame on them, some lists don't even include one woman. Give them a weak seat or one that has slim chances, but at least give them one, put them in the competition... This is a disrespect for women's role, for giving them a chance today saying 'Welcome to the race.' How can you not nominate at least one woman? And don't anyone say that women aren't competent. Gender representation is essential" (Interview with Paula Yacoubian in Samar Abou Khalil's talk show, Al Jadeed, 1/5/2018).

Women mobilized their efforts to convince women and bet on them for change. That was before the results. Some opinions even sought during the electoral race to stress on this bet, as stated by Dr. Paul Morcos, attorney-at-law and president of Justicia Foundation for Development and Human Rights: "Women's admission in parliament relies on the fundamental demand that women elect their fellow women instead of relying on seats reserved for women as is the case with the quota system," stressing that "in case this is achieved, it wouldn't change society's patriarchal mentality and it carries with it the risk of keeping the status quo."⁴⁶

In their discourse, female candidates asked women to elect them to achieve equality and eliminate discrimination. Some association had helped explain the new law to women motivating them to exercise their right to run for office and vote. As for the President, he invited them to take their right without waiting for men to give it to them. The irony is that neither women nor men voted enough to provide a significant number of women in the parliament.

9-1 Women Demanding Support

"Women have to support each other, especially at this stage... I need a bloc that supports me, that teems with youthful energy and gender diversity" (Kholoud Wattar Kassem, Al Jadeed, 23/3/2018).

"We provide the laws that do right by us and make us citizens of this country" (Joumana Haddad, Al Jadeed, 11/3/2018).

⁴⁶The president of Justicia Foundation for Development and Human Rights Dr. Paul Morcos, attorney-at-law, during a phone call with An-Nahar, **Women Are Their Own Enemy... R.I.P. to the Women's Quota**, Rosette Fadel, An-Nahar, 23-02-2018

9-2 Men Support

There are also supportive opinions from men, whether they were candidates or not. “Women succeed in every post and they're definitely against corruption” (Al-Assaad, MTV, 27/3/2018).

“Let's give women their due value and right by encouraging them more so that they have the opportunity to get more involved in the next stages of political life. It's important that they truly get involved, from submissions and programs to decision-making and follow-up... (Chamel Roukoz, Al Jadeed, 18/3/2018)

“Since the beginning of my political movement, I’ve been advocating for women's participation in the elections and public affairs. When I was named Interior Minister, I appointed 4 women general managers. It was perhaps the first time the Interior Ministry had so many women because they're qualified and have competence and strength. In my opinion, women are much more courageous than men, unlike popular belief” (Nohad El Machnouk, MTV, 20/3/2018).

“As a young male candidate for the parliamentary elections, I encourage all women to vote for their fellow women because you represent 52% of the Lebanese society and you have the right to make your voices heard from within the parliament” (Silvio Chiha, Télé Liban, 21/4/2018).

“Women are the foundation of society and behind every great man there’s a great woman” (Fayez Shokr, LBCI, 7/4/2018).

“Women have more integrity at work than men and that’s why a lot of women work at my company. They're in control of their work / women being on the list is a good thing / I’m with women taking on a bigger role in politics because they're less corrupt than men” (Assaad Nakad, NBN, 17/4/2018).

“The more women are represented in decision-making, the less corruption there is. Lebanese mothers should be able to give their nationality to their children in addition to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women” (Mazen Skaf, MTV, 20/4/2018).

9-3 Inviting Women

In the context of explaining the new Election Law and inviting women to run for office and vote, there’s electoral awareness and education: “Now you have an idea about the new Election Law. Vote. Run for office” (Future TV, 8/3/2018).

“There's a close relationship between empowering women and fighting against corruption / The President calls on women to take their right without waiting for men to give it to them” (Inaya Ezzedine, OTV, 7/3/2018).

These three headlines must also be read in light of what the study showed while reporting on the press coverage of positions that are supportive to female candidates' political participation and their equality with men in assuming public responsibilities.

In a sample of 1,312 different statements made between March 6 and May 4 (chart 10), Only 4.4% of positions were directly supportive.

10- The Reality Today

It's not enough to look at the number of female candidates (113) because there's another figure, and that's 6 winners out the 86 who remained in the electoral competition for 128 seats, which means that women's representation in parliament is 4.6%.

Lebanon seems far behind in gender equity. Even in the previous government (currently a caretaker government), only one out of the 30 ministers was a woman.⁴⁷ Since 1953, the date of recognizing women's right to vote and run for elections, progress was slow, be it in the number of female candidates or the number of voters, or more accurately, in the number of female candidates and voters who are not political heirs, i.e. wives or sisters of male politicians.

“According to the 2016 figures, there were 1,841,089 female voters making up 50.8% of all the voters. In the last parliamentary elections in 2009, they were 51.2% and 52.4% of them voted, i.e. more than half of them.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷While, according to the UN Women statistics “Women's representation in the current Jordanian Parliament is 20 out of 120 legislators or 15.4%, according to the results of the elections on September 20, 2016. The same source noted that Jordanian women won 10 seats out 65 in the Senate elections on September 27, 2016.” Still according the same source, in Turkey, women won 68 out of the 217 parliament seats in the 2014 elections, meaning women's participation reached 31.3%.” Statistics continued in several countries including Algeria with 119 seats for women in the parliament out of 462 in the 2017 elections, Tunisia with 68 out of 217 seats in the 2014 elections (33.1%), Saudi Arabia with 30 out 151 seats (19.9%), Iraq with 83 out of 325 seats in the 2014 elections (25.3%) and Libya with 30 out of 188 seats in the 2014 elections (16%). Women Are Their Own Enemy... R.I.P. to the Women's Quota, Rosette Fadel, An-Nahar, 23/02/2018.

⁴⁸Mortada Saja, “Lebanese Women in the 2018 elections... Will the Parliament Receive Women Who Aren't a Politician's Wife or Sister?” Raseef 22, 22/2/2018.

The number of female candidates for the 1992 elections was only 6 women and 3 of them won.

In 1996, the number of female candidates was 11 and the number of those who won remained the same, 3.

In 2000, the number of female candidates was 18 and 3 women won.

In 2005, the number of female candidates was 14 (out of 448 total number of candidates, i.e. 3.12% of them were women) and 6 of them won.

In 2009, the number of female candidates was 12 out of 702 total number of candidates, i.e. the percentage of female candidates was 1.7%. 4 of them won.⁴⁹

In 2018, 113 women ran for the elections (according to the Ministry of the Interior and 111 as commonly reported in the media). After withdrawals, 86 women remained in the electoral competition out of a total of 592 candidates, i.e. 14.52%, 6 of them won.

<https://raseef22.com/>

⁴⁹ See the same reference.

To look into the obstacles preventing women from getting into the parliament, candidacies must be examined on the basis of success opportunities. Among these obstacles:

- Discrimination against and condescension toward women.
- Hereditary politics, a distinctly Lebanese characteristic. Despite the birth of new parties, positions remained hereditary, a tradition that became almost sacred, and parties remained within the same family.

Fadia Kiwan—the first ever Lebanese Director General of the Arab Women Organization and one of the founders of the National Commission For Lebanese Women to present and address women’s issues—identifies three factors in this regard that are not in the interest of women: First, “the economic status and ownership of resources” which affects candidacies since most of the female candidates don't have economic influence and “often don't have a personal capital they can rely on for electoral spending and negotiation with the political leaders heading the formation of lists.”⁵⁰

The second factor weakening most of the female candidates is not coming from a “partisan political background.” Here too, Kiwan points to three barriers women have to cross: to join a list first, then for that list to receive the electoral quotient and after that, the highest percentage of preferential votes.

The third factor is “kinship and proximity to the leader” which is also applicable to male candidates since “many of the male candidates didn't start off by giving speeches but thanks to the leader's blessing. Those people are endorsed and don’t need money, family influence or professional capital. We see them penniless, coming from nowhere and yet they're endorsed by this leader or that chief.”⁵¹ "

11- Violations of the Electoral Silence

⁵⁰“The campaign spending ceiling established by the Election Law 44\2018 is in itself high if we take into consideration that constituencies have become medium-sized and larger than a district and that the number of voters is no less than 150,000 voters. Some might reply that the spending ceiling doesn’t mean that any candidate must spend amounts that reach that ceiling. That’s true but what about the female candidate competing with other candidates who do reach that spending ceiling or even exceed it?” Kiwan Fadia, “What About the Lebanese Woman's Political Participation in the 2018 elections?” An-Nahar, 20/3/2018.

⁵¹The previous reference.

On another level and on the fringe of monitoring the media during the electoral campaign from a gender perspective, the study showed that violations of the electoral silence were recorded in all monitored TV stations, with 141 different violations in all eight of them. The types of violations ranged between electoral promotion 38%, inflaming emotions 37% and electoral rallying 25% (chart 48).

The highest percentage of violations was recorded on Al Jadeed station, followed by Télé Liban (chart 49).

The electoral silence is supposed to allow voters to exercise their right with minimal intervention and influence, giving them at least one day to decide who to vote for. Therefore, a high percentage of silence violations is not in the interest of a smooth election process.

12- Electoral Education

In general, electoral campaigns scored the highest share in the distribution of coverage topics, as expected, at 71.66%, while awareness and education scored the lowest rate of 0.3% (charts 11 & 12).

Electoral education had low insignificant rates in the press and on television. It wouldn't have been important if the citizens had adequate knowledge of the democratic culture, the electoral work, the electoral mechanism and especially of the new Election Law.

Press coverage of electoral education and awareness was almost nonexistent with an overall rate of 0.19%. It performed slightly better on television but the rate was still a negligible 2.93%.

In the distribution of overall rates of posts and tweets by male and female candidates, the topic of electoral awareness and education received 2.8% on both sides (chart 57).

Electoral awareness and education can be valuable tools to encourage a high turnout (one of the elections goals) and contribute to healthier and more representative elections. The higher the participation, the more democratic the process really is.

And when participation dwindles, it's not the electoral process or the announcement of the winning results that are affected, it's proper representation where only a certain segment of the population is represented while another segment's stance was to choose not to participate.

Education involves explaining to the voter the Election Law and the voting process, especially since the new law is being implemented for the first time and relies on different mechanisms other than those in the previous laws. Some associations went around universities and explained the law but in the media, education was insignificant. Education informs citizens how to calculate the votes and how ballot papers are canceled, as well as guiding them to their rights and duties. Education defines bribery and clears any ambiguity surrounding it, so that citizens know that bribery can be direct or indirect, tangible or intangible, etc. Awareness helps inform the voters how to report violations and encourages them to vote for whomever they want consciously and out of conviction. Education also sheds light on the concept of electoral silence and its violations, as well as the right of people with special needs to receive facilitation when voting.

In our study, electoral education draws attention to the quota system which Lebanon agreed on but didn't comply with and to the importance of representation that fosters gender equity.

13- The Media and Achieving Social Justice

The form and content of the media coverage from a gender perspective highly affect the achievement of equality in the public sphere. The results show that the Lebanese media is far from achieving that. The media is a component of public opinion and thus a very important tool for change and the establishment of new concepts that serve social justice. Therefore, it's necessary to rely on this means to spur the current powers in government—which are patriarchal by far—to give women a role in decision-making, legislation and representation, by implementing the quota system as a first phase and by encouraging political parties to nominate women in every election with satisfactory percentages as well. The media, with its headlines, photos, news, interviews, reporting, etc. can

strive to educate the recipient to trust women, highlighting the work of female candidates and their roles in public life, offering them a space to be seen and heard, and emphasizing their electoral program and concerns. By doing this, it serves humans in general and a society that continues to strongly suffer from this imbalance.⁵²

Direct discrimination and hidden obstacles prevent women from reaching decision-making positions. Hence the concept of quota, considered an “affirmative action,” to avoid these obstacles and make women feel that their numbers in parliament can tip the scales. At the same time, it would be democracy in action as a large proportion, if not half, of the population would be represented. On top of the equal opportunities available in the candidacy, since both women and men can run for elections, the quota system provides equality in the outcome, i.e. equal representation⁵³. That’s why the quota isn’t seen as discrimination against men but as a way to remove barriers that don’t allow achieving equality in the results.

Summaries

1- Quantitative Monitoring

- The high number of female candidates indicates that the elections are no longer limited to a few women who want to run but it’s now a matter that’s important to a larger segment of citizens.
- A large number of female candidates are college graduates of various specialties and working in various professions: some are activists in NGOs, others are famous media personalities, and they all want to play a leading role in society.
- The figures showed a significant disparity in the distribution of coverage rates between female and male candidates in the newspapers—in favor of male

⁵²Journalist Nabil Bou Monsef commented on the President’s speech in the conference of women’s affair (Al Jadeed, 7/3/2018): “Upon the closing of the nomination process, we’ll find out which party respects itself by looking at the number of female candidates on their list”

⁵³« A Propos Des Quotas », International IDEA et Université de Stockholm, 2009. <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/quotas?quotalang=fr>

candidates, of course—at a rate of 95% for men and 5% for women (chart 5). On television, the rates were 3.46 % on the news and 11.85% in interviews and talk shows (charts 19 & 21).

- Women's absence in the coverage wasn't limited to the low rate of appearance. The study showed that women were also rarely featured as a main topic of coverage in press stories, barely making up 8% (chart 9).
- In general, electoral campaigns scored the highest share in the distribution of coverage topics, as expected, at 71.66%, while awareness and education scored the lowest rate of 0.3% (charts 11 & 12). Electoral awareness and education could have paved the way for a culture of gender equity acceptance.
- The direct coverage of female candidates in news bulletins was 3.46% out of the overall coverage of all candidates 96.5%. This means that women are still marginalized and that the news bulletin imposed a certain reality in some way which didn't help in getting women's voices heard so that people can have faith in them and their abilities, and consequently vote for them.
- The share of female candidates in private interviews and talk shows was 11.85%, and it's mostly thanks to the percentage of direct coverage or the space they occupied as a first story (chart 21). It should be noted here that interviews relatively made up for the lack of coverage in news bulletins but the rate is still low.
- Télé Liban was by far the biggest contributor in raising the percentage of coverage in talk shows and special interviews with a rate of 77.2% for independent female candidates (chart 25). The rate for TV stations combined was 55.53% compared to 24.79% for female candidates from the Sabaa Party, while the rest was divided among the other parties' female candidates (chart 24). As for private TV stations, they offered a space that amounts to 46.7%.
- The first and second rank in terms of Télé Liban's coverage rates for the election campaigns went to the independents at the forefront with 39.5%, followed by Kulluna Watani 11.7%, the Free Patriotic Movement 10.5%, the Future Movement 8.1%, the Lebanese Forces 7.3% and the Kataeb Party 5.7%. The rates ranged between 1% and 0% for the remaining parties (chart 42).
- The rates were disproportionate between Télé Liban and private stations in offering a space for independents and civil society. The largest space allocated on private TV stations to the independents, including those on the major

parties' lists (chart 30), was 22.5% by MTV, closely followed by Al Jadeed with 21%, then LBCI 18.2% and OTV 16.7 %. Al-Manar and NBN had similar rates, 9.9% and 9.6% respectively. Future TV had the lowest rate (chart 30). On Télé Liban, the coverage of the electoral campaigns for the various political parties was in favor of independents 39.5%, followed by Kulluna Watani 11.7% then the remaining movements and parties (chart 42).

- Private TV stations were better supporters of the Sabaa Party compared to Télé Liban. Was this in line with backing the civil movement? Or was it the result of buying ad spaces?
- The coverage of the different parties on private TV stations (chart 29) reflected the size of the ruling and active political forces. Thus, the combined rates were in favor of the traditional parties. The Future Movement was in the lead with the highest coverage 22.2%, closely followed by the Free Patriotic Movement 21%, while both Hezbollah 8.2% and the Amal Movement 8.8% had low rates. The same with the Lebanese Forces 4.7% and the Kataeb Party 3.3%. Kulluna Watani had 5.8%, a large difference between them and the various traditional parties combined.
- Even partisan TV stations gave a space, albeit small, to independents (with MTV offering the largest space) (chart 30).
- The largest space allocated to Kulluna Watani on private TV stations was on MTV 40.8% followed, with a large gap, by Al Jadeed and LBCI 22%. The two were similarly followed with a large gap by OTV 6%, Al-Manar 3.2% and Future TV, which had the lowest percentage 0.6% (chart 31). LBCI and Al Jadeed together accounted for about 50% of the coverage, almost as much as MTV alone. And the three TV stations accounted for a total of 90% of the space allocated to Kulluna Watani.
- The distribution of the television coverage space for electoral campaigns among the various parties and forces for the non-advertising coverage space was 26.7% for each of: Kulluna Watani, the Sabaa Party and the independents, while the rest was divided among the traditional parties, led by the Future Movement (chart 39). As for the distribution of the electoral campaigns' TV coverage space among the various parties and forces: the independents, the Sabaa Party and Kulluna Watani accounted for 32.2% and the rest for the traditional parties, led by the Free Patriotic Movement (chart 40).

- For the use of social media sites, the study showed that both female and male candidates were more active on Facebook than Twitter (chart 59). There was a slight difference of 4% in the distribution of male candidates' posts, with 52% on Facebook and 48% on Twitter (chart 50), while female candidates recorded a larger difference of 18.67 points between the two platforms: 59.33% for Facebook and 40.66% for Twitter.
- Male candidates were more active on Facebook and Twitter, with an average of 79.7 posts and tweets compared to 54.4 for female candidates (chart 57).
- As for the content of the posts and tweets, political positions were at the forefront for male candidates at 27.8% and the electoral campaign for female candidates at 18.1%. This reflects female candidates' need to use social media platforms to announce their presence in the electoral campaign as a first step in preparation for a later role whereas male candidates were able to fulfill their role by commenting on events. The figures also reflect men's political experience in terms of topics they can influence or comment on.
- Paradoxically, the number of posts about women's political participation was higher among male candidates at 3%, compared with 1.7% for female candidates (chart 58).
- For electoral education, the percentage was insignificant and almost nonexistent in newspapers and television, with an overall rate of 0.19% in newspapers and a slightly better but still negligible 2.93% on television. In the distribution of overall rates of posts and tweets by male and female candidates, the topic of electoral awareness and education received 2.8% on both sides (chart 58).
- Offering a space for independents and civil society on Télé Liban and private stations—even if the rates were disproportionate, especially on overtly partisan stations, which is normal—is still considered a way in to help give increasingly more space to women as diversity begins to break through the rigid traditional scene, albeit slowly.

2- Content Analysis

- Education wasn't a highlight in the media and its percentage was insignificant, almost nonexistent. Electoral awareness and education play a key role in encouraging a high turnout (one of the elections goals) and contributing to healthier and more representative elections. Increasing the turnout revives democracy. In the context of our study, electoral education helps voters choose consciously and out of conviction, and draws attention to the quota system which Lebanon agreed on but didn't comply with, as well as to the importance of representation that fosters gender equity.
- The need to consider feminizing women's functions and roles in the public sphere to pave the way for a thinking that achieves gender equity.
- Through the meager space allocated to women in the media compared to the number of female candidates and the maximum space given to male candidates, the study showed that the media approach was complementary to the general social approach to women in society, in the public sphere and in politics specifically. It's undeniably a man's world, in real life and on air.
- In referencing, at the beginning of news bulletins, the number of female candidates upon the closing of the nomination process (113 female candidates) and the lack of women's presence in the coverage later, it seems that women's presence in the headlines was limited to candidacy filing, then men returned to the main and most important space for the daily coverage of the electoral campaign. Women were almost absent from press stories as a main topic of coverage and from news bulletins compared to the overall coverage of all candidates. Additionally, traditional powers are deeply rooted in the political field, a factor which makes the task, as shown in the monitoring process, difficult for women in spite of their serious attempts.
- Women's absence or unsubstantial presence in the news bulletins showed that they aren't placed in the spotlight in most programs on every television station with a space that reflects preparation to exercise their work in politics.
- To attract viewers and advertisers, the media was subject to the "traditional" market policy where men dominate in politics. It's one of the conditions that control the media and limit its freedom to carry its work objectively and independently.

- Women can't exist outside the discourse, outside the narrative and outside the first person "I." But women didn't speak enough, and so their direct access, or the direct statements they made, was very small. And among the already low rates, the largest share was for familiar faces, such as Inaya Ezzedine in the lead with a small difference between her and Paula Yacoubian, followed by Ghada Eid and Myriam Skaff with an insignificant difference between the two.
- Female candidates who appeared the most in the overall TV coverages were familiar.
- The numbers indicate that dominance over direct access, i.e. speech, was for males.
- The media effort wasn't directed toward new faces and it seemed faster and easier to mainly and simultaneously cover women the public already knew than risk the viewer ratings.
- Considering that the main players in politics as a public sphere are by far men, the media also prefers to come back to candidates who dominate the political arena, who are used to political discussions and to giving an escalating or calming tone in their political performance, etc. Female candidates fall victims to this usual media behavior.

In the content of what the female candidates talked about, it's interesting that topics related to legislation, public policies, economy, security, infrastructure and pensions were rarely mentioned as they mostly talked about the electoral campaign. This shows that they invested their energy in marketing without being able to discuss topics in depth for several reasons including their lack of experience in this area, not getting the opportunity to do so and the absence of media campaigns that are based scientific rules of advertisement and promotion.

- It's also interesting that the female candidates who appeared the most in talk shows and interviews were media personalities who are used to managing talk shows and interviewing important political figures, such as Paula Yacoubian and Ghada Eid.
- The figures and rates recording how the media dealt with women showed that the mechanism of the social discourse toward women is still dominated by old

representations of women and men. It's the same discourse adopted by the media. These representations were clearly and directly reflected in the percentage of positions that aren't supportive to female candidates' political participation and their equality with men in assuming public responsibilities.

- In the small space given to women to speak, they explained why they were running for the elections. Among those reasons: since they make up half of society they should make up half of the parliament, in order to participate, have an equal share and support women and the quota system, provided that their candidacy isn't seen as an act against men. Another reason is keeping pace with progress so that Lebanon is on par with developed countries. There's also the motive of reaching a decision-making position and the motive to do something because of the parties' shortcomings as well as the emergence of what's called "civil society" and a new non-traditional party to challenge the failure of traditional parties.

Some of the direct motives presented by the female candidates were about implementing solutions, fighting corruption, and introducing and implementing a specific program. Women being up to the task is an encouraging element. But stereotypical representation of women's role was also one of the motives (they take care of the family and home, they raise children and generations, therefore they can take care of the country). In contrast, some motives were about breaking the stereotypical image in which women are confined.

Other motives include women's causes and marginalization, defending women's rights and their lives against violence, fighting for their right to give their nationality, ending child marriage, the challenge itself and looking up to role models. As for obstacles impeding their candidacy: Leadership, patriarchy, money, logic inherited from war and militia rule, etc.

- Based on the results of the elections, it seems that the stereotypical image reflected in the statements made by some female candidates, and even in the media performance, has influenced women voters who didn't support female candidates and not necessarily because they were convinced by the candidate they ended up voting for. This was also expressed by Fadia Kiwan who partly blamed women themselves "for women not holding leadership positions because they tend to not trust other women [...] But I believe that this

stereotype about women is being promoted to create confusion among them, and that's one of the patriarchal ideas."⁵⁴

- The responsibility of the parties which have many female members but don't nominate female candidates on their lists. On one hand, these women don't hold important positions within their parties and remain marginalized. On the other hand, women are running for the elections without being backed by parties or political forces. This is one of the reasons women aren't getting into the parliament.
- Women coming from political or influential families are often guaranteed getting votes because of partisanship and inherited politics.
- The right to vote and stand for a seat in parliament doesn't mean anything if it doesn't actually materialize by women playing an effective role in politics.
- Analyzing the number of female candidates based on the number of female winners, i.e. from a negative instead of a positive perspective (especially since 4 of the female winners are recurrent, plus a minister and a media personality), motivates women to move forward in playing a role in the public sphere in general and in politics specifically. It also motivates society, the public opinion and political parties to implement women's role, especially since the parties' failure to nominate female candidates has been highlighted and negatively pointed out. It's a form of discrimination and it's seen this way.
- This result raises the question: is it easier for citizens to accept a woman appointed in the executive authority than willingly choose a woman to represent them in the parliament? If the answer is yes, then that means that between what citizens do by their own volition and accepting what's imposed on them, there's either a long conceptual path or one that hasn't been forged yet.
- The study indicated that male candidates used Twitter to mostly express their political positions, while female candidates used both Facebook and Twitter for the same purpose: electoral publicity.
- The results showed that women were less active on Facebook and Twitter than their male counterparts and that their posts and tweets were mostly about electoral publicity. Women didn't use those platforms to create a balance

⁵⁴Kiwan F., in an interview with Zahi Wehbe, Beit al Kassid Program, Al Mayadeen TV, 3/3/2018.

between marginalizing them in the traditional media outlets and their activity on alternative media.

Using social media in the recent electoral campaign has several implications:

- First, they help create an alternative for the traditional media outlets which exclude women or marginalize them. Thus, they help create an alternative audience while the main features of traditional media are selectivity, promotion and exclusion.
- They're a source of information that creates communities and breaks isolations.
- It's a form of information exchange.
- It's interactive, participatory, immediate and cost-effective.
- It stimulates discussions.
- Users can contribute to tweets, share them and retweet them.
- Participation and interactivity via Facebook.
- Expressing concerns that inspire protests. Some studies have shown a correlation between the prevalence of social media and the diffusion of protests.
- It's a public opinion outside the context of traditional media.
- Social networks around the world are one of the tools that helped weaken traditional ruling regimes.
- The ability to express views, criticize politicians in power or political forces in general, which also contributes to putting pressure on the government.
- They turned the “audience” into “users;” i.e. they turned them from passive to active.
- Of course, accuracy and professionalism cannot be taken into account.

Recommendations

1- In Gender Politics

- The need for the different parties to support female candidates and the need to complete the work at the executive authority level, i.e. women's

participation in government through portfolios that are not limited to education and social affairs.

- The need to adopt a women's quota for a while to boost people's confidence in women, in the public sphere in general and in politics specifically. According to Fadia Kiwan, "Only Lebanon rejected and still rejects taking exceptional measures such as a women's quota. The irony is that Lebanon is the only country that adopts a sectarian and confessional quota in political representation."⁵⁵ At the same time, implementing women's participation in the executive power without it being restricted to ministries that mirror the stereotypical image which socially confines them, i.e. education and social affairs.

- Increase women's presence in the media. Traditionally, men have been by far the main players in politics as a public domain. Therefore, the media prefers coming back to candidates who dominate the political arena, who are used to political discussions and to giving an escalating or calming tone in their political performance, etc. Female candidates fall victims to this usual media behavior. Hence the need to put women in the picture, making them the news as well as men in politics and public affairs. The media should make the effort to dedicate a fair space for women as actors in society in general and in politics in particular, as experts in economy and everything related to the state that would reflect interest in women's role and reinforce confidence in them.

The media should realize that the discourse cannot be separated from power and that it should give women a consistent opportunity to express themselves and be the authors not just the content.

- The need to implement educational programs on gender and achieving justice on that basis, so that the recipients and voters—both women and men—see what human rights are and how gender equality is both a duty and a democratic value.

- Language and the stagnate image: The media is often a reflection of reality, meaning it establishes what reality is. From this comes, for instance, depicting female candidates within the stereotypes of caring for the household, family

⁵⁵Kiwan F., An-Nahar, 20/3/2018.

and kids, etc. But conversely, the media also influences reality and is the cornerstone of change by breaking the stereotypes and implementing gender equality. This way, the media helps to dismantle the prejudices about women, such as not being up to the task because their natural place is away from the political scene, and frees itself and the topic, which is women, social justice and humanity as a whole. Editorial content and the mold, or form, and the quotas all offer women the chance to be in the public sphere, along with women in society, whether they're workers or housewives, leading to progress in the law which is still unjust toward women, and to the development of society and men for sure.

The need to work on clearing up the confusion between the concepts of sex and gender so that women aren't kept confined to the rigid stereotype which only sees her based on the biological factor. Through awareness, guidance and drama, in the way women appear on talk shows and news bulletins, the media can play an important role in this respect using one of its main features, "the power of role models."

- The need to enlighten the public opinion and this involves the state, the laws, the political parties, education and the media so that the discourse about "Lebanon's freedom" and "diversity that's in its DNA" isn't just words with a different reality.
- Updating the law of political party organization based on the rule of democracy, which would allow women to do their part for a broader start in political life.
- Women should also do their part within their political parties and get involved in political life in general
- Creating an Arab cultural production, in Arabic, that promotes gender equity to counter the patriarchal culture.
- Nurturing a culture of human rights.
- Women shouldn't wait to be given the chance to participate but should instead rely on themselves to implement and establish their eligibility and role.

2- In the Media Coverage

- The need to implement the laws related to the electoral media and advertising, especially equal appearance and the establishment of effective mechanisms to provide this equal balance between female and male candidates, mainly in the private media sector. This would provide female candidates with a fair share in the media coverage which takes into consideration their right to reach the public. It would also ensure that media access is no longer controlled by money or political dependency.
- The need for private media to seek, as part of their social responsibility, to provide fair, impartial and balanced election coverage to all candidates, for even though they're commercial companies, they inherently provide a public service.
- The need to use the available mechanisms for claims and complaints to access the media, provided by the current law, so that candidates can demand that the media and the Election Supervisory Authority give them access to the media on similar terms as their competitors.
- The need for the Election Supervisory Authority to determine a spending ceiling for paid election publicity and ad spaces, which would increase the female candidates' chances to appear in free spaces.
- Provide female candidates with a fair share in the media coverage, which takes into consideration their right to reach the public, as well as a share to talk and call for more participation in the direct access in news bulletins, talk shows, interviews and in the coverage as a whole. This would bring about an approach toward democracy and objectivity, and would promote issues related to gender equality in form and content.
- The media can take into consideration all the elements of the electoral component, i.e. it should independently select its topics, including women, without being affected by the ratings which would increase if the guest is a well-known patriarchal political figure. An independent approach would help deal with the media piece in a just way. If the media took into account gender equity, women can adequately become a source for the topic, a content and a main news. However, female candidates being interviewed or talked about in the media shouldn't be stereotyped. Insults, misconceptions and topics typically related to femininity, such as beauty, should be avoided. Female candidates should be addressed as "candidates" and not as women, the same way male voters are referred to as "voters" and male citizens as "citizens."
- A gender-sensitive electoral coverage is considered a catalyst for practicing democracy where there's no marginalization, a good representation, respect for human rights' and the achievement of gender equity. The current reality

though is that there's a lack of representation for women in most audio, print and visual media outlets. This lack of representation applies to their presence and content production, as reflected by the numbers and rates; for women are absent in both the general discourse, i.e. the coverage, and in producing their own discourse directly, i.e. in their share of direct access. This, in turn, actually reflects their absence from decision-making. What does the lack of media presence mean for female candidates? It increases the odds for not voting for them since they weren't heard. And if women are excluded, how did the media, political, social and cultural discourse apply exclusionary measures?

- The topic of gender didn't have an important place in the media discussion during the electoral campaign, except in referring to the number of female candidates. The media is considered a system to produce meaning. Despite all the conditions that govern the construction of social meaning in the media⁵⁶ (the conditions of production, the speaker, the economic and social circumstances of the discourse, the interpretation circumstances, etc.) the discourse reached in this space contains the shared purposivism that arises between the speaker and the recipient.⁵⁷ Hence the recipient who's colluding with the utterance and its contents is invited to change it by moving toward openness to a new narrative that prepares for the recognition of the other and their right to equality. It's a social cause involving both men and women.

“Meaning only exists within a fabric made with sensible materials,” that is “in the form of investments in certain materials... What I call ‘investment’ here is simply providing space—the time of meaning in the form of discursive processes.”⁵⁸ As Veron sees it, if meaning is everywhere, then it's the same for ideology and power. In other words, we can say that “every social phenomenon can be ‘read’ in relation with ideology and in relation with power.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶Cf. Charaudeau P., 1997.

⁵⁷*Ibid.* p 18.

⁵⁸Eliseo Veron, “Semiosis of Ideology and Power,” translated by ElYazmi Abdel Ali, *Alamat Magazine*, Issue 12, 1999.

<http://saidbengrad.free.fr/al/n12/index.htm>

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

Hence framing the study material within the formation of the discourse (meaning) and its relation with power. Power is a notion that's become linked to the discourse itself, as Foucault pointed out, and history keeps repeating itself in this regard, “discourse is not only what translates struggles or the systems of domination but it is also what we fight for, what we fight with, the power we want to take over.”⁶⁰

Within these determinants, this study looks at the discourse about women in the media. The cultural, social and religious discourse⁶¹ around women’s ability to be active in the public sphere in general and in politics specifically is a reference to an old and important notion as one of the essential components of women’s political status in Lebanon.

The relationship between women’s status and the dominant discourse is problematic. A discourse narrates and creates reality at the same time. It cannot be separated from power. It contains prohibitions and compulsions.

The influence of all media is essential to the formation of public opinion and the contribution to its “enlightenment.” In the recent elections, the effort by the electoral machinery of the political forces paid off in political marketing, which is originally an American invention that was quickly adopted by Europe, especially since the 1970s-1980s. More than ever before, the media was central in the campaigns for the Lebanese legislative elections. It was thus possible to take advantage of the high media consumption to discuss gender issues—and the consequences of gender inequality, be they economic consequences in terms of wages, political consequences in terms of equal access to decision-making, social consequences in terms of stereotypes and violence against women, etc.—between the candidates and with female candidates, which would have contributed to educating recipients who would become voters by the end of the campaign.

The awareness that the media can break the stereotypes which rigidly portray men and women based on biological differences is the motivation behind the contribution

⁶⁰Foucault Michel, *The Orders of Discourse*, translated by Mohammed Sabila, Dar al-Tanweer Publishing, Beirut, 1984, p. 5.

⁶¹Ben Salama also studied the religious discourse produced about women’s eligibility to this participation. See Ben Salama, *Bahithat*, Book Nine, 2003-2004.

to the creation of a culture that reconsiders this system. “We must now begin to realize and to retrain ourselves to see that both intelligence and a reverence for life are human qualities. It is high time we began to be reasonable about the relationship of sexuality to personality and admit the facts -the present assignment of temperamental traits to sex is moronic, limiting and hazardous. Virility [...] has got to go [...] There is also a vast number of women who are beginning to wake out of the long sleep [...] they are joining together [...] to establish true equality between the sexes, to break the old machine of sexual politics and replace it with a more human and civilized world for both sexes, and to end the present system's oppression of men as well as women.”⁶²

Manière de voir Magazine had titled its 150th issue (December 2016 - January 2017) “Women, the Longest War.” It was called “a war” but “Let us begin the revolution and let us begin it with love: All of us [...] Male, and female, have it, within our power to create a world we could bear out of the desert we inhabit for we hold our very fate in our hands.” So wrote Kate Millett.

⁶²Millett Kate, *Sexual Politics*, Translated by Azza H.

http://www.maaber.org/issue_may14/spotlights1_a.htm

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