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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Spring 2010

The National Council for Women:
Reassessing the Social, Economic and Political Empowerments for
Egyptian Females

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Master of Arts

by

Wesam Hamdy Mostafa

Under the Supervision of

Dr. Heba Raouf

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my lovely Mother
who supports me in everything in my life.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Empowering women is a crucial issue to be discussed nowadays due to its direct effect on the whole society. The Egyptian National Council for Women (NCW) is considered a tool for empowering women socially, politically and economically as claimed by the State. Indeed, and according to its declared aim, the NCW plays a very important role in tackling women's issues aiming for empowering the Egyptian women and giving them their rights. Thus, the main framework and policy of the NCW are for the interest of all women. Although, the declared aim from establishing the NCW is to empower Egyptian women, still there are some doubts concerning its main target and credibility which will be tested by the researcher through surveys and the interviews which will be conducted with the NCW's members and Egyptian women ranging in age from 17- 60 years old.

1.1 The Research Topic: The National Council For Women (NCW) :

The Egyptian National Council For Women was established year 2000 according to 90th decree for the same year declared by the Egyptian President Mubarak .(NCW, Online) Indeed, this council was established as a way to increase the “ capacity of the state to contribute to the fulfillment of a feminist agenda” (Stetson,2001, 8). Thus, the NCW is viewed by others as “institutionalized feminism in public agencies” (Stetson,2001, 8).

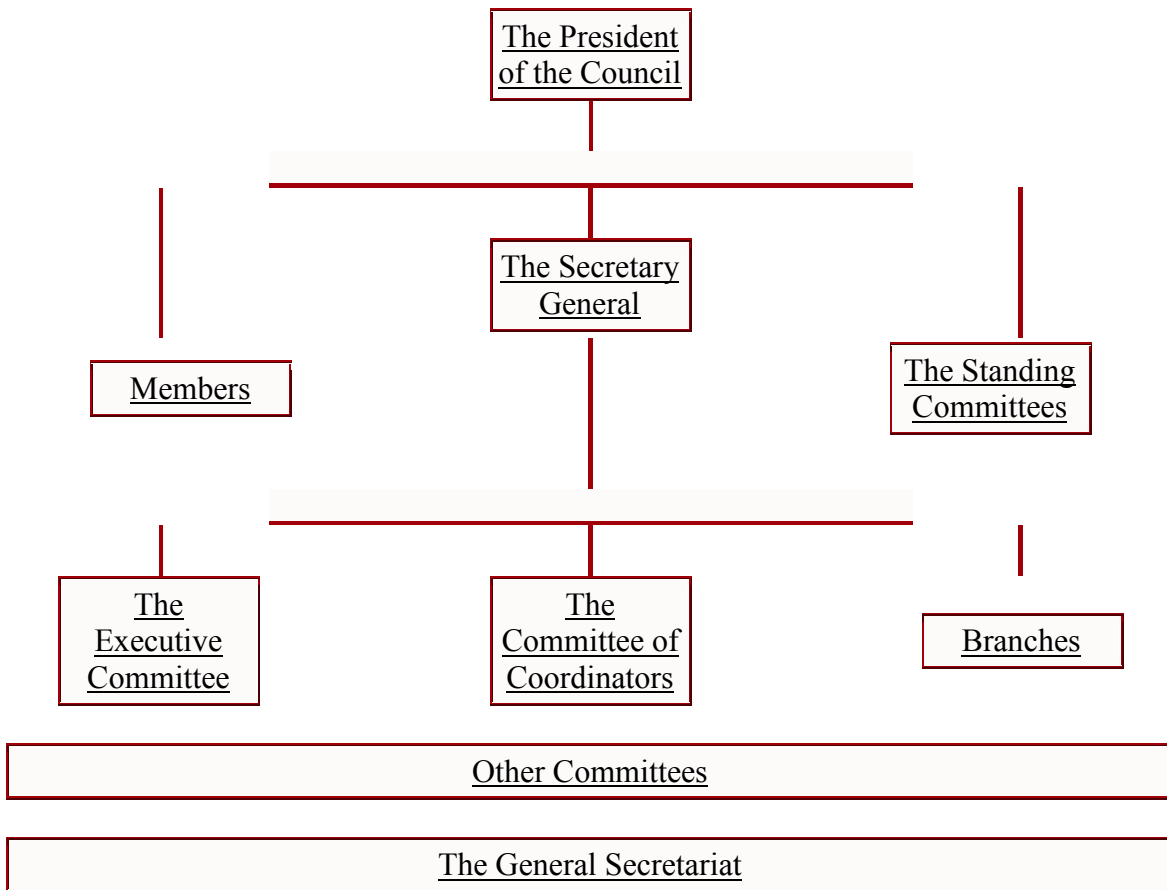


Figure 1: Organization Chart of the Council

Actually, article three in the decree shows the mandate of the NCW which is:

- “To propose public policies matter for society and its constitutional institutions on development and empowerment of women to enable them to play their economic role, and to integrate their efforts in comprehensive development programmes.
- To draft a National Plan for the advancement of women and to solve their problems.
- To monitor and evaluate the general policies related to women and formulate its recommendations and observations to the concerned parties.

- To advise on the draft laws and decrees related to women before submission to the competent authorities. Recommend the adoption of proposed laws and decrees that contribute to reinforcing the enhancement of women status.
- To advise on all agreements relating to women.
- To represent women in international fora and organizations dealing with women's issues
- To establish a documentation center, collect information, data and research on women, and to conduct related research and studies.
- To hold conferences, seminars, symposia and debates on women's issues.
- To organize training sessions to raise awareness of the role, rights and duties of women.
- To publish newsletters, magazines and other publications informing the public of the goals and functions of the Council.
- All other issues referred to the Council by the President of the Republic.” (NCW, Online).

Moreover, the council’s is chaired by Ms Suzan Mubarak [This point will be investigated through interviews with NCW ‘s members], and its members are all from the elites which may have an indication that the policy it is adopting will to a great extent serve the interest of such elites and the ruling regime .In their article in El Dostoor newspaper 2009, Gamal Eldeen Essam and Saleh Magdy ensures that the NCW is following the NDP as the ruling party and implement its policies with all issues concerning women.(Saleh & Essam, 2009). They added also that the Opposition and independent members of the Egyptian Parliament are totally against the new women’s

laws which are adopted by the NDP because such laws are not included in the Constitution (Saleh & Essam, 2009). Moreover, the writers mentioned that the Parliament member Mohamed El Omda attacked the NCW and consider it as the biggest importer for the American ideas and values because of the Foreign funds and donations given to the NCW .(Saleh & Essam, 2009). Mr. Mohammed El Omda added that the leaders of the NCW are totally convinced by the American ideas. (Saleh & Essam, 2009).On the other hand and on the same Parliament session Dr Fathi Soroor accused Mr. Mohammed El Omda of being old fashioned and unsophisticated and such old ideas may lead us to the past eras with all of their ignorance to women's political and social rights (Saleh & Essam, 2009). Dr Amal Osman ,head of the legitimate committee of the Parliament, ensured what Dr Fathi Soroor said.

According to the NCW website, “30 public figures and experts in women's issues are permanent members of the Council” chaired by Ms Suzan Mubarak (NCW, Online).Indeed, the idea of having permanent elite women as members in the NCW and not the elected women is unfair for the rest of the Egyptian Women who might be interested in joining the NCW and also it is significant in which by the end of the current ruling party and President, the NCW will vanish as it is not giving the chance for freedom and democracy in choosing its expert members by the Egyptians. However, they are imposed to represent the Egyptian women. The critical point here is to check the credibility of the NCW' s members and if they are really to the interest of the Egyptian women or they seek power or they are just a tool in the government's hands to achieve their targets regarding women's issues?

The NCW was affected by a new law 2003 which regulates the activities of the NGOs in Egypt. (Nazir and Tomppert, 2005, 70). Also, “the 1971 constitution guarantees equality to all citizens without prejudice based on gender”. (Nazir and Tomppert, 2005, 71). This means that gender equality in Egypt is not a new issue that is created by the current ruling regime. The National Democratic Party came up with such law to serve the interests of the NCW as the NDP is dominating and controlling the political and social regime in Egypt. (Nazir and Tomppert, 2005, 70). As a result, the NCW is having more power in the civil society and it has now many achievements concerning women’s issues such as the passing of El Khol3 law, and the nationality law which gives the nationality rights for children of the Egyptian women married to non Egyptian husbands (Nazir and Tomppert, 2005, 70).

Indeed, affecting the law to that extent shows the real power of the NCW as being supported by the State. Moreover, the NCW is not a normal NGO working to serve the civil society, however and according to the Egyptian public opinion it is an authorized and official organization that is considered one of the Specialized National Councils which gives it the power to interfere in the State’s law and change it. (There will be more elaboration about the legitimacy and regulations of the Specialized National Councils in the thesis to understand how the NCW function as being one of those councils) So, the point that will be investigated by the researcher is, does the NCW make such changes in the law to serve the common people’s interests or it is a tool for giving its elite members more power and authority?

One of the women who occupied a high position in Egypt is Ms Tahany El Gebaly who “became the first woman SCC judge” (Shihata, 2007), which means that she has a

strong power and she has the authority in a very critical position because “the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) is the highest legal authority in Egypt” (Shihata, 2007). Also, it is important to shed a light on Ms Tahany EL Gebaly activities in the past in which she was a member in the Nasserist Party which is an opposition Party and she had a role in the Public service. So, attracting Ms El Gebaly to the NCW membership and hiring her in such critical position means obviously for the public that she is an example for empowering women in Egypt but if we go deep into the situation, it is a way to get her apart from her loyalty to the opposing party and to benefit from her efforts to serve the interest of the NDP. Thus, enabling certain women in Egypt to access power is not done haphazardly, however it may be designed based on certain criteria that will serve the interests of certain group.

Thus, the NCW managed to recruit women from different ideological background to be under the control of the state. Tahany El Gebaly as a Nasserist and Amina Shafik as leftist and Dr Mona Zulfokar as a liberal. Also, the NCW started operating at the same time the Women Muslim Brotherhood took the decision to run for the Parliament elections. So, the obvious fact that the NCW collect and recruit all women in the Egyptian society who had plans for the women despite their different ideologies. Indeed, in year 1999, Tahany el Gebaly and Nawal El Sedawy were planning to reissue Hoda Sharawy’s movement again. After that, Ms Suzan Mubarak established the NCW and recruit Ms Tahany El Gebaly in it. Thus, many of the Egyptians believes that the NCW adopt a hidden policy for empowering the Egyptian elite women in order to facilitate controlling the Egyptian women in general and to deliver any message for women that will be for the interest of the NDP. Dr Azza Karam in her article ‘ Islamist NGOs an

Integral Part of Muslim Societies' argued that in many Arab countries "governmental organizations have been unable to provide basic services" which lead to the appearance of other NGOs such as the Islamist NGOs to work "collectively and in diverse ways [to fulfill] some of the impending needs" (Karam, 2007). Karam argued that the role civil society represented in the NGOs can not be denied in the improvement of the economic status of the Arab societies.

Indeed, the decree of establishing the NCW article number eight which states that "State institutions shall provide the Council and its Secretary General with data and statistics that are related to its functions" (NCW, Online) and in article number ten in the same decree mentioned the resources of the NCW which will be through the following:

- "Allocations in the government's general budget
- Donations and grants which the Council may decide to accept.
- A special account shall be set up to collect these resources in a public sector commercial bank. The surpluses shall be carried forward at the end of each fiscal year to the budget of the following year." (NCW, Online).

Nazir and Tomppert in their book 'Women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa' claims that the fact in Egypt is that women's empowerment is facing a lot of obstacles and the there is a lack of adequate mechanisms to guarantee women's equal accessibility to law and justice. (Nazir and Tomppert, 2005, 70). Furthermore, in Egypt "the State encourages groups that advocate for women's rights but it is not as supportive of groups that associate women's rights with the call for greater participation in the political system"(Nazir and Tomppert, 2005, 70).

Indeed, one of the assumed roles of the NCW is to fulfill women and citizenship . So, The NCW was blamed because it did not take any action to support the women of Muslim Brotherhood when they were subjected to some harassment form the police in 2007 in Menoufya Governorate and the police warned the Muslim Brotherhood leader to keep their women away from the street protests.(Abdel Latif, 2008, 13) .Moreover, Omayma Abdel Latif in her article ‘In the Shadow of the Brothers ,the Women of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’ states that “ Brotherhood leaders insist that the state’s “ruthless war” against the Brotherhood is the primary cause for the exclusion of women members form the positions of power” (Abdel Latif, 2008, 13)

In fact, this contradiction between the claimed aim of the NCW for supporting women citizenship and ignoring the women members of the Brotherhood lead the researcher to investigate the agenda and policy of the NCW. Moreover, there is a differentiation here between women member of the Brotherhood and other women keeping the fact that they are all Egyptians and that the NCW was established for the interest of all Egyptian women. Thus, studying the policy of the NCW and its real aims and goals is the main concern of this thesis. Also, how do the NCW members, as elite women, use their authority to serve their interests and to reach their goals through empowering Egyptian women politically, socially and economically, and to what extent is the NCW serving the current political regime?

1.2 The Objective of the Research

The main objective is to explore and investigate the efficiency and effect of the NCW on the Egyptian women. The aim is to examine if the NCW is a real empowerment for women or it is just a governmental tool to control the Egyptian women and to direct them

according to the leaders' interests and benefits as most of its members are from the elites and related in a way or another to the country leaders who are controlling the decision making process.

1.3 The Importance of the Research

This research is important because it is a new topic so it is an original research that aims to explore new areas in the Egyptian social and political life, and also it is important because the outcome of this research will benefit a large segment of the Egyptian females. Moreover, this research will tackle the credibility and efficiency of the NCW as a governmental body established to empower the Egyptian women.

1.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. Is the NCW an efficient body for empowering the Egyptian women?
2. What is the credibility of the NCW as viewed by its members?

It is significant to clarify that this research question will be tested and investigated through surveys and interviews which will be conducted with the NCW's members and Egyptian women ranging in age from 17-60 years old.

3. Are the Egyptian women really benefiting from the NCW and to what extent? What is the role of the international organizations in supporting the NCW to achieve its objectives in terms of funding?
4. What is the effect of the State on the NCW policy and decision making and vice versa?

Hence, the research hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1:

The role of NCW is affected by the policy of the current ruling regime represented in the National Democratic Party.

Hypothesis 2:

The Egyptian women will be empowered politically, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all Egyptian women not only the elites who are members of the NCW.

Hypothesis 3:

The Egyptian women will be empowered socially if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women.

- *For clarification, an example of social empowerment is the woman's right to take decision of divorce using El Khol' law.*

Hypothesis 4:

Egyptian women will be empowered economically, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women.

- *For further clarification, an example of economic empowerment is by offering micro credits to the poor women and not merely concentrating on the interests of upper economic segments of Egyptian women.*

Hypothesis 5:

The NCW members are benefiting from their power in serving their own interests and in reaching their goals.

Hypothesis 6:

The NCW is indirectly serving the interests of the current ruling regime by controlling The women's sector.

Moreover, an elaboration for each variable will be pinpointed at the operational definition's part of this Thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Social Movements and the origin of Feminism in Egypt

There is a clash of civilizations among nations, especially between the East represented in the developing countries of Asia and Africa and the West represented in the developed countries of Europe and America, for surviving and ensuring dominance. There is no contradiction between the culture conflict and the economic development. The meaning of culture conflict is the idea of spreading certain concepts, beliefs and principles of a certain people among other people with different beliefs and concepts. However, on the other hand there can be a room for exchanging trade and mutual benefit on the economic level among countries from the East and the West despite their different cultures. So, no contradiction in my opinion. According to Nadjie S. Al Ali, in her article ‘The Women’s Movement in Egypt ,with Selected Reference to Turkey’ “Women’s movements, in the Middle East are similar in that they share several historical and political and political factors, such as their links to nationalist movements, their links to process of modernization and development , and tensions between secular and religious tendencies”(Al-Ali, 2002, 3).

There is no doubt that political power plays a very important role in this aspect in which the most powerful country can dominate and force its own culture and principles among other weak countries. This is the case nowadays in which the Arab and Muslim societies are totally affected by the Western culture coming from powerful countries such as European countries and the USA. Indeed, the culture effect

can be obviously seen in the Egyptian society for example among the people who are affected by the coming foreign culture blindly without being rational and smart in choosing what suits us as a Muslim and conservative society and reject the unneeded concepts or ideas that might affect our identity. One of those Western concepts is Feminism which affects to a great extent the Egyptian society in a way that does not satisfy a lot of people who are still so conservative or at least want to keep attached to our Islamic regulations and our Arab traditions and culture in general. First of all, it is important to shed more light on the origin and definition of Feminism in order to understand how it affected the Egyptian society.

Culture and religion are used sometimes as tools for serving the interests of the elites and empower them politically and socially. Those tools specifically are used in Egypt because of its traditions and culture that will difficultly accept any foreign concepts or ideas without being linked with our religion and culture. Doria Shafik as a middle class woman and one of the earliest feminist in Egypt “ focused her struggle almost exclusively on obtaining full political rights for women” (Rieker, 2007, 110). She demanded the right of women to run for the public office and to get access to high political positions(Rieker, 2007, 106). Indeed, there are many examples of Egyptian feminists like Doria Shafik who dedicated their lives fighting to get women their rights according to their own views and perspectives.

The idea of fighting for getting and reaching the women’s equality and their political, social and economic rights is prevailing in Egypt nowadays and the clear and concrete example for that is the NCW which is the biggest organization representing women in Egypt.

2.2 Empowering Egyptian Women Politically ,Socially and Economically

Gender equality is the real key for empowering women which means enabling women to access all of their rights on all levels. Indeed, it is essential to focus on women's rights and understand the definition of empowerment which is the "creation of an enabling environment where individuals can fully use their capabilities to take charge of their lives... and acquiring of capacity to accomplish certain tasks and attain specific goals" (Mawaya, 1999). Actually and in her book 'Women and Rights' , Caroline Sweetman argues that " using a rights-based language to assert women's claims to equality in economic, political and social life carries some dangers" (Sweetman, 1995, 5). Sweetman believes that international and national legal systems need to recognize that women and men face the law with gender identities which carry different status , position, and power within society , In most situations, men will be at an advantage" (Sweetman, 1995, 5). She added that men are superior to women and more powerful which means the existence of unequal power relations. (Sweetman, 1995, 5) This unbalanced power is unfair for women as they are always inferior to men and loose their rights in many cases.

The real question here is how the gender equality can lead to the empowerment of women which will result in the ability of the Egyptian women to share in the decision making process at least concerning women's issues and rights. According to Anthony D.G Mawaya, practical steps should be taken to empower women because the improvement in the political empowerment of women in general is very slow (Mawaya, 1999). Those steps are as the following: "[1] take measures to ensure women's access to and full participation in power structures and decision making ... [2] increase women's capacity to participate in decision- making and leadership" (Mawaya, 1999). In fact, it is important to shed a light on the importance of the role of the government to empower

women as the government has the authority, power and tools to enable the women to share effectively in the political and social arena. The government can support women officially using the law and by applying gender equality on all levels all over the country. Mawaya added that the government can “establish the goal for gender balance; creating critical mass of women leaders in strategic positions; women to hold 50 % of managerial and decision-making posts..., political parties to integrate women in elective and non elective positions; protect and promote women’s equal rights with men; remove discriminatory/ prejudicial electoral systems; continuous monitoring and regular evaluations of progress” (Mawaya, 1999).

Indeed, the previous criteria can be applied on the Egyptian National For Women as it is controlled by the National Democratic Party which is considered a real power that give the council all the authority to have an effective role in the Egyptian society concerning women’s issues and the clear example for that is the Khol’ law which is adopted by the NCW represented by Dr Mona Zolfokaar as a very active member in the NCW. Mawaya may be considered too optimistic in the idea of empowering women which is a real difficulty especially in the Middle East region as being regulated by traditions and culture norms which is considered an obstacle towards achieving a real and effective participation of women in the political and social decision making of the country.

However, the NCW ‘s declared aim is a clear example towards reaching a real empowerment for women although it is not the perfect or ideal example so far but at least it is an attempt from the Egyptian government’s side to empower women. Mawaya believes that by establishing “mechanisms for participation at community and society

levels; (adopting) measures to improve women's economic status; affirmative action... to redress imbalances; mobilize and sensitize men, women, NGOs, political parties, trade unions, enact legislation on women with disabilities; ensure women take 35 % of decision making positions" (Mawaya, 1999) can all find a real platform for the progress in the women's role in society (Mawaya, 1999).

In fact, the NCW Economic Committee held a seminar named " Financial & Non-financial Services for the Economic Empowerment of Women" on Wednesday July 16, 2008 which included many sessions that discussed the crucial role of the Egyptian financial sector and the NGOs in supporting the women's micro credits which is a practical and obvious way for empowering women through creating a new group of women entrepreneurs (NCW, Online). Economic empowerment of women can never be ignored as it is the first step towards achieving the political empowerment because, if women has financial problems, so their priority will be the satisfaction of their own basic needs and then start thinking about their political rights as a next step. Thus, the economic aspect should be considered first in planning for the empowerment of women as it is the case in the NCW policy and agenda.

Actually, there are different kinds of governments but Mawaya has limited her discussion to a certain type which is the democratic progressive governments. Mawaya believes that there should be a "national action plan" (Mawaya, 1999) adopted by the government and should be implemented according to a certain schedule in order to reach its objectives. Actually, despite the political and personal aspects and dimensions of having Ms Suzan Mubarak the head of the NCW, the NCW is trying hard to implement a certain action plan in order to empower the Egyptian women politically and socially.

Indeed, being engaged and well connected with the international and regional community and organizations such as the United Nations gives the NCW more credibility and efficiency in tackling women's issues. Moreover, and according to the NCW website, the NCW "represent women at international conferences and organizations dealing with women's issues" (NCW, Online), which is considered a very important asset towards achieving its objectives. There is no doubt that being supervised and controlled by the NDP, the NCW has great facilities in addressing the international community and organizations which means more support and help for reaching its goals.

In fact, there are many challenges that face the process of empowering women and make it relatively slow compared to other countries such as the United States. Furthermore, the traditional and cultural barriers, the unfair division of labor, the inadequate women's training and education, lack of the serious political will and the economic problems (Mawaya, 1999) are all considered crucial obstacles and challenges because those factors are directly affecting women economically which means the difficulty in empowering them. Actually, the existence of such challenges make it important for the responsible and those who are interested in gender issues to find solutions for decreasing the effect of such factors on the women's empowerment or at least lessen its involvement in the process itself.

Mawaya claims that the solution for promoting women empowerment can be done through many ways such as creating leadership positions for women, funding women's campaign who are running for high positions in the country, eliminating discrimination between women and men especially in the elections and finally, supporting women's public figures and leaders (Mawaya, 1999). There is no doubt that all the previous factors

will give women the strong will and more self confidence to improve themselves and to be more ambitious in order to achieve their goals. Moreover, Mawaya is suggesting more ways for empowering women such as “ensuring economic empowerment of women; changing oppressive traditional and cultural practices; promoting alternative leadership through encouraging and acknowledging leadership initiatives by women at all levels of society [as Dr Mona Zolfokar initiated the Khol’ law] , and conceptualizing an alternative framework for women’s leadership such as the responsible use of power , challenging corruption and promoting a culture peace and non violence” (Mawaya, 1999).

According to the NCW website, The “NCW Project for combating violence against women” held a meeting for a group of experts on Monday July 14, 2008 which chaired by Dr Farkhonda Hassan to discuss the issue of practicing violence against women which shows the great interest of the NCW leader to give the women all of her social rights. (NCW, Online). Actually, most of the previous recommendations by Mawaya are adopted and implemented through the NCW which will be discussed and focused on in the next section.

2.2.1 El Khol’ Law as one of the achievements of the NCW:

The new Egyptian family law and the Family Court is one of the great achievements of the NCW. Lama Abu Odeh in her article ‘Modernizing Muslim Family Law: the case in Egypt’ states that there is general evolution in the Islamic law in Egypt and most Arab countries “from a dominant system existing within an Islamic state to a subordinate system existing within an overall secularized legal system characterized by legal borrowing from European codes, is given” (Abu Odeh, 2004, 1). She added also that

“Islamic law has survived in the modern era primarily through family law, having lost jurisdiction over most other areas of law” (Abu Odeh, 2004, 1). Dr Heba Ezzat in her article ‘The Silent Ayesha : An Egyptian Narrative’ agrees with Abu Odeh that “ the legal domain was one of the targeted areas of secularization” in Egypt (Ezzat, 2001, 249). Both Authors believe that secular feminists in Egypt represented in NCW members are using gender as an operational concept rather than an ideological concept. Abu Odeh added that “in order for family law to be legislatively reformed, progressively interpreted by secular judges, or actively protected by elite constitutional judges, the outer limits have to be convincingly defined for a difficult to please religious audience” (Abu Odeh, 2004, 3). Thus, according to both authors, religion was taken as tool to gain the acceptance of the Egyptians for the new family law and to suit the Egyptian culture.

Indeed, there was an urgent need for a secure law that can guarantee the Egyptian women their social rights and enable them to survive in the society in case of having family problems with their husbands and not to leave them under the control of their husbands who might be tyrant and may deprive them from their rights. This issue was the main concern of Dr Mona Zulfokaar who adopted the issue and initiated the step forward that gives the Egyptian women the right to divorce their husbands in case of having problems. Indeed, Singerman states that "during the 1990's , a coalition of activists successfully lobbied parliament to enact important legislation reforming the personal status law. The 2000 Law on Reorganization of Certain Terms and Procedures of Litigation in Personal Status Matters grants women the right to divorce without the consent of their husbands if they give up some of their financial rights" (Singerman, 2008, 1). Singerman is referring here to EL Khol’ Law which was a real and practical

step for the Egyptian women to get their rights. Indeed, the Egyptian government had a role in supporting such new law.

The Egyptian government declared a strategy that will enable the Egyptian women to take all of their rights and such strategy will promote and encourage the political and social participation and decision making of such women. Ms Suzan Mubarak always insists on the importance of women's development by reducing the educational gap between males and females as a start which has many positive effects on the Egyptian society (Gehan Mostafa, Elahram, 2005).

Gehan Mostafa added that the appreciation of the role of international community for the efforts and achievements exerted by Ms Suzan Mubarak concerning women's issues encourages Ms Mubarak to proceed her efforts to support the Egyptian women 's participation socially and politically (Gehan Mostafa, Elahram, 2005). This means that the campaign for the NCW all over the world gives it more strength and credibility which lead it to come up with great changes in the Egyptian women's life.

Despite being a controversial issue in the Egyptian society, El khol' law is a rescue for many women who suffer from their husbands. Indeed, and according to the prosecuting attorney Mr. Maher Abdelwahed, the new family law is a positive step towards achieving the social justice and it really shows the superiority of Islam in appreciating women and their equal rights with men.(Mostafa Abdallah, Elahram,2000). Moreover, the new family law is created for the welfare and stability of the whole family by avoiding the longtime conflict cases in the Egyptian courts (Mostafa Abdallah, Elahram,2000). Indeed, women will not be inferiors anymore and men will not be able to humiliate them in case of family conflicts. .(Mostafa Abdallah, Elahram,2000) Dr Samia Saleh in her article in

Elahram newspaper confirms that women are human beings who have the right to speak up and call for their rights.(Saleh,Elahram,2000) Dr Samia added that the real target for feminists is not destroying the families or just creating a westernized women society, but women should be strong enough to be decisive ,balanced and have the ability to defend her social and political rights (Saleh, Elahram, 2000). According to Singerman, the coalition which included female lawyers and women's rights activists who supported the new family law "muted the liberal rights discourse favored by many women's rights activists and instead emphasized religion as an asset" because they believe that if this new " law were founded on religious principles, it would be difficult for opponents to reject it as anti Islam" (Singerman, 2008, 1) . On the other hand Singerman added that some women activists were against the new reforms of women's rights in which they argue that " the reforms benefited elite women at the expense of the poor and that using religiously- based arguments risked diluting liberal and feminist ideals and undermining constitutional guarantees of equality. Islamists voices warned that feminists and secularists has distorted the Islamic tradition and had co-opted religious authorities who were too close to the government, thereby contributing to the dismiss of the Egyptian family" (Singerman, 2008, 2). Singerman added that this coalition "represented a valuable learning experience for the Egyptian women's movement" (Singerman, 2008, 2). One of the positive effects of this coalition is the appointment of one of its members lawyer Tahani El Jibali as the first Egyptian female judge (Singerman, 2008, 2). In fact, the coalition was also positively affective in which its members "played a critical role in Parliament's recent enactment of a law granting citizenship rights to children born to

Egyptian women and foreign husbands" (Singerman, 2008, 2). Singerman believes that this coalition is a practical and obvious step in the Egyptian women's movement.

2.3 Women's movements from an Islamic perspective

Women's freedom is viewed as restricted and limited aspect in the Islamic perspective. Freedom in Islam means the ability to take decisions and act freely in everything in our lives but under the umbrella of the Islamic laws and without violating the Islamic regulations. Such principles are learned from families in which the person is brought up to know his rights and obligations from his family. Diane Singerman in her article 'Restoring the Family to civil Society : Lessons from Egypt' ensures the role of the family in building a balanced society in which the family is " the center of social organization and constitutes the dominant social institution through which persons and groups inherit their religious, class, and cultural affiliations. It also provides security and support in times of individual and societal stress" (Singerman, 2006, 5)

Indeed, studies were made to focus on the Muslim Woman role in life and tackled it from two point of views; first, that women are considered half of the society and their role will obviously affect the production and the improvement of the society as the case in the Western society which is civilized and progressed due to the women's effective role in it (Yassin, 2003, 9). Second, studies made on woman's issues and relate that to the Islamic views and regulations in the sense that the Islamic rules have preserved the woman all of her rights, dignity and safety (Yassin, 2003, 9). Thus, the first group vote for the total freedom of the woman and encourage her to interfere directly with men in all aspects of life and it's her right to challenge him but on the other side, the second group is calling for restricting women's freedom as it is regulated with the Islamic law and

rules. Dr Emad Yassin in his book ‘Haraket Tahreer El Mar’aa fee Mezan El Islam’ claims that he supports the second point of view as he thinks that the Women’s freedom advocacy is a Westernized concept that was brought to the Muslim culture and societies to destroy it and to destruct the structure and the building unit of the Islamic society which is the family (Yassin, 2003, 11). Dr Emad Yassin added that the invasion of the Western culture in the Muslim societies is a kind of conspiracy and that there is a difference between Freedom which is a destructive tool for societies as it means a complete absence of morals and ethics; and being freed “Taharor” which means following the devil and being totally away from the God (Yassin, 2003, 11).

Dr Yassin claims that those who are responsible for applying the Islamic regulations and resisting the invading western culture are the scholars, people in the Islamic nation, media experts and definitely the rulers (Yassin, 2003, 12). Dr Yassin believes that directing the people towards a certain principle or culture should come from people who are in power and can easily affect people’s minds through the strong tools they have such as media experts who have different channels for addressing the people that can spread quickly everywhere like TV, Radio, journals and so on. Dr Samia Saleh, in her article ‘Cases and Opinions’ claims that media has a very important role in directing the whole society correctly through culture and social principles (Saleh, Alahram, 2000). According to Dr Samia, the Egyptian women are lacking the role model like Hoda Sharawy, Nabawaya Mousa , Latifa Elnady and Moufida Abdelrahman because the media is focusing on the belly dancers and Artists as role models for women which is a great disaster and a real flaw from the media (Saleh, Alahram, 2000). Thus, the media has a national responsibility in the globalization era in directing women to adapt

and cope with the social changes smartly to avoid conflicts and struggles (Saleh, Alahram, 2000). Dr Samia ensures that the NCW has a very important role concerning that aspect through holding training sessions for women to raise their awareness (Saleh, Alahram, 2000). Dr Samia added that the media has a crucial role in restructuring the social view for the Egyptian women (Saleh, Alahram, 2000).

The NCW can be more effective in the Egyptian society and can have more credibility but under certain conditions which are [1] being applied adequately among people without being biased to a certain group's interests especially the elites [2] being directed to serve the interest of all women despite their social, economic or political level [3] Choosing suitable members who are sincerely serving the interest of common people [4] Adapt the concept itself in a way which will not contradict with the Egyptian culture, religion and traditions. So, Dr Yassin here is tackling an important point.

Martina Rieker in her edited book 'Pioneering Feminist Anthropology in Egypt' claims that the Islamic perspective the "the equality of men and women is meaningless" (Rieker, 2007, 56). She added that men and women are different in features and characteristics in which each one has his own that enable him or her to perform their duties and roles in life (Rieker, 2007, 56). Moreover, Rieker argued that in Islam, women are viewed as "creatures incapable of and unfitted for public duties and in a traditional society both men and women upheld the superiority of the status of men as a basic value of their stratification system" (Rieker, 2007, 57). According to Rieker, the unequal and unfair legal status between men and women in the Muslim world creates an insecure and fragile marital relationship. (Rieker, 2007, 57). Rieker here is referring to the right of men to divorce their wives without any reasonable excuses, however the wife must have a

reasonable excuse such as proving for the judge that her husband is “mad, impotent, unable to support her, or extremely cruel” (Rieker, 2007, 57). Then Rieker contradicts herself by mentioning that the “Islam envisages man’s and women’s role as complementary not competing” (Rieker, 2007, 57). Moreover she added that men and women have “certain privileges and duties in accordance with his or her nature and sphere of influence” (Rieker, 2007, 57). Women have the right to inherit and to completely control their own properties and despite being sometimes financially independent, still men are totally responsible economically and socially for their wives and kids (Rieker, 2007, 57). Men have high privileges in Islam such as the “political authority and mobility” (Rieker, 2007, 57); however, women are competing nowadays with men in the political arena to acquire high political positions. Indeed, there is the “issue of changing roles in contemporary Egypt” (Rieker, 2007, 58) can never be ignored. Rieker highlighted the origin of such social and political changes among men and women in the Egyptian society which happened because of the rise of the urban bourgeoisie who were a new military elites after the Egyptian revolution 1952 (Rieker, 2007, 58). It is a fact nowadays in the Egyptian society that “the traditional Islamic conceptions of male authority are no longer applicable to the exigencies of contemporary Egyptian society where the woman has become more independent in managing her own affairs and making her own decisions....and women are encouraged to participate actively in the larger society” (Rieker, 2007, 68). Unfortunately, these changes create a sort of conflict between men and women in which both nowadays seek superiority and a kind of competition between males and females are existed nowadays to achieve power and

authority despite the traditional values and norms and the religious aspects or regulations in some cases.

The Egyptian National Council for Women is a concrete example for such changes of roles in which the elite Egyptian women are exerting obvious efforts to empower the Egyptian women politically and socially by following their own perspectives and concepts.

Actually, the NCW is trying hard to mix between the Western culture and the idea of feminism and the Islamic regulations and principles by adopting issues related to woman's rights and tackle them through Islamic law like 'El Khol' for example. According to Egyptian public opinion, the NCW should apply a strategy that can never be contradicted with the Egyptian culture and norms in order to guarantee its sustainability and existence in the Egyptian society. Moreover , the NCW's policy is affected by the Western culture as most of its members are related in a way or another to the Western thoughts and ideas .

Most of the Egyptians believe that it is a hard task to apply western concepts in a Muslim conservative society and that's why the government is giving all kind of support to the NCW to guarantee its existence as it serve the State's interests to control the Egyptian woman's sector. Indeed, there is one Egyptian culture but it is affected by many other cultures which give some people the false sensation that there are many cultures in our society. In fact and according to Martina Rieker , Egypt was influenced by "the cultural exchanges between Egypt" (Rieker, 2007, 133) and other countries after the colonization. Thus, being culturally influenced and affected is a matter of fact but being vanished is not real. The Egyptian culture is a valuable one because it is a mixture

of religion and traditions which means values and the great Pharaohs civilization which make it an extremely strong and reliable one. The definition of culture is the mixture of values, ethics and beliefs which affect and influence the behavior of people. So, when religion, moral traditions and ancient civilization shape this culture, this means that it is a strong and well built and existed culture because simply it has valuable origins that can never be terminated or doubtful.

The Egyptian culture is not changing but the Egyptian society is affected by other coming cultures but this is due to other reasons and factors that affect people directly specially the young generation who lack the experience or ability to differentiate between the pros and the cons of any culture. One of those factors is the media and the spread of strange and unethical media channels which negatively affect the youth thinking that by imitating the West blindly means that they are upper class. For example, imitating the fashion which is not suitable for The Egyptian society such as clothes fashion without knowing that such fashion is used there by certain people who do not exist in our society. Thus, the effect of the media can never be ignored in affecting the Egyptian culture. Furthermore, without considering the culture awareness that should be presented through such media channels, the Egyptians will be affected negatively in a way which might lead them to reject our culture and describe it as old fashioned or a restricted one. In fact, some people think we should adapt our life to our culture rather than adapting our culture to our lives.

Thus, the role of the media is to create awareness among Egyptians in order to avoid the invasion of the negative concepts of any other culture to our society. Dr Azza Karam in her article 'Women Parliamentarians in the Arab World' argued that media "in most of

the Arab countries, reflects cultural norms and patterns, and as such, gathers its information from these sources” (Karam, 1999) .She added that the Arab media in general is controlled indirectly or directly by the State which “means that what gets portrayed in the different forms of media, is that which is allowed and approved by the state, and forms a large part of state-ideology. States themselves are often the strongest proponents of women’s ‘natural’ roles in society, in addition to their tradition of conditional support for formal gender-equality. The most important condition for state-support being that the particular gender-equality issues are not controversial to the conservative religious establishments, most of which are meant to support the state’s ‘Righteous Religious Male’ image. By the selective courting of the religious establishment on gender-equality issues, Arab states use gender issues as a bargaining chip, whereby the biggest losers are women.” (Karam, 1999). Therefore, and according to Dr Azza Karam, the media in the Arab world is used as a tool for the governments which use the society’s traditions and culture to send certain messages for the people.

Actually, culture is related to identity which means that we can shape our life and direct it according to our culture and personal identity. Adapting people's culture to their life simply means that those people have a weak culture that lacks strong values, ideas and beliefs which will make it easy for them to change it and direct it the way they want and according to the frequently changing ideas, especially in the West. So, sticking to values and principles gives the person more respect in defending his opinions because he has a base and origin for his views which gives also more credibility for the person’s ideas.

Indeed, it is important to differentiate between culture and religion in the sense of their origins. Culture which is a mixture of values, beliefs and concepts is made and created by human beings and is found within a certain community or region. Thus, it can be imported or transferred to another community depending on the power and strength of such culture and its believers. However, religion can never be imported because it is the Divine law and God created it for the welfare of the whole world and not restricted to a certain community. Thus, such term is not applied on religion whether Christianity or Islam as they are spread all over the world among all communities despite their culture or language. Moreover, Muslims and Christians are found everywhere in the West and the East despite the culture difference. The difference in culture makes the implementation of some tiny parts of the religion differ but the basics are settled and strong according to the Bible and the Holy Quran.

Feminism is a Western concept which started as first and second wave Feminism and it was done according to their own culture beliefs and problems also. So, adopting such concept to raise the slogan of getting the Egyptian women their rights is a fake and deceiving way for reaching more authorized and official power among women's sector in Egypt. However, if we refer and go back to the Islamic rules and regulations, we will find that Islam has guaranteed women all of their rights but in a way that can preserve their dignity and safety. That's why the women's rights, role and position in Islam is discussed in the next section to show that the Islamic law and regulations are existed for the interest of women and not against her as some people claim.

2.4 Women's rights, role and position in Islam

There is no doubt that women have a great position in Islam and the Islamic Shari'a has guaranteed her all the rights that enables her to survive peacefully and to make a stable, balanced and settled family but the problem is existed in the current circumstances and the changes in the social morals and values and ethics that can divert the man and lead him to mistreating his wife which may lead her to ask for divorce and to destruct the whole family. Islam also guaranteed women the rights of education, work and for being an active participants in social services (El Bawadi, 1995, 129). Women in Islam have all rights as citizenship as well as men but in a way that can preserve their dignity.

Actually, and according to Suzan Bazilli, in her book 'Putting Women on the Agenda' "issues of family law can not be separated from issues of women's law" (Nhlapo, 1991, 111). Being member of the family , women should be considered in tackling issues related to family law.

Diane Singerman in her article ' Women and Strategies for Change: An Egyptian Model ' focused on the Egyptian efforts that are done by female activists to achieve " concrete gains for women " through the " use of pragmatic, coalition-building strategies that take advantage of the expanded political space available" (Singerman ,2008, 1).

In fact, Nemat Guenena and Nadia Wassef in their article 'Unfulfilled Promises: Women's Rights' agree with Singerman that the "Egyptian feminists and women's rights activists struggled for a more equitable status in society" (Guenena and Wassef, 1999, 1).

The problem is not only with the man but also the pace of life has completely changed and may be in some cases the woman is mistaken which may lead her to ask for divorce to satisfy her own ambitions for example even if this may be against her family interests.

Unfortunately, people nowadays are looking after themselves as individuals and many people are not thinking for the interest of the group and the idea of the family as a the building unit of the society is vanishing to a great extent. Many people are considered selfish nowadays in which they seek their own interests only without considering the effect of their own decisions on their families and this causes a lot of disasters in our Egyptian society. God has honored the woman in all the religions in the sense of guaranteeing all of her rights. So, following God's orders either from the wife or the husband will avoid our Egyptian society a lot of family conflicts that we observe and spread nowadays in the courts. In fact, tackling women's rights from an Islamic perspective is really important in my thesis because the NCW is using religion as a way to empower women socially, as they claim, using EL Khol' law.

Actually, Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie in their book "Women in The Muslim World" discuss the existence of all of the women's rights in the Holy Quran and they added that "a central feature of the rules of conduct contained in the Quran, the primary source of Islamic religious law, is the intent to improve the social position of women" (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 37). Indeed, all the details of marriage that guarantee the woman's rights like the dowry are mentioned in the Quran. Beck and Keddie ensures that "the Quran is not primarily a legislative document but rather the declaration of the fundamental Islamic ethic" (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 37). Beck and Keddie discussed the main five problems in the idea of reforming the religious law which are the "capacity to marry, polygamy, divorce, custody of children, and succession" (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 39).

Concerning the capacity to marry, Beck and Keddie tackled the marriage procedures and the ability of the woman to contract her own marriage according to the Shiite and Traditional Hanefa law and that this right for women is not allowed in other schools. (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 39). Then the authors added that the importance of the guardian for the woman in order to be concerned about her “moral welfare”. (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 39). This really shows how the Islamic Law and rules are totally for the interest and favor of woman to guarantee her all of her rights. There is no doubt that every rule has exceptions but in many cases the husband will think a lot before taking any decisions against his wife as she has someone who will defend her to take her rights in case of divorce for example .The second part in this chapter is really interesting which tackles the Polygamy issue which is a permission mentioned in the Quran for men to get married to up to four wives. Beck and Keddie clarified that the “the law does not require a husband to obtain the permission of the court or his current wife before contracting an additional marriage. Although the Quran stresses that a man should not marry a second wife if does not feel able to treat his several wives equally, the law regards this purely as a matter for a man’s own conscience and one in which judicial intervention is unnecessary” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 40).

One of the most essential problems in the Egyptian society nowadays is the divorce which is really obvious in many cases and spread all over the Egyptian Courts. Beck and Keddie presented the idea of divorce in Islam and they also mentioned the trials of many reformers to change and improve some parts concerning divorce as a way to guarantee the woman her rights. The authors claims that “the prominent aim of the reforms enacted since 1915 has been to improve the position of women by granting them the right to

obtain a dissolution of their marriage , a right that was denied to them under traditional Hanifa Law no matter how ill treated they had been” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 41). They added that most of the enacted reforms were based on the Maliki principles and Law which were well known as being so liberal in getting the woman all of her rights and to obtain a “judicial decree of divorce” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 41).

Indeed, the reasons of divorce vary from one case to another but in some cases the woman has the right to obtain the divorce if her husband is sick for example and continuing with him may affect her negatively and may be dangerous for her (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 41). Moreover, the woman can obtain the divorce according to the Islamic rules if her husband is unable to maintain and satisfy her or if he is treating her violently. (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 41). Indeed, it is important to mention different reasons for divorce and to tackle all marriage issues and custody in order to know and investigate why the Egyptian women seek El Khol’ Law which is adopted by the NCW.

On the other hand, nowadays the Khol’ is a way for the woman to get rid of her husband depending on the reason but in such case “the wife is required to return to her husband all benefits she has received from the marriage” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 41).

In Egypt “the wife may obtain a decree of dissolution on the grounds of cruelty and where the treatment to which she is subjected is intolerable to persons of her social status, this of course represents a variable standard in as much as a blow from her husband, for example, might be intolerable to a middle class wife but acceptable to a woman of the poorer classes” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 42). This will be shown and discussed later on in this thesis depending on the interviews which will be conducted with the cases from the NCW ’s complain office in order to know if really the economic and social standard of

the woman affect her decision to take a step forward against her husband using the Khol' in case of any conflict?

The Khol' law is giving the woman more superiority and the upper hand in taking the decision whether to continue living with her husband or not. Before, the woman used to be passive and unable to take the decision and completely surrender for the husband in their break up in case of any conflict because she can not take any practical decision in this break up. In Islam the husband can divorce his wife up to three times. Beck and Keddie ensures that in some cases when the "husband pronounces three talaqs at the same time, thus immediately dissolving the marriage irrevocably and, moreover ,making remarriage between himself and his divorced wife impossible until she has consummated a marriage with another man and this intervening marriage is, of course, duly terminated" (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 43). This of course shows the idea of tyranny and unfairness sometimes if the husband is really an irresponsible man and is unable to control and keep his temp and he can easily divorce his wife for strange reasons for example.

Custody of the children is a real problem that faces any woman in case of divorce or Khol3 because it is a very sensitive issue since both the husband and the wife quarrel about who has the right to take the children. Indeed, "Rigidity is the outstanding characteristic of the traditional law relating to the custody of children" (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 44). It is known in Egypt that the mother has a limited time for the custody of her own children and after that the custody passes to the father. Actually, and during past reform in the Egyptian Law which stated that "the court has the right to decide which parent should have custody of girls after the age of nine and boys after the age of seven? However, the mother may not have custody of her girls once they have reached the age of

eleven or of her boys once they have reached the age of nine” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 45).

Furthermore, and according to the Egyptian Law and in normal divorce cases ,the mother does not have the absolute right to the custody of her kids and she may lose it if she is morally or physically unfit or if she gets married to someone who “ is not related to the child within the prohibited degrees” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 45). Thus, and with the total respect to the Egyptian Law and the Shar3aa but still it is clear that the Egyptian law is not always with the favor and interest of the woman specially these days in which many of the husbands are abusing the law using its tiny details through professional and may be unethical lawyers.

For solving the problem , a good search for the roots and the real reasons that cause this problem. Moreover, one of the main reasons for the conflicts and the marriage problems in general is the early marriage in which “ there is no legal age for marriage” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 55), and girls specially in rural areas and slum areas are getting married in very early ages which makes them lack the awareness of their own rights. Furthermore, “local custom and limited knowledge” (Beck & Keddie, 1978, 54) of people in such areas causes a lot of problems specially in family and marriage problems in which most of the people in such areas follows certain norms and the traditions that they get used to regardless the law as we will discuss later according to the interviews with some of those people. For example many women in such areas when they get divorced the children’s custody passes to the father according to the norms in which he must be responsible for them totally and the mother gets married to another one. So, in

such areas the women rarely seeks the family courts in which they prefer following the norms rather than searching for a solution in the courts.

The Woman has a great position and level in the Islamic Law and Shari'aa but if it is well applied in the sense that it is existed for the welfare of the whole family and specially the woman who has all of her rights guaranteed in Islam. Not only in Islam but also in Christianity in which it also insists and ensures the great position of woman and the welfare of the whole family. Moreover, Madeha Khamees mentioned in her book "El Mar'aa wa alsharee'aa alsmawya" that in Matta Bible part 32 the person who divorce his wife without being an adultery will make her committing an adultery and the person who gets married to a divorced woman is considered an adultery (Khamees, 1978, 18). Khamees added that allowing the divorce in Christianity was because of the hardness and the cruelty and the violence of some people in some cases (Khamees, 1978, 18). So, and according to the author it is clear that the human being in general is the one who is responsible for the conflicts especially among married people and that the Divine law is always with the welfare and happiness and settlement of the human being.

This part is really important because the NCW is using religion as a tool to get women their rights ,and this part is mentioned because if people follow the Divine's law whether Muslims or Christians people will not need the interference of people who claims that they call for women's rights to serve their own interests .Adding the part of Christianity is because there are Christians in the Egyptian society who can never be ignored and also because the NCW was established for serving the interests of the Egyptian women and not only the Muslim Egyptian women. So, it is important to shed a light on the Christian perspective concerning women's rights especially in the divorce

cases. According to Khamees, the problem exists in the ignorance of the woman of her rights in Islam but not the unfairness of Islam to the woman (Khamees, 1978, 39).

The idea of marriage itself is not just for satisfying the sexual desires; however its essence exists in the idea of sharing, settlement and happiness between the spouses (Khayrat, 1975, 68). In Islam, the woman has all the right to choose her husband and no one can force her to marry someone (Khayrat, 1975, 69). This means that the Islamic law and Shari3aa are totally with the woman's rights even in choosing her husband in order to avoid any conflicts as much as possible in the future between the spouses because it was her own decision and she can never blame anyone for being responsible for her marriage. According to Khayrat, the Islamic law enables the man to marry up to four women because of four reasons and under certain conditions which are: [1] to protect the man from committing the sin if his wife is not satisfying him, [2] the number of women is more than the number of men specially after the wars which means that many women will be without a husband which may lead them to commit the sins, [3] the main aim for marriage is to get a lot of children and this can be achieved through the polygamy,[4] in some cases the woman may be infertile and her husband wants to be a father and he can never forget his right for being a father (Khayrat, 1975, 74). However, these conditions and rights are abused by many Muslim men, which cause a lot of problems for the families, spouses and the children also (Khayrat, 1975, 75). The children will be psychologically affected by the disturbance of the whole family and this will cause also conflict and violence among all the four wives and their children. The right of polygamy for the husband is allowed under the conditions mentioned before but in such case the husband must be fair in treating all of his wives which is in my opinion very hard

to be achieved because if he tried to be fair financially, he can never ever be fair psychologically in the sense of giving the whole care for all of his wives equally without differentiating between them by any means.

In Fact, the Islamic law allowed the polygamy as permission in some emergencies and under certain conditions but it is not allowed as an obligatory or preferred. (Khayrat, 1975, 74). The Husband in Islam is totally responsible for his wife financially even if she is rich. The woman has the complete right to ask for divorce if her husband is neglecting or ignoring her expenses (Khayrat, 1975, 80).

Islam totally fights the feeling of hatred among the spouses and urges them to overcome such feeling by getting closer to each other and by trying to be kind in the way they treat each other (Khayrat, 1975, 85). Thus, the rules of Islam are always keen and eager to support the frame of the family to keep it as it is the building unit of the society. However, in many cases the people do not want to get the message and are easily attracted to the bad intentions and the conflicts starts from such weak points that all people have in their personalities. According to Ahmed Khayrat, the stability and the balance of the family is the responsibility of both the husband and the wife in which both of them should be eager to keep the continuity of this marriage and make it happy and settled by avoiding the interference of any stranger who might be the catalyst of exaggerating any small conflict between the spouses (Khayrat, 1975, 85). Khayrat insists on the importance of keeping the family secrets within the members of the family in order to solve their problems by themselves without any interference from the people which may have a negative effect and may lead to the exaggeration of the problem (Khayrat, 1975, 85).

One can never deny that many of the cases in the courts and the NCW' s complain office nowadays are due to the interference of other people in the family problems. In fact, the best way for anyone to interfere in any family conflict is to reach a compromise and to narrow the gap between the spouses in order to finish the conflict and to reach a meeting point through which they can begin or continuing their marriage and to avoid the idea of divorce. Divorce is allowed in Islam under certain conditions which is mainly the impossibility of the spouses to continue their life together due hatred and many verses in Quran are supporting this idea “Abghad elhalal Aend ALLAH el Talaq” Sura EL Nesaa (Khayrat, 1975, 88) which means that God allowed divorce in some special cases but it is not recommended. Also, divorce in Islam is not just a word that the husband says to his wife and that is it, however, he has the chance three times to regret in his divorce decision may be he was mistaken (Khayrat, 1975, 88).

The idea and essence of giving the man the legal right to divorce is not put haphazardly but it is because the man has more control upon himself than the woman and he is also financially responsible for the financial affairs of the family before marriage represented in the dowry and during marriage represented in the expenses of the family and after marriage represented in the alimony he should pay in case of divorce (Khayrat, 1975, 89). As a result, the husband must think well before taking such decision because he is also more rationale than the woman who is so emotional and can take fast decisions without any control or without evaluating and calculating the consequences of her decisions (Khayrat, 1975, 89).

The Islamic Shari'a has guaranteed the woman the right to divorce herself but under certain conditions: [1] she can put her right to divorce herself in the marriage contract by

having the “Esmāa” [2] if the husband is miser or has any disease or if he left her and she cannot reach him anywhere [3] if the husband is treating her violently and rudely and has feelings of hatred towards her and the woman here can give the husband money to divorce her as “Fedyāa” and she must leave all of her rights like the alimony and this is called “Khol” (Khayrat, 1975, 91).

Thus, Divorce sometimes is the only solution and no other alternatives, however it is the worst of the “Halal” (Moeness, 1988, 39). Actually, Mohamed Atya Khamees, ensures in his book “El Mar’aa wa el Hokook el Seyasyaa” that the woman is really enjoying all of her rights that is guaranteed by the Islamic rules and law especially in marriage such as the responsibility of her husband for her expenses, Clothing, bringing a suitable home and being fair with her and always guide her to the right way but kindly without even hurting her (Atya Khamees, 1978, 66).

Indeed, God ordered the husband to well treat his wife as in Suraa El Nesaa, verse 19 “Wa Aasherhon bel ma’roof” which means that the husband should treat his wife kindly and he should care about her. Dr Abdel Ghany Mahmoud in his book “Hokook EL Mar’aa” which means woman’s rights tackled this issue from all aspects either economically, socially and legally. Dr Mahmoud claims that The Islamic rules and Law guaranteed the woman all of her rights which is not the case in other non Islamic nations. (Mahmoud, 1991, 113) then Dr Mahmoud added that all the rights that is related to marriage and family relationships is guaranteed in Islam and even in case of any marriage conflict and the existence of hatred among the spouses, the woman can divorce herself using the “Khol” and that there is nothing called discrimination against the woman concerning her rights (Mahmoud, 1991, 115).

El Bahey El Kholy in his book “EL Islam and Kadayaa El Mar’aa EL Mo3asraa” describes in details the real meaning of “EL Khol’” in Islam and why it is allowed and under what conditions it can be permitted. Moreover, El Kholy added that the woman has the right to divorce her husband if he is immoral, or if she does not like his physical appearance, or for his religion, or arrogance, or weakness and things from the like but she has to pay for him as “Fedya.” (El Kholy, 2000, 101). El Kholy supported his words by mentioning the story of Gameela Bent Solool who asked Prophet Mohamed to separate her from Thabet Ibn El Kayes because she did not like his physical appearance as he was short, dark skinned and very ugly and she can never live with him and she got the Khol3 (El Kholy, 2000, 100).

The role of the judge is really as important in the El Khol’ cases as it depends on the conditions and the social standard of the spouses. Moreover, the judge must be aware with all the aspects of the case in order to give a fair decision whether this woman deserves the Khol3 or not. El Kholy ensures that the judge should be smart enough in taking his decision concerning El Khol’ issue as it is a very sensitive issue and it means the destruction of the family and this can be reached through the judge’s well awareness of the environment that surrounds the cases either rural or urban because this means the diversity of the people in their attitudes, mentality and emotions in which what will suit a certain person may not suit the other one (El Kholy, 2000, 101).

Al Sharmani has another opinion in which she claims that “ Thousands of Egyptian women for whom the existing family law system regulating matters such as family property, marriage and divorce, alimony , child custody, and paternity disputes offered no guarantee of their civil rights or human dignity” (Al Sharmani, 2007).

Then and after the creation of the new family law 2004, a great advance and improvement had been obvious in applying the new legal framework but as any new system there is still some obstacles (Al Sharmani, 2007). Al Sharmani here tackles a very crucial issue which is the possibility of the legal reforms to bring out social reforms and if these reforms can lead to the real empowerment for the Egyptian women or not (Al Sharmani, 2007). It is really essential to discuss such issue as being one the issues that can investigate if the Egyptian woman can be empowered through the new family law which is adopted by the National Council for Women.

2.5 Women, Politics and Power in Egypt:

Accessing Power through Politics is not an easy game for women. It needs special support from the government or any powerful authority as it is well known throughout history that Men are pioneers in political authority or accessing power in general.

Margaret Stacey , in her book ‘ Women , Power and Politics’ argues that “ women neither have a private domain of their own, nor do they have equality of decision-making in matters that gravely affect their lives,nor do they have the same freedom as men to enter the public domain” (Stacey, 1981, 104) .Stacey believes that women are deprived from all their rights and that they have to search for these rights.

Diane Singerman claims that networks and family are of great importance in the Egyptian society because "they organize and distribute scarce resources, facilitate coordinated actions, and promote public discourse" (Singerman, 2006, 1). Thus ,it is essential to focus on women as important and effective member in the family who have rights and responsibilities at the same time. Mr. Maher Abdelwahed ,general deputy,

claims that women have special nature and family responsibilities that will prevent them from being able to perform some hard tasks or jobs in the society such as working in the military or the desert or in being a judge (Mostafa Abdallah, Elahram,2000). In Egypt and being affected by the feminist principles and concepts, Egyptian women started to search for their social and political rights. The Egyptian women activists realized that they should have a certain role in their society and they have to search for it. In fact, and in a conservative society like Egypt ,it was not easy at all for women to compete with men in the political arena. It needed hard efforts from the Egyptian feminists to reach their target and to make advocacy for their concepts. They partially reached their target as there are women in high political positions in Egypt nowadays. Rieker added that in Egypt nowadays there are “ certain patterns expressing the changing roles of men and women as they confront the demands ,responsibilities , and opportunities of their society” (Rieker, 2007, 54).According to Rieker , women are the powerful key for change in any society as women are leading the same role in their families. (Rieker, 2007, 54). Rieker believes that the status of women in any society can play a big role in the social change and the reform of the this society in a way that serve the interests of the whole country. The idea of equality between men and women is not the whole issue , however it depends on the real initiative and motivation of women to have a role in their society. Rieker believes that women should be keen and eager to participate in the Political arena which they were excluded from in the past (Rieker, 2007, 55).

Thus, and after the 1952 Egyptian Revolution, Women emancipation affected the relation between men and women in way that changed both roles in the society (Rieker, 2007, 55). Moreover , the “ traditional beliefs and values guiding the conduct between the

sexes is being called into question which in turn is creating different kinds of conflict for both men and women” (Rieker, 2007, 55). These social changes within the Egyptian society will lead to the “ changes in the structure of social relations within the community in which new roles , new distribution of rewards and a new alignment of power can occur” (Rieker, 2007, 157).The idea of female subordination and male dominance was prevailed in Egypt until the 1970’s in which “ the ethnographic descriptions of women in the Middle East was taken for granted” which lead many women social scientists to start recognizing the importance of accessing power for women (Rieker, 184).Rieker added that looking at power should be done through negotiating the idea of social order in which both males and females should have the right of access to power (Rieker, 2007, 184). Then Rieker raised several crucial questions concerning women and power in Egypt and these questions will be discussed in details according to the interviews conducted by the researcher in the Discussion chapter of this thesis. Rieker’ s questions are about “ the constructs that facilitate ,limit and govern negotiation,.... the sanctions open to women,....the control exercised by women,...the conscious of women of their capacity to influence” (Rieker, 2007, 184).Such questions should be considered because they will determine and evaluate the actual role of women in social life and specially in politics and their ability to influence the society through accessing power. According to Rieker , there is a “ there is a considerable measure of unassigned power” among the Egyptian female households in which women compete for achieving their own needs and for reaching their own wishes and targets (Rieker, 2007, 185).

Rieker focus then on the “variety of strategies available to women to manipulate position and status to achieve their own ends” (Rieker, 2007, 185). The importance of

culture in determining women's role in the Egyptian society can not be ignored because culture has a significant effect according to which women's experiences and social class can be determined and evaluated. (Rieker, 2007, 185). According to culture and economic aspects in Egypt, there is a great contradiction exists in the society in which the upper middle class women are unliberated professionally but socially liberated, however the lower middle class women are sexually and socially conservative but professionally liberated which despite the huge women labor force (Rieker, 2007, 187).

Actually, women's productivity and role in the Egyptian society is affected by their social class and economic status and this is the reason for the existence of the "problem of interactions between class and sex" (Rieker, 2007, 187) within the Egyptian society.

The economic status and social class of women will lead them to easily access power because they will be able to fund their political campaigns without the need to be supported by others. Moreover, Toyar added that the "the lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics in greater numbers" (Toyar, 2007, 1) That's the reason that few number of women are taking a role in the political arena as the bad economic status for most of the Egyptians with the exception of some elite women who are participating in the political sector and have a real access to power. Thus, the expansion of the presence of Egyptian women in politics will be reached when women are enabled to raise their economic status without restrictions. Moreover, this can be done by giving women the chance to establish their own projects and improve their financial abilities without the restrictions done by men in most of the cases where many husbands for example prevent their wives from being financially better than them. This is a real challenge for women to support themselves

this will lead them to face great obstacles internally which is inside their families and externally within the whole society. Furthermore, the economic burdens that face women can be the reason of their reluctance to be active participants politically. Most of the Egyptian women prefer to keep their family resources for their children and the family in general rather than spending them on their own activities or to achieve their own ambitions and targets. Women are more dedicated to their families if it comes to spending money and consume the financial resources of the family. Moreover, the expenses of the political and social involvement for potential candidate women are economically exhausting. Such participants need to exert huge effort and spent too much time and money on “building reputation and recognition among constituents as well as among party members” together with other costs such as communication ,traveling for campaigning and attending party conferences and sessions (Toyar, 2007, 3). Thus , all of these aspects will affect women’s will and ability to be active participants in their society.

The fact that women are being excluded from accessing power is not for the interest of any country in general because the whole society needs to benefit from their efforts and work and participation. Toyar supports such opinion by mentioning that “a recent survey of men and women parliamentarians concluded that women parliamentarians have redefined legislative priorities to include women’s concerns and perspectives, such as gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare ,pensions, gender-equality laws and electoral reforms that enhance women’s access to parliaments” (Toyar, 2007, 1).

There was a research done by Dr Marcela Toyar tackling women’s difficulty to access powerful positions and to share in the decision making process (Toyar, 2007, 1). Dr

Toyar shows her optimism concerning women's political role and acquiring high political positions in any society all over the world through mentioning the fact that women's representation in the Parliament until year 2008 is the highest ever (Toyar, 2007, 1). This is a good sign for the improvement of women's role the importance of such role for the development of the whole society.

Toyar in her research 'Women and campaign finance-the high price of politics' highlighted the importance of setting certain plans and strategies for the improvement of women's political status and active participation in their societies. She offered many strategies if smartly followed , women will be able to get involved and efficiently participate in politics. She added also that the way of applying such strategies will vary from one culture to another but at the end such strategies will be valuable and beneficial for the development of the whole society inside any country (Toyar, 2007, 1). In most of the countries, those strategies are mainly done or supervised by the government which is considered the executive and powerful tool for implementing decisions. Indeed, empowering women especially in a developing country like Egypt should be done through the government as it has all the facilities to use all the resources available in the country. Toyar believes that “ Women have to be ranked at the top of the party's list in order to have a good chance of winning” (Toyar, 2007, 2) in the political elections which means more power for such women .This means that in a country like Egypt in which the ruling party, The National Democratic Party NDP, is dominating the political and social arena there will be a good chance for its women members to express themselves and to have access to power and authority.

Allowing economic, media and political support for women running for power is really essential for the success of such women. Toyar added that providing fair media campaigns by allowing “free, equal broadcasting time on TV and radio” (Toyar, 2007, 2) for women running for elections or high positions from any partying any country is very important which shows the real democracy of this country. Thus, allocating the political parties resources for supporting women’s campaigns is a real asset for such women as a way for reaching power and high positions in the country.

According to Toyar, there are some crucial obstacles and facts that can really prevent women from being active participants in the political arena which means their inability to access power or occupy high positions in the country. First, "women have less money than men as well as less access to powerful and moneyed networks" (Toyar, 2007, 3). There is no doubt that the lack of financial abilities for women in general will be a real challenge for them to compete with men in the political campaigns. Second, Men are money donors in the campaigns while women are time donors (Toyar, 2007, 3). Women are most likely to give their time and share in campaigns which means more effort and dedication while men are capable financially in most of the developing countries which means more power for men their competition with women. This lead Toyar to come up with the third fact which is the importance of "providing women with early money for nomination campaigns (as) as key to increasing their potential for raising more money in electoral campaigns and increasing their numbers in elected seats" (Toyar, 2007, 3). Indeed, supporting women financially in reaching political and social power is a real encouragement for them to exert their effort for the improvement of their societies. Fourth, the inferior status of women's power and authority in their parties in most of the

countries is a real obstacle for women to express themselves and get higher positions (Toyar, 2007, 3). Fifth, "Data from the US shows that the incumbent candidate has a great advantage over challenger candidates. Given the worldwide gender gap in elected seats, most incumbents are male" (Toyar, 2007, 3). Toyar highlighted the existence of unfairness between men and women due to the gender gap which makes a real challenge for women all over the world to compete with men. Toyar then added that "establishing networks and planning political strategies to finance women's nomination and election campaigns" will increase the number of elected women (Toyar, 2007, 3). Thus, the electoral success for women within any society needs contributions and support from their society especially the government and those in power and have an effective authority.

Toyar suggested some recommendations for the success of women's political campaigns in any country. She mentioned that governments and political parties play a very vital role in empowering women politically. Also, women have certain obligations which should be done to achieve their goals and to occupy high positions in the country.

Concerning the government:

“[1] Adopt national campaign finance legislation that reflects international norms on women's equal participation in politics.

[2] Formulate national policies and plans with a gender-sensitive finance component to ensure participation and adequate training for women candidates and decision makers.

[3] Secure measures that favor women, including legislation on public funding, limits to contributions and expenditures in nomination / election campaigns, and quotas within the parties or cabinets.

[4] Establish incentives, where public funding is available, that are linked to the percentage of women candidates put forward by each party or elected to Parliament.

[5] Limit candidate expenditures, rather than parties' expenditures" (Toyar, 2007, 5).

Toyar mentioned her recommendations for the government for the political empowerment of women and she highlighted the importance of the quotas within the cabinet or the parties. Indeed, this point specifically is currently discussed in Egypt as a way of giving women their political rights and a trial for achieving equality between and women in their right to access power and to occupy high positions in the political arena. Dr Maha Mousa ,the head of the Arab Women Association , discussed the quota issue in a TV interview and she insisted on the importance of giving women the chance and the right to represent themselves and their political views freely.(TV interview).Dr Maha then added that the Arab Women Association is offering training and workshops for the Egyptian women to empower them politically and to have the ability to occupy high political positions and to be representatives in the Parliament.(TV interview). Dr Maha confirmed that women themselves should be motivated and willing to participate in the political field which was Toyar's opinion also concerning women's role .Alison Brody in his article 'Women in Politics: Do number counts' focused on the discussions that were held at the 11th forum of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) on the 17th of December 2008.Moreover, Brody highlighted the quota issue and presented the two sides of the debate in the forum concerning the quota system as a way for applying women's rights in any country. Brody mentioned that " one group argued that 'numbers counts' and that the presence of many women in the parliament has been a positive influence on the realization of women's rights (while) the other argued that it is

not numbers but the quality of the female Members of Parliament (MPs) and of their level of participation that counts” (Brody, 2008, 1) On the same forum one the women who was a member in the parliament claimed that “ history of activism in the women’s movements gives female political candidates the confidence, capacity and public profile to campaign for and win seats in parliament, and to take up office” (Brody, 2008, 1). However, in some other cases “women are helped in parliament by powerful male players exploiting a quota system that calls for a certain percentage of female candidates. These female candidates receive final support and other forms of assistance with their campaigns but, once elected , are expected to promote their party’s views rather than policies on gender equality.

Dr Azza Karam in her article ‘Women Parliamentarians in the Arab World’ claims that there are many arguments against the quota issue which is “by reserving seats for women, men are being denied the option of access to those seats. Another argument against quotas is that they may lead to a number of women occupying seats in parliament for example, when they are not necessarily adequately qualified. In other words, women were being allotted seats, not because of their capabilities, but because of their sex. Yet another criticism of quotas for women is that they work against them, since these women are then looked down upon, or not treated with equal respect by either their legislative colleagues, or their ‘constituencies’, since they are seen as the ‘token women’. In addition, quotas are seen as an anti-democratic measure because they pre-empt voters choices.” (Karam, 1999) .Thus , the quota issue is a controversial issue in the Arab countries such as Egypt because it will be implemented in a male dominated society which means the existence of discrimination between men and women.

Mr. M.E, a member at the NCW, stressed that the NCW is not differentiating between women as it is found for the sake of all the Egyptian women despite their religion, social standard or political views (Interviewee 1). Mr. M.E added that the NCW is offering help for the women running for parliament elections in the form of workshops or training sessions to raise their political awareness and skills . (Interviewee 1) So, and according to Mr. M.E, the NCW is not supporting women in their campaigns as this is the women's role to exert effort for winning the elections without the interference of the NCW in anything either financially or politically.(Interviewee 1) He stressed that the NCW is not by any means supporting the National Democratic Party in its views and they do not follow its views in setting their agenda or policies (Interviewee 1).

Toyar viewed women as being positive and their capabilities are really high if they desperately willing to achieve something precious concerning their rights within their societies (Toyar, 2007, 5) Toyar encouraged women to “[1] Make campaigns part of your agenda; [2] Strategize with other women across political parties on ways to secure more financial resources; [3] Partner with women's organizations to support women running for public office; [4] Monitor parties' campaign expenditures to be sure that women are getting their fair share of resources; [5] Document strategies and best practices by women for raising resources” (Toyar, 2007, 5).

Indeed, all of the above mentioned suggestions for empowering women should be considered if there is a real will to get their rights but the questions is, Can women follow all of the above suggestions alone or they need the help and support of a powerful authority which is the State itself or any other Party ?

Thus, and according to Toyar, Political parties have an important role in supporting women candidates to be part of the decision making process in any country (Toyar, 2007, 5)

Toyar added that Political Parties should:

“[1] Distribute resources to women and men candidates equally by making it part of political parties’ policies,[2] Ensure that women continue to receive equal support once they assume office, [3] Dedicate specific amount of resources for women’s affirmative action, [4] Establish a women’s caucus to empower women candidates and help ensure equal access to the parties’ resources” (Toyar, 2007, 5).

Being supported by a powerful authority in the country is very important for women seeking power but what really matters most is the necessity of the existence of a big scale of coordination among all women’s organizations within the same country. (Toyar, 2007, 2) This will be an indication of the unity of all women in the whole country towards empowering women in general even if they belong to another organization which is not supported by the powerful or the ruling party or may be opposing it.

There should be a real and concrete recognition for the important role played by women within a society as active participants in politics. Women can be beneficial for their societies if they have the chance to show their efforts. In some countries especially the developing ones, the political or social role played by women can be directed according to the interests of the party supporting them. This will lead to a very crucial question which is : What is the aim behind supporting and empowering Egyptian women and giving them the chance to occupy high positions or to be members in the Parliament? Also , what is the role of the State in empowering Egyptian women?

2.6 Egyptian Women and the role of the State :

Indeed, and according to Nazih Ayubi in his book 'Over-Stating the Arab State' ,most of the "Arab states are 'hard' states, and indeed many of them are 'fierce' states, few of them are really 'strong' states." (Ayubi, 1995). Ayubi claims that the reason behind this fact is that the Arab states "a) lack the infrastructural power [Mann,1986a] that enables states to penetrate society effectively through mechanism such as taxation for example ,b)it lacks ideological hegemonythat would enable it to forge a 'historic' social bloc that accepts the legitimacy of the ruling stratum."(Ayubi, 1995, 3). The state plays a very important role in the society and the economy and it is responsible for the development of the whole country. Furthermore, "the state apparatus [is] a distinct entity that might be distinguished but could not be separated from the society at large" (Ayubi, 5, 1995). Indeed, the state is "the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules." (Ayubi, 1995, 5) .Thus, the state controls the society and can either direct it according to the interest of the ruling regime or towards the interest and the development of the whole community which depends on who is ruling and policy he is adopting. This means the ruling power is dominating the whole community especially in the Arab countries in which most of them are considered authoritarian regimes. However , the state can not be isolated from the civil society because the state should work for the interest of the society in order to achieve its aim and to remain superior above the society .In such case the state will be able to implement its policies among all people and it will control the decision making process depending on its own views and ideologies. Culture has a role also in the decision making process of the ruling regime especially if the issue is directly related to the people. Moreover, Religion aspect has it role also in the "dynamics for political

equilibrium” (Ayubi, 1995, 18). Since the state is the powerful authority in the Arab countries, thus, it can affect the whole society by any ideologies or views it implement. Furthermore, the crucial role played by the state can affect the country economically , socially and politically. For example, the idea of women empowerment which is adopted by the states since the establishment of the NCW year 2000 has really affected the Egyptian society in which women started to call for their political , social and economic rights. Such sensitive and controversial issues need the support of a real power like the state in order to have existence in any society especially in the Arab countries. Indeed, and due to the state’s desire to control the society , the ruling regime has to compromise and sacrifice by allowing the elites to have authority and power in order to guarantee their support for the policy of State.(Ayubi, 1998, 195). Women elites can be granted certain power as well as men in order to guarantee their loyalty and support for the State. For some people, The NCW can be considered as an attempt from the State to collect the elite women to design policies that can serve the interest of the Egyptian women.

In fact, it was important for the researcher to conduct an interview with one of the NCW 30 preminent members to clarify the views and opinions of its members.

Ms Amina Shafik is one of the recruited 30 members of the NCW who occupied her position year 2000. Ms Amina is a Journalist and a member in El Tagamo’ Party which is an Egyptian opposition Party. She is so proud and happy of being a member at the NCW which she thinks is not contradicting at all with her position as a journalist at EL Ahram newspaper and as a member at El Tagamo’ party. She confirms that The NCW directly controlled by the president and it follows the State not the government. She added that the State allocated a fixed budget which is spent on the services offered by the NCW such as the micro credit loans. According to Ms Amina Shafik , the 30 NCW permanent members are considering

themselves as volunteers or honored by their positions as they do not take any salaries for their positions. They are selected directly by the Egyptian president and no women is allowed to join the NCW as it is not an NGO. However, the NCW employees and administration are getting salaries for their work. The role of the NCW is to discuss women's issues and rights with respect to the International standards and views. Ms Amina added that the NCW is responsible for following up with the international status of women's rights and link this to the Egyptian laws and if there is any contradiction with the Egyptian law, the NCW starts to suggest topics and issues that will improve the status of the Egyptian women with respect to women's rights and role in the Egyptian society. The NCW had also an effective role on the media discussing women's issues through offering workshops for improving the women's programs presented in the media to raise women's awareness about different issues such as the financial crises for example.

Ms Amina believes that the past attempts from the Egyptian women like Hoda Sharawy to achieve women's rights were individual highly appreciated efforts. Also, the NGOs specialized in women's issues are representing the ambitions of the civil society about achieving women's rights. On the other hand , and by establishing the NCW year 2000 , women's issues started to be put on the agenda of the state which means the support of the highest authority of the country and as a result more credibility will be found in achieving women's' rights. She added that the state has the power to empower women economically. Politically and socially by improving women's' education , health and social level. Ms Amina confirms that adding women's rights issue on the State agenda means an official declaration for the importance of women's' rights which were marginalized before establishing the NCW. For example, the quota issue was raised by the NCW which is considered a real achievement for the NCW towards empowering women politically. Moreover, one of the

priorities of the NCW is women's identity which was erased due to the fact of the Sunni marriage found in rural areas which means that many girls are born without birth certificates which will lead to the loss of their rights in the future. Ms Amina stated that in one of her visits to the rural areas , she discovered that seven thousand girls in this village only were born without birth certificates because of the Sunni marriage which means no official papers found which proof the marriage, and as a result the NCW took a decision to raise women's awareness in such areas and enabling such girls to get birth certificates to guarantee them their rights as Egyptian civilians. Such Sunni marriage prevails in Egyptian rural and among Bedwens. Thus , it is a real challenge for the NCW to reach those women and get them birth certificates and issue them official papers to guarantee their rights. Ms Amina believes that the State is the only power that can solve such problem because it is a real defect in the Egyptian society which needs a powerful authority capable of cooperating easily with the government without any obstacles. The problem is that such cases are found among the poor which means that such people will not be convinced easily to be interested to have official papers for their marriage and existence. Ms Amina considers herself luck to be a member at the NCW because it is a powerful authority that have credibility in achieving women's rights. She prefers her position at the NCW at this stage after her work at the Journalists syndicate which she considers a political work. Working for the NCW enabled Ms Amina to directly contact the people who are in real need fro help and support due to poverty, lack of education and health problems. According to Ms Amina, The NCW is highly efficient in reaching such people and offer them many services which will lead to empowering women by time. She added that in a male dominant society , the establishment of the NCW is a practical and brave step towards a real empowerment of Egyptian women socially, politically and economically.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction :

Many theories have attempted to explain social equality and gender issues. In this research thesis the Feminist Theory will be used as the theoretical framework by linking it with Citizenship, Empowerment and Gender. Feminist theory is based on the idea of feminism which is explained later. Feminism is a social movement from the woman's perspective which calls for gender equality. Also, feminist theory is considered an academic discipline in developing and analyzing feminism and the feminists' perspective (Ryan, 1996, 108). Moreover, it was a movement that was organized around the belief in the political, economic and social equality of the sexes (Maline Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic). Also, it tackles the theoretical analysis of gender inequality and the idea of promoting the interests and rights of woman. Thus, choosing such theory for this research was based on its importance as an "outgrowth of the general movement to empower women worldwide" (Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic). Although many scholars such as Lengermann & Niebrugge 1996, Smith 1979, and Alway 1995 have used a broader definition for feminist theory that focuses on gender, Chafetz defines the term according to four criteria: [a] "gender comprises a central focus or subject matter of the theory, [b] gender relations are viewed as a problem... feminist theory seeks to understand how gender is related to social inequalities, strains, and contradictions, [c] gender relations are not viewed as immutable, and [d] feminist theory can be used to challenge, counteract, or change a status quo that disadvantages or devalues women" (Chafetz, 98).

Indeed, many authors agreed upon the main goals of Feminism which are “to demonstrate the importance of women, to reveal that historically women have been subordinate to men and to bring about gender equity” (Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 4). Melanie, Greiter and Tursunovic added that Feminists fight for the “equality of women and argue that women should share equally in society’s opportunities and scarce resources” (Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 5). However, some other authors have other opinions concerning the feminism theory and idea of women empowerment. Indeed, Sherifa Zuhur in her article ' The Mixed Impact of Feminists Struggles in Egypt During the 1990s' focus on the theory of feminism and its implementation in the Arab world specially Egypt. Zuhur raised an important issue which is "whether feminism can be Egyptian in content or whether it is and must remain a Western import, thus reducing its legitimacy and acceptability." (Zuhur, 2001, 1) She argues in the same article if " feminism represent women's struggle against men or women's struggle with men for human rights" (Zuhur, 2001, 1). Zuhur highlights the fact of the existence of Islamists in Egypt who reject the Western views and concepts even if such principles are for the sake of women.

Zuhur claims that the " conflict sometimes violent between Islamists and the Egyptian government brought several women's rights issues to public attention such as veiling and the relationship of intellectual freedom to personal status laws, including divorce. One controversial Islamist tactic was to force a divorce via a third party lawsuit, on an unwilling couple to punish the husband. For example, Nasr Abu Zayd, a scholar whose writing appeared too secularist to his Islamist critics, faced such an attack, and left Egypt in response" (Zuhur, 2001, 2) . Zuhur added that the economic problems and inflation in

Egypt and the inability of the youth to get married lead to the Urfi marriage which is acceptable compared to the costs of the normal marriage and this means that " local customs combined with inflation necessitated legal reforms that impact women through feminists activists" (Zuhur, 2001, 3). In fact, Feminists have a role in their societies that may affect women and cause a real impact in the society. Deniz Kandiyoti argued that for some feminists "women's essentially different natures qualify them to be the custodians of a more environmentally friendly, less violent and more democratic world, these natures may be invoked with equal force to disqualify them from everything except domestic and child rearing roles" (Kandiyoti, 1996, 15).

Each Feminist described feminism according to her own perspectives and views. But in the beginning, the history of feminism should be highlighted in order to know its origins and hence its development. The American Feminism started in Seneca Falls, New York at 1848 by two feminists Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and ended up by the Women's Rights Convention (Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 8). The main goals of such convention is to focus on the religious, social and civil conditions of women.... And that women and men were created equal (Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 8). According to the authors, the supremacy of man in regards to divorce and education should be discussed in order to give women all their rights. (Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 9). As a result of this convention, women in the United States gain the right to vote in 1920. (Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 20). This was a practical and crucial step for women towards gaining their civil rights. On the other hand and in Germany, feminists such as Marianne Weber "were fighting for the right of women to engage in sexual

relations regardless of marital and legal considerations” (Melanie Lord,Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 11). Moreover, Weber believes that “women should be treated equally in the social institution of marriage, along with other social institutions.” (Melanie Lord,Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 12). Thus, many activists in many countries were aware of the importance of giving women their rights but each has his own views and priorities of women’s rights that should be gained first and their definition to the word Feminism vary according to each one’s perspectives and principles. Jone Johnson Lewis states in his article that “Not all feminist theorists have agreed about how to achieve that equality and what equality looks like” (Lewis, 2006, 2).As a result of the previously mentioned initiatives that were taken by many feminists in the past ,different views about feminism emerged such as Radical ,Cultural, Liberal, Marxist, Socialist and Postmodern Feminism. First, Radical Feminism emphasizes the social dominance of men and “ views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power primarily by gender, and as a result oppressing women by privileging men” (Lewis, 1). Moreover, “Radical Feminism opposes existing political and social organization in general because it is inherently tied to patriarchy” and it supports “cultural change that undermines patriarchy and associated hierarchical structures” (Lewis, 2006, 1). Thus, Radical Feminists do not trust the political or the social regime that ignores women’s role in the society and focuses on men’s role only. According to the Radical Feminists, this means that women are inferior which is not acceptable at all as women are part of this society and their capabilities and efforts should be considered and appreciated. Radical Feminism is against the idea of patriarchy but not against men themselves as they view the role of men is as important as women and that there should be equity between both

roles (Lewis, 2006, 1). Melanie Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic agree with Jone Lewis because they believe that men have all the social power and women are oppressed and this lead the Radical feminists to “ speak out against all social structures because they are created by men” .”(Maline Lord,Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 20).Thus, women’s suffering is a result of the unfair social structure that gives men more that what they really deserve and ignores women’s role which means women’s inferiority and oppression in the society. Andréa Dworkin was one of the Radical feminists who believes that “pornography is a tool by which men control, objectify, and subjugate women” (Lewis, 6).Dworkin was against pornography in which she believes that such “culture created by pornography supported sexual violence against women” (Lewis, 2006, 6). So, a serious action against such sexual violence should be taken and women should take their rights as victims in such cases. Second, Cultural Feminism is based on the idea of “essential differences” which means the biological differences between men and women that makes women superior and have high virtues than men (Lewis, 1).

Liberal Feminism is based on the idea of equality of opportunity among all people which should be guaranteed despite the gender.(Maline Lord,Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 14). Moreover, Liberal Feminists believes that gender bias is the main reason of inequality which means that there is an urgent need for a social change “through the construction of legislation and regulation of employment practices” (Maline Lord,Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 14).Furthermore, Dr Deniz Kandiyoti in her book ‘Gendering the Middle East’ added that “the liberal feminist approach, with its emphasis on removing obstacles to gender equality through changes in legislation, improving access to education and paid employment and combating sexist attitudes was

immediately intelligible and relatively easy to adopt to local conditions” (Kandiyoti, 1996, 13) . Kandiyoti believes that “the strong identification of cultural authenticity with Islam has meant that feminist discourse could only legitimately proceed in two directions: either denying that Islamic practices are necessarily oppressive or asserting that oppressive practices are not necessarily Islamic” (Kandiyoti, 1996, 9) .

In fact, in some countries, the social structure is biased to men which deny women in some cases their rights to occupy certain jobs. Thus, Liberal Feminists are totally against this perspective because they view it as great obstacle towards equality. The Marxist Feminism is near from Liberal Feminism concerning the idea of Labor and job opportunities in which male are dominant in the labor field leaving just trivial chances for women to occupy. Marxist Feminists believes that men are considered the “Bourgeoisie” and women are viewed as the “Proletariat” (Maline Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 16). The Marxist feminists claims that the unfair division of the labor opportunities among men and women is the main cause of the superiority of men.

Diane Singerman highlighted the Liberal and Marxist perspectives in which " the family has been excluded from predominate understandings of civil society in Western political discourse" (Singerman, 2008, 3). Singerman argues that the Liberal idea of the state's non intervention in the private domain which is the family will "reinforces existing inequalities" within this private domain (Singerman, 2008. 3). She added that "personal and family life is politically regulated by the state ... and naturalized by dominant ideological constructions" (Singerman, 2008, 3). Singerman added that "the feminist critique of a naturalized understanding of the family recognized the inequalities and the relationships of power that ordered the domestic realm while pointing out in the historical

record how they were treated as though they did not really exist. As Seyla Benhabib has argued, "All struggles against oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered private, non public, and non political issues as matters of public concern, as issues of justice, as sites of power" (1992: 84) Activists transformed what were considered private matters of the good life (affection, childrearing, the division of Labor) "into public issues of justice , by thematizing the asymmetrical power relations on which the sexual division of labor between genders has rested"(Benhabib 1992: 92). " (Singerman, 2008, 3) . Singerman believes that some movements used the previous concept to "politicize issues, gain sympathizers, and reshapes politics " according to their own views and interests" (Singerman, 2008, 3).

Socialist Feminists refer the oppression of women and their inferior position to their work in the economy and the family. (Maline Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 21) Socialist Feminists believe that the “class-based capitalism” is the main reason for the inferior position of women.(Maline Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 21) they argue that more emphasis should be given to women as households and equal opportunities should be available for women at work. Maline Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo Tursunovic, 21). Those feminists believe that women’s role as households is as important and crucial as their role at work and such roles should be highlighted and appreciated by men.

Postmodern Feminists are very sophisticated and have different views than other Feminists. They believe that the role of women is part of the global economic world and that “looking to the past no longer applies” . Maline Lord, Anthony Greiter and Zuflo

Tursunovic, 24) .Thus, due to the modern era that we live in ,women should be adapted to the new technology because women's role is so crucial as being part of the society.

Diane Singerman in her article ' Restoring the Family to Civil Society: Lessons from Egypt' claims that "Postmodern theorists demonstrate the ways in which power has been naturalized within the family and the domestic realm so that the subordinate role, unpaid labor, and dependent status of women became associated with conscious and unconscious characteristics of the good wife and mother" (Singerman, 2008, 2).

Indeed, there are many Feminists who dedicated their lives to gender studies in order to come up with ideas that will help to empower women and improve their status in the society. Those writers are considered as key writers about the Feminist Theory. Moreover, most of those feminists agreed on the inferior role of women in the society and their should be some social changes in order to empower women by giving them their social, economic and political rights. The implementation of empowerment here vary from one society to another according to its culture, norms and traditions but the definition is the same which is seeking the rights and equality.

Sherifa Zuhur in her article ' Women and Empowerment in the Arab World ' argues that the term Empowerment is a " complex and relative notion that implies a scale of power , and a linear progression from one end of that scale to another. One could debate whether the purpose of social welfare policies are to empower citizens, women among them, or whether they are intended to give impression of empowerment, thereby legitimizing nation-states, international organizations or other actors." (Zuhur, 2003, 1). Zuhur is highlighting the real purpose behind the existence of some NGOs that claim the empowerment of women as a main target. Zuhur believes that the low income and limited

access to essential services will lead to the lack of basic and main rights and power for men and women as citizens (Zuhur, 2003, 1). The writer then added that "women are by no means globally empowered" because women are weak politically and economically which are the main components of empowerment (Zuhur, 2003, 1). Zuhur states that one third of women all over the world are subjected to violence all over the world not only in the Arab world and that " two million girls under the age of 15 are forced into the sex trade each year, and about twice as many women as men are affected with HIV in Africa." (Zuhur, 2003, 1) . Zuhur totally supports the importance of the study of gender because there is " an increased awareness of gender as a category of power and status" (Zuhur, 2003, 1) According to Zuhur ,empowerment and the study of gender combined with other social phenomena "revolutionized the study of power " in the society (Zuhur, 2003, 1).

Indeed, women's empowerment "extends beyond acts and attitudes of governments" as women should be aware of their economic rights such as possessing a property, bodily rights such as the right to control their health and fertility and legal rights such as hiring or educational preferences. (Zuhur, 2003, 1). Thus, and according to these believes women started to think about gaining their rights and expressing themselves through NGOs.

Betty Friedan who was a very active feminist and the first president and the founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW) (Lewis, 2006, 6). She was also the organizer of the "Equal Rights Amendment" and she did not find any problem to oppose some feminists who were taking positions that would make it difficult for the "mainstream" women and men to identify with feminism (Lewis, 2006, 6). Thus, Friedan

was a feminist who calls for women's empowerment specially the "educated housewives" and encourages them to ask for their rights (Lewis, 2006, 6). So, Friedan focused mainly on the social rights together with the political rights of women. Gloria Steinem was a feminist who was a "middle class oriented" but she was also "an advocate for the Equal Rights Amendment" (Lewis, 2006, 6). Steinem was also an advocate for the women's empowerment politically through her efforts in the "National Women's Political Caucus" (Lewis, 2006, 6). Thus, Feminists theorists are giving concern to the idea of empowering women politically, socially and economically through equality and freedom.

Batilwala and Dhanraj claims in their article 'Gender Myths That Instrumentalize Women' that they are "not suggesting that economic empowerment programmes for women are either disempowering or unmitigated failures" and that their "purpose, rather, is to highlight the manner in which such interventions are being designed and delivered in increasingly disempowering ways, instrumentalizing poor women, and being distorted to serve other agendas" (Batilwala and Dhanraj, 2004, 32). Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead states in their article 'Gender Myths and Feminist Fables: The Struggle for interpretive Power in Gender and Development' that there is a "gap between professed intention and actual practice in policies and programmes" (Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2007, 1). However and in the same article, authors believes that some feminists may raise different slogans such as "poverty reduction, empowerment, rights, exclusion and citizenship" and take the idea seriously by following "tactical moves to bring about policies that can change women's lives for the better" (Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2007, 3). Some institutions adopt certain beliefs or ideologies and seek the

support of the UN or other international NGO's such as OXFAM and work under their umbrella in issues concerning gender and development as a legitimate way to transfer certain ideology to their societies (Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2007, 4).

Feminist movements mainly rely on human rights to seek help because they considered the law as a rescue from the violence they are subjected to. Sally Engle Merry in her article 'Rights Talk and The Experience of Law :Implementing Women's Rights to Protection from Violence' states that one needs more experience in the legal system in order to adopt the "rights consciousness" (Merry, 2003, 343). Individuals should be aware of their rights and how to practice and implement them correctly. Thus, women will not be victims of violence anymore and they will have the ability to recognize their "problems as an offense that violate (their) rights, rather than as a burden of everyday married life" (Merry, 2003, 346). Merry believes that women should be aware of being citizens which means that they can seek protection from their state which is obligated to defend them against any violence. According to Merry, women are now aware of their private sphere and the ability of the state to interfere in it to defend them from any violence. Merry claims that "Gendered subjectivity is redefined by doing legal activities: through acting as a legally entitled subject in the context of these injuries. As women victimized by violence call the police, walk into courtrooms, fill out forms requesting orders, tell their stories of violence and victimization in forms and in response to official queries, they enact a different self. Such performances reshape the way these women think about themselves and the relationship between their intimate social worlds and the law" (Merry, 2003, 352).

In her article 'Constructing a Global Law Violence against Women and the Human Rights system' Sally Engle Merry states that the UN is always interested in women's issues more concern is given to women's rights which lead to the appearance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW "articulates a vision of women's equal protection from discrimination and addresses gender based violence as a form of discrimination" (Merry, 941). Thus, the international organizations and NGOs plays a crucial and a very important role concerning human rights to the extent that the CEDAW now is considered a "global system of law" that has an "influence over national and local system of laws" (Merry, 2003, 943).

Sondra Hale in her article 'Sudanese Women and Revolutionary Parties the Wing of the Patriarch' believes that women move towards gender equality and emancipation by resisting the oppression they face (Hale, 1986, 25). She claims that "Third World women have far less autonomy than men" and this justifies the existence of the potential for a mass movement to resist oppression and inequality (Hale, 1986, 28). Hale highlights the importance of this mass movement which is based on the "traditional forms" which will create resistance which will lead to "a totally transformed society" in Sudan (Hale, 1986, 29).

Sondra Hale in her article 'The Iranian Paradox' gives another example of the idea of women's emancipation in a country like Iran before and after the Iranian revolution and she highlighted the effect of Western culture and Western Feminism on the Iranian women. Hale believes that the veiled Iranian women were fighting during the Iranian Revolution against the oppression of the Shah and searching for their freedom. Hale

argues that women activists had a role and they were “conscious actors” during the Khomeini’s Islamic Republic.(Hale, 1986, 1).Hale mentioned the “Islamic Challenge” in which Islam calls “for giving “full Islamic equality to men and women”, espousing the doctrine that privilege should be based on piety and not on sex or class” (Hale, 1986, 2). Hale added that the “Koran improved women’s conditions limiting men’s number of wives to four, stating that all wives must be well and equally treated, giving women and children a set share in inheritance, making killing women a crime equal to that of killing men” (Hale, 1986, 1). Hale believes that the Iranian women were totally affected by Western Feminism and influenced to the extent that they “didn’t try to rationalize their emancipation by any appeal to a reinterpretation of Islamic doctrine” and they fought “violently and nonviolently on three fronts: against foreign rule, tyranny of the Shahs and the conservatism of the clergy” (Hale, 1986, 2). Indeed, the Iranian women were torn between the Western Feminism with all its freedom and liberation and considering women as sex objects especially during the Shahs era with all of its corruption , and the conservative era of Khomeini. Thus, the Iranian women were trying to achieve their freedom and rights starting form the revolution 1978.

Indeed, sometimes the private sphere which is the home can help in strengthening women in the public sphere. Moreover, women have certain characteristics at home which really help them to cope outside home efficiently and easily. Partha Chatterjee in her article ‘Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India’ believes that “the new construct of “women” standing as a sign for “nation, namely, the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity, and so on. This spirituality did not, as we have seen, impede the chances of the woman moving out of the

physical confines of the home; on the contrary, it facilitated it, making it possible for her to go out into the world under conditions that would not threaten her femininity. In fact, the image of woman as goddess or mother served to erase her sexuality in the world outside the home.” (Chaterjee, 1989, 630) In this case , women are controlled by a certain responsibilities that is so special for them as representatives of the private sphere and due to their spirituality and purity that differentiates the from men who act differently due to their influence by the material world. Thus women have to act differently in the public sphere. Chaterjee believes that “the new patriarchy advocated by nationalism conferred upon women the honor of a new social responsibility, and by associating the task of female emancipation with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new, and yet entirely legitimate subordination” (Chaterjee, 1989, 629).

According to Dr Azza Karam in her book ‘Women, Islamisms and the State’, there are three different types of Feminism in Egypt which are Islamist, Secular and Muslim Feminisms.(Karam, 1998, 284).Islamists Feminists lies within a religious framework and they believe that a balanced society should not be based on competition between sexes but rather based on “ recognition and compatibility”.(Karam, 1998, 284). Karam added that Secular Feminists follow the international standards of Human Rights and keep away from Religion aspects. Then Karam moved to the third type are Muslim Feminists who believe that the idea of equality between sexes is found in Quraan and Sunna.(Karam, 1998, 284).Karam discussed the main issue that the three groups agree upon but also she highlights the main differences between them “with regard to political convictions, social backgrounds, and perceptions of the causes and nature of women's oppression and the

best means available to counter it” (Karam, 1998, 284). Karam elaborated the concepts and views of each group in order to highlight the different feminist ideologies in Egypt and to show that if all these groups share common target and fight for common cause, the status of Egyptian women would be better but if not, then women will be continuously oppressed without any improvement for their status in the society. In fact, the Egyptian Law which is secular and European in most of its details follows the French law, and part of it which is related to marriage, paternity disputes, child custody and divorce is set according to Shari’ a and Islamic regulations.

Indeed, Amira Sonbol in her article ‘Women in Shari’ a Courts: A Historical And Methodological Discussion’ states that “ the modern state created a multi-court system in which personal status and family were itemized under “religious” law and the selections of codes compiled by committees was confined to the Hanafi code resorting to the other madhhabs only when it suited the committee.” (Sonbol, 2004, 55) As a result of that the “ state-society relations , the logic and function of the law and the historical role premodern Shari’ a courts were disregarded” (Sonbol, 2004, 56).

Moreover, Lama Abu Odeh stated that “the question of identity was often framed as a debate over the "character" of Egyptian law, asking: Should law in Egypt be reconstructed to re-acquire its lost Islamic identity, or should it remain European and secular?” (Abu Odeh, 2004, 1). The idea of being secular makes the Egyptian law lack the Islamic regulations that guarantee women their rights and dignity. According to Abu Odeh, this secular Egyptian legal system led to the “phenomenon of cultural displacement” in Egypt which was one of the main causes for the Liberal feminists to ask

for a balanced religious/secular legal system in Egypt (Abu Odeh, 2004, 1). Abu Odeh argued this point because the complete secularization of the Egyptian law will never be accepted by the Egyptian conservative Ulama and would work against the social stability in Egypt. Actually, Egypt is a Muslim country and this must be taken into consideration in tackling legal issues, especially those related to Family law and the Feminists attempts to reform it.

An argument was made by some Egyptian feminists and Islamized liberal male elites who called for the sacrifice of secularism in the Egyptian legal system for the sake of liberal feminism. Abu Odeh shows the Liberal male elites and some Egyptian feminists who are supporting the idea of Islamizing the Egyptian law to avoid the defects in the secular part of the law that may be against the interest and stability of the Egyptian families. (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1) Moreover, the agenda of this new Feminist group is to Islamize the Egyptian legal system in order to avoid any traps that may exist due to the secular parts in the Egyptian law. (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1) . Some Islamists Feminists argue that sticking to a one certain culture and religion in creating the legal system of any country will lead to the stability and balance of its legal system and avoid any adversary or objecting groups that may ask for changes in the law according to their own concepts, beliefs and interests. They also believe that there is no harm in defending one's interests or beliefs as long as those interests and beliefs are not against the culture, religion and norms of the society. So, being legal and legitimate are not the only two aspects in defending the interests of any group, but other aspects should be considered because those interests are not personal in such a case; however they will be applied to the public and the whole community who must accept such beliefs. Furthermore, preserving the

identity of any culture or country comes from the respect of its legal system by the local and international communities. The word “identity” here means the sense of belonging to a certain culture, traditions, norms, religion, values and beliefs. For example, in talking about one's Arab identity, this means that he belongs to a certain culture and set of beliefs, traditions and norms that prevail in the Arab communities in general.

Abu Odeh claims that the debates that exist on the identity of the Egyptian legal system and gender have led to the split of the Egyptian society to various political and social forces. (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 2) Moreover, “Mainstream Egyptian feminism is one such social force, and its destiny has been intricately related to the way these twin struggles have unfolded” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 2). Indeed, Abu Odeh’s opinion ensures that splitting the integrity of the Egyptian society through the interference of foreign concepts and principles into the Egyptian legal system is a real disaster because it will affect the Egyptian community directly in critical social issues such as conflicts.

Concerning gender struggles and conflicts, the foreign involved law which is totally apart from the Egyptian culture and identity will be considered as a way to solve such conflicts. The social aspect is tackled here, which is the consequences of applying a secular legal system in Egypt. This part is really important to be mentioned because it is related to the NCW concepts which affect the Egyptian women and this is the thesis topic.

In 1999 there were about 14,000 NGOs dealing with women's issues and projects in Egypt in which the government disempowered most of them fearing that they might affect the stability of the society due to the unstable socio-religious mood at that time (Zuhur, 2001, 3). Due to the international pressure represented in the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the Egyptian government allowed some NGOs to resume their

activities through the GONGOs [government created non-governmental organizations] (Zuhur, 2001, 3). Then, the National Council For Women [NCW] was established in March 2000 under the direct control of the president with Ms Suzane Mubarak as president (Zuhur, 2001, 3). The NCW has adopted some views which are rejected by the Islamists in Egypt. Zuhur views the situation in Egypt as very complicated because "the state has supported certain legal reforms for women but this has been limited. It permits NGOs, including those with feminist agenda, but sometimes pressures or suspends them" (Zuhur, 2001, 13).

In Egypt, there is an Islamist Feminism which "upholds transactional reciprocity [husbands maintain and wives obey] as the basis of healthy gender relations, provided that men pursue both their powers over women and their responsibilities towards them conscientiously and consistent with God's commands" (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 3). Moreover, and according to the Islamists Feminists the trial of women to be equal to men placed women in humiliating and unfair situations as being together in the labor market which means being together also in transportation for example (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 3). The liberal mainstream Egyptian feminists argue that the previously mentioned concepts are considered a real danger as it is a formal and unbalanced inequality structure (Abu-Odeh, 3). However, Abu Odeh believes that the danger lies in the abuse of Muslim men of their religious powers and responsibilities. Abu Odeh added that the real problem can be created "when a woman tries to "cross-over" to the man's world to assume powers and responsibilities that are rightly his" (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 3).

The issue here is not being against women's work at all but being subjected to such humiliating situations sometimes urges the women to think about their priorities in life

and the right way to get their rights without considering the issue as a conflict with men. Furthermore, equal division of roles in life according to women and men's nature and abilities is really crucial. On the other hand, mixing beliefs is very dangerous as there is a difference between taking the rights according to religion, culture and norms, and following any foreign stream of thoughts without smartly applying it to the culture and religion of the same society.

Indeed, the Egyptian society and law is affected by two mainstreams: first, the secular feminists who are advocates for splitting between women's equality and the religion aspect. Women's freedom and equality are viewed as restricted and limited aspects in the Islamic perspective. However, Freedom in Islam means the ability to take decisions and act freely in everything in our lives but under the umbrella of the Islamic laws and without violating the Islamic regulations. Also, gender equality is found in Islam which means that Islamic law guarantees women all of their rights but by preserving their dignity. Thus, splitting between women's equality and religion is totally unfair because all of women's rights are guaranteed in Islamic law and rules. Abu Odeh claims that the Egyptian male elites are supporting such concepts which is obviously shown in the Supreme Constitutional Court's decisions such as banning the veil .(Abu-Odeh, 2004, 3) .Indeed, the veil is also banned in part of the Public sector such as TV and the ministry of Foreign affairs and many other companies especially those which are dealing with foreigners. This is real shame for a Muslim country declaring its support for freedom and democracy. So, where is freedom in banning the veil. It is a personal decision and freedom. That's why such opinions are presented and analyzed in order to show different opinions. Second, is adopted by the liberal feminism advocates which

calls for following the West particularly in their legal concepts such as consent, autonomy and equality (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 3).

The idea of power for national organizations such as the NCW is very important to the extent that some scholars think that theories such as the Legal theory is considered as an “ideological cover for decisions governed by power” (Scheppele, 1994, 390). Furthermore, the power of the NCW as being an authorized organization lead to the appearance of new laws which affect the Egyptian society negatively to some extent such as El Khol3 law which is abused by some women just to get rid of their husbands without having an accepted or logical reason for that and this of course will lead to the disturbance in the society. Indeed, legitimizing such critical laws should be based on detailed and critical analysis from experts and professionals to the Egyptian society in order to understand the consequences and the defects that can be fixed through creating new laws.

Indeed, to link the research’s scope of investigation with the latter categorization, it is significant to emphasis that the scope of this thesis is interested in the part of the feminist theory that explains the relationship between gender and various social, economic and political processes.

According to the above, some scholars are interested in investigating the feminist studies; among those scholars is Mary Eagleton, who has stressed that the majority of last studies that tackled feminist approaches have “created a literary history which is both selective and schematic” (Eagleton, 1996, 1). She suggests that we should be more critically aware of “what we are constructing, how we are constructing it and of the political consequences of those constructs” (Eagleton, 1996, 1). She further added three

critical modes which might help in enriching and benefit the field: [1] “a greater awareness of institutional contexts, [2] a concern with empirical details, and [3] an ongoing analysis of the cultural and political significance of feminist practice” (Eagleton, 1996, 1).

Having pinpointed the latter point, it is of great importance to stress that the scope of this thesis aims in integrating “an awareness of the institutional context” (Eagleton, 1996, 1) that is represented in assessing NCW and its role in empowering Egyptian women, which is a scope of investigation that some scholars had called to tackle it. The latter point can be considered an aspect which gives significant weight to the topic under investigation.

Further, Eagleton added that Feminists should exert more effort in placing everything in its appropriate place according to their target but they should consider the process of “selecting, ordering, prioritizing” ideas and thoughts in their plans in order to be “controlling and deeply ideological” (Eagleton, 1996, 5). Thus, selecting the issues that serves women’s interests should be ordered according to priority depending on the culture and people themselves. Moreover, considering the previous aspects will give more credibility to the Feminist advocates’ .Indeed, the NCW should consider the previous factors in its agenda and keep aside their own interests in order to reach consensus of the people.

The newest trend in feminist theorizing during the late twentieth century is the “intersection of race, class and gender; in fact, the central contention of this emerging focus is that the three forms of oppression are not separate and additive, but interactive and multiplicative in their effects” (Chafetz, 1997, 101).

Furthermore, till the end of the last decade, “very little theory has been produced on the topic; the growing literature remains overwhelmingly descriptive, and too often descriptive of a sample of women of only one race and class, or even specific occupation.” (Chafetz, 1997, 101)

In light of the above it is important to reemphasize that the scope of this thesis aims to integrate a various segments of Egyptian women as to comprehensively address the issue under investigation.

3.2.1 Citizenship:

Indeed, linking between Feminism and Citizenship is very logical because both feminists’ theorists and citizenship theorists were interested in the same issues such as the “state ,the welfare system, social policy , law and democracy. Often they even posed the same questions in these projects; questions such as how do we combine the common good with respect for group difference? ” (Voet, 1998, 8) Furthermore, both theorists have same hope and focus on “concepts of freedom ,political equality ,justice and democracy.” (Voet, 1998, 8) Actually , both theorists agree upon the real definition of citizenship which is “membership, identity, values and rights” (Abowitz, 2006, 653) Hege Skjeie and Birte Siim in their article ‘Scandinavian Feminists Debates and Citizenship’ ensures that from a gender perspective citizenship is very essential and they gave an example about Scandinavia .

Both authors added that the interpretation “of political developments over the last thirty years is that there has been a change in citizenship in Scandinavia to include women as active citizens” (Skjeie and Siim, 2000, 346). This is real evidence of the crucial role that

women can play in the political development of any country and that their role should be considered in the transition towards democracy which will lead to development .

Moreover, focusing on the idea of citizenship as it is “ a process and not just an outcome , in which the struggle to gain new rights and to give substance to existing ones is seen as being as important as the substance of those rights” (Lister, 1997, 5). The NCW is exerting a lot of effort in enhancing the idea of women citizenship in Egypt. Moreover, and due to these efforts a “ new political and social spaces have opened up, enabling women to construct challenges to the prevailing gendered relations of power.” (Einhorn, 2006, 15). In addition, the NCW is adopting new gender programs that contribute to “the formulation of alternative discourses and political strategies” that will guarantee women their rights of citizenship . Citizenship means a person should have the right to vote and to the political representation in the Parliament and to acquire high positions in the country. Furthermore, citizenship is based on the equal rights of citizenship for men and women based on “ equal protection under the law , equal rights in the family and in all areas of public life” (Lister, 1997, 5) The NCW was working hard to get the Egyptian women a certain quota in the parliament and they succeeded to achieve the target quota.

Thus, for achieving a fundamental and genuine citizenship for women will be not be guaranteed unless there is a real democracy. Women should have all the rights as men in voting and political representation and that was the reason behind offering sessions and workshops for women at the NCW to improve their political skills. The policy of the NCW concerning women aims to eliminate the “deep seated inequalities that still undermine many of their citizenship rights and particularly those of minority group

women” (Lister, 1997, 6). Indeed, many Egyptian women especially the poor are deprived from their rights and this was the main concern of the NCW to get those women all their rights as citizens as real way towards democracy. Moreover, “Democracies open up the possibility of political participation to all adult citizens .Because full participation requires one to be citizen, citizenship is considered sufficiently important for access to it to be subject to s very particular legal conditions” (Stevens, 2007, 21). Therefore, a real democracy is always attached to complete implementation of citizenship in any society.

Nira Yuval Davis in her article ‘Women, Citizenship and Difference’ argued that studying citizenship as a perspective should “consider the issue of women’s citizenship not only by contrast to that of men, but also in relation to women’s affiliation to dominant or subordinate groups, their ethnicity, origin and urban or rural residence” (Davis, 1997, 4). Thus , as members in the society , women should mingle with their society despite being rural or urban residence. According to Davis, women should be active participants in their society which is one of their rights as citizens.

Citizenship is not only a notion for the NCW, however its policy confirms that there should be an “emphasis on the notion of social struggles as the central motor of the drive for citizenship” (Lister, 1997, 4). The NCW gives more concern to the “active political citizenship” for women as an indication for “ representative democracies” (Lister, 1997, 2).

Indeed, democracy is term that is used sometimes by the state representatives as if it their own form , however, " democracy is not simply a form of government ;it is also a cultural and intellectual tradition" . (Ayubi, 1995, 397) .Thus , the culture and traditions

of any country can not be excluded for the state's agenda and policy towards a democracy transition.

Since, one of the main concerns of the NCW is based on giving women all their rights as citizens ,so, the researcher found it important to focus on the concept of citizenship as part of the theoretical framework for the thesis.

3.2.2 Empowerment:

One of the important concepts to be discussed by the researcher is women's empowerment because it one of the concepts adopted by the NCW. Azza Karam in her article 'Women Parliamentarians in the Arab World' argued that Poverty and Illiteracy are the main challenges which face women in the Arab world which impact their economic and political empowerment.(Karam, 1999). She added also that men in the Arab world "Keep and control the sources of wealth" which means that women will be economically dependent on men.(Karam, 1999).All of these challenges lead some organizations such as the NCW adopt certain policies that enable women to be independent and encourage women for more political participation.

Indeed, empowering women can be done economically through the micro credits which are given to women by the NCW and some NGOs in Egypt. The NCW offers micro credits for the poor women to enable them to survive but such micro credits are give after full investigation on the woman and her social status to make sure that she really deserve this loan. Through these loans, the NCW is aiming to empower women economically which will lead to the equality between men and women as women will be able to share the responsibility with men. Rekha Datta in her article 'from Development to Empowerment: The Self –Employed Women's Association in India 'ensures the

importance of empowering women economically by providing various services such as micro credits. Datta highlighted the role of international organizations in empowering women because such aim can not be done only by local governments, however international organizations should play a certain role in supporting such local governments . Datta added “indigenous groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations such as the United Nations have been influential in evaluating women’s status and making recommendations to governments about addressing empowerment strategies and alleviating gender discrimination at all levels” (Datta, 2003, 353). Actually, poverty alleviation is done through the microcredits provided to women who are households which is a kind of economic empowerment for women because in such case means “enabling women to increase their control of resources and decision making capacity” (Datta, 2003, 353). When a woman has economic power, she will be able to take vital decisions in her life .Francois Hainard and Christine Verschuur claim in their article that the gender issue will be taken beyond that of sex to be considered as indicator of power (Hainard and Verschuur, 2001, 33). Both authors added that “when the United Nations launched its Decade for Women , have enabled women to emerge from the shadows” (Hainard and Verschuur, 2001, 33). Indeed, women empowerment as a process should be studied and linked to an existing operational Model which can be a proof to be “vital form of influence for leaders attempting to induce and manage organizational change” (Conger and Kanungo, 1998, 480). As a result , the researcher found it beneficial to focus on studying the economic empowerment of women with respect to the NCW as model that implement such empowerment strategy through its agenda. In fact, the NCW is adopting certain strategy

to “empower women and upgrade their political skills through a series of training programs, to create funds for supporting their campaigns, or to raise awareness about their role in the voting process” (Ezzat, 2007, 188). According to Dr Heba Ezzat in her article ‘ On the Future of Women and Politics in the Arab World’, “ the process of empowering women politically has to go hand in hand with democratization and disempowerment of the authoritarian regimes of the region” (Ezzat, 2007, 188). This means that the role of the State in empowering women can never be denied. However, Nazih Ayubi in his book 'Overstating the Arab State ' argues that although there are political and economic improvements and transformations in the Arab world but " the state remained 'alien' in relation to society" (Ayubi, 1995, 23) . Ayubi added that the "Arab state is all body and muscle but with little spirit and mind and with no theory of Liberty" (Ayubi, 1995, 22) . According to Ayubi, the political transformation and improvement is not based on theory , however it is " tied to the practices of the bourgeoisie " (Ayubi, 23) . Those bourgeoisie are the elites who are in power in most of the Arab countries. Volker Perthes in her book ' Arab Elites Negotiating the Politics of Change' agreed with Ayubi that the Elites in the Arab Countries have " political influence and power in that they make strategic decisions or participate in decision making on a national level, contribute to defining political norms and values (including definition of "natural interests "), and directly influence political discourse on strategic issues." (Perthes, 2004, 5) . However, Dr Azza Karam in her article ‘Women Parliamentarians in the Arab World’ argued that religion and culture also have obvious effect on empowering women politically in the Arab world. She added that “Some viewpoints maintain that the cultures of the Arab world, particularly those which identify themselves with Islam, are the root cause of

women's low political representation.” .(Karam, 1999). Furthermore, empowering women economically and politically in the Arab world can be done through certain associations or organizations , however such NGOs face many obstacles and restrictions and governmental control which prevent them from them from working on “‘political’ issues, to having their finances curtailed and each decision subject to approval by a board which, according to legal stipulations, includes a government official or representative”(Karam,1999).Thus, the lack of democracy and freedom of expression lead to a difficulty in the process of empowering women.

3.2.3 Gender :

Actually, “Gender is a prominent and as compelling as race , class, or ethnicity and has fateful consequences in every human society” (Winston and Bane, 1993).

Dr Deniz Kandiyoti in her book ‘Gendering the Middle East’ believes that “the discourse of modernization underpinned many of the constructions of gender and nation” (Kandiyoti, 1996, 92). She added that modernizers considered women as “the vehicles and objects of civilization”. (Kandiyoti, 1996, 93).

Indeed, and from a feminist's perspective, political development is viewed as gendered and have certain effects on women. (Charles and Hintjens, 1998, 1) Actually, “the word development is highly politicized” (Staudt, 2008, 136). This means that development can be taken as tool to achieve political aims. This is a question that can be raised by the researcher which is , are the members of the NCW used as tools for the state to control Egyptian women or they are working to achieve their own goals ?

Women as members in the society can never be ignored as a active members in the development process of any country. Charles and Hintjens highlighted the importance of

gender studies and their relation to nation states as a base for the national identity. (Charles and Hintjens, 1998, 2) There should be an equality between men and women in which both should be treated equally by the state as they both follow the same identity equal social , economic and political rights should be guaranteed for both men and women without any discrimination based on gender. Georgia Duerst – Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly in their book ‘ Gender Power , Leadership and Governance’ claims that “ gender is not necessarily tied to a human body; rather it is rooted in a generally coherent set of beliefs” (Kelly & Lahti, 1995, 16) They believe that “ freeing our notions of gender from biological sex opens new avenues of thought about gender” (Kelly & Lahti, 1995, 16). Thus , the point here is that gender power as an ideology can be considered as a set of beliefs especially the idea of organizing power in the society (Kelly & Lahti, 1995, 16). This is the main reason that make the researcher tackles the gender issue in order to explore some questions such as “does the sexual integration of our political institutions lead to a greater representation of women’s interests?” (Kelly & Lahti, 1995, 93). In fact , studying the policy and agenda of the NCW as national organization can give answers to such questions. Moreover, nowadays, women’s organizations such as the NCW are “increasingly challenge the power and scope of traditional political institutions within the state and lobby international agencies to reinterpret development policies.”(Tinker, 1999, 88).

The NCW is supporting women’s rights through creating laws such as EL Kol’ law. Moreover, and “while Muslim governments borrowed heavily from the institutions of the West in political, economic and legal development, Muslim family law generally was not replaced by western civil codes but was reformed through legislation that affected laws of

marriage, divorce , custody and inheritance” (Ezzat, 2007, 236). This new family law is one of the achievements of the NCW for supporting women through law. The NCW are always declaring that they are not feminists and as a result they take form the Islamic law what suits the Egyptian culture in order to be accepted in the Egyptian society such as El Khol’ law. So , religion here is taken as a support for achieving a social empowerment for women. Lawrence Rosen in his book ‘ Law and Culture’ claims that “ a good example of the relation of law and custom to culture practice may be found in Islamic law” (Rosen, 2006, 37).So, Islamic law was the key used by NCW members to come up with new legislations that empower women socially supported by Islam as part of the Egyptian culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

To gain a rich insight of the research questions and hypotheses, both a quantitative research method is combined with a qualitative. For elaboration, the researcher is triangulating a survey research as a quantitative research approach along with intensive interviews, which is a type of qualitative research methods.

3.1 The Research Sample and Sampling Method

The population of this research will be Egyptian women with different social standards and different level of education. The research sample will integrate 100 Egyptian women who have dealt with, or are currently dealing with the NCW. The sampling method will be purposive sample. The basic criterion for qualifying the research sample is to be dealing with the NCW or at least to know about it, and to be an Egyptian Woman between the age of 17 and 60 years old. Moreover, the research will integrate a sample of some specialists at the NCW for the intensive interviews.

3.2 The Quantitative Research Method

The quantitative method will be represented in surveys among Egyptian Women ranging age from 17 to 60. The survey will include women with different social standards and education. University students and working women will be included as well. I will ask

them about their opinions in the credibility and efficiency of the NCW in getting women their economic, political and social rights and empower them.

3.3 The Qualitative Research Method

The qualitative method represented in intensive interviews is selected to provide the researcher with detailed information regarding the competencies of women such as political, analytical, advocacy and networking which are considered very important as qualitative aspects or factors that can guarantee the sustainability of the improvement of the position of the Egyptian women and empowering them.

3.4 Research Variables and Operational Definition

As highlighted at the introduction part, this investigation integrates research questions and hypothesis. The research questions are used to explore the previously mentioned scopes of research, which are still exploratory in nature. Besides, four hypotheses will be examined. The following parts highlight the dependent and independent variables, and operational definitions of each hypothesis.

The first hypothesis states that the role of NCW is affected by the policy of the current ruling regime. The dependent variable is the role of NCW, and the independent variable is the policy of the current ruling regime. The operational definition for the dependent variable is that the objectives and effectiveness of the practice of NCW is directly linked with being the current regime in power.

The second hypothesis states that the Egyptian women will be empowered politically, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women. The dependent variable at this hypothesis is that the Egyptian women can be empowered

politically; and the independent variable is that NCW policies serves the all interests of Egyptian women.

The operational definition of the dependent variable is the ability of Egyptian women to practice all their political rights freely and have the ability to be represented at various political parties. Further, the operational definition of the independent variable means the ability of NCW to serve the interests of the Egyptian women in general not only the elites and those who are in power.

Regarding the third hypothesis, it states that the Egyptian women will be empowered socially, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women. The dependent variable is being empowered socially, and the independent variable is as the second hypothesis - that NCW policies serves the all interests of Egyptian women. The operational definition for the dependent variable is the ability of women to acquire high positions in the country and to live safely and secure in her society.

The Fourth hypothesis states that the Egyptian women will be empowered economically, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women. The dependent variable is becoming more empowered economically, and the independent variable is as the second and third hypothesis - that NCW policies serves the all interests of Egyptian women. The operational definition of the dependent variable means that the woman will have that ability to sustain their life and to survive independently through the micro credits for example that are offered by the NCW.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA GATERING AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Survey Questions' Analysis for close Ended Questions

The following parts reflect the results of the survey questionnaire.

As figure 1 reflects, results for the first question showed that people who belong to the age group from 20 – 29 was 20 respondents out of the total surveyed sample; the age group 30-39 is 20; 40-49 is 50; and from 50 and above is 10 people out of the total surveyed sample.

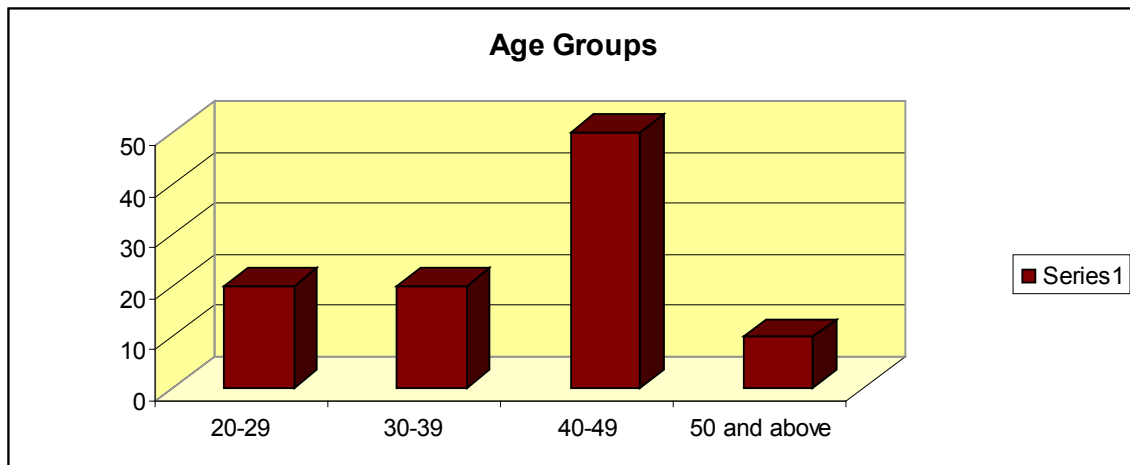


Figure 1 Respondents age group

The second question asked respondents whether they know the Egyptian National Council for Women or not. As highlighted at figure 2, results showed that 85 knew about it, while only 15 respondents did not know about it or about its existence.

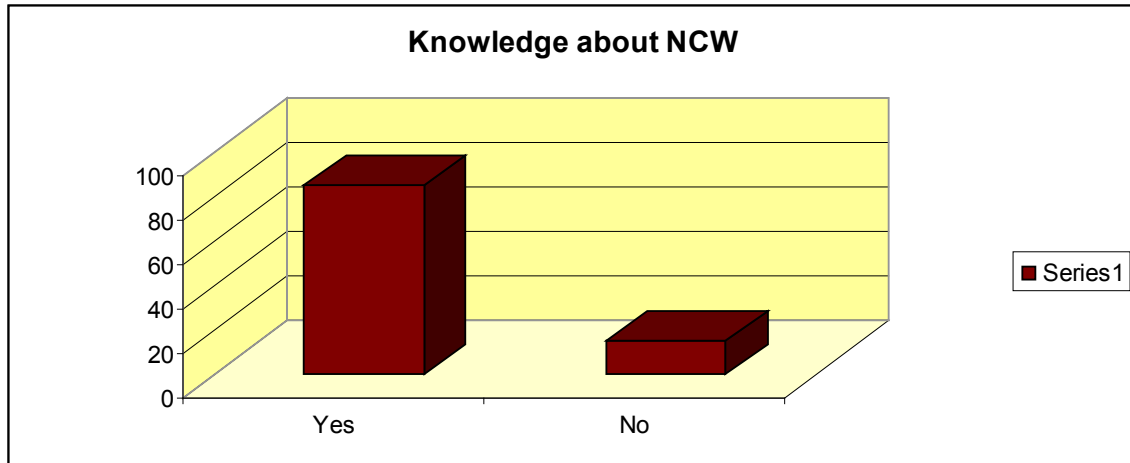


Figure 2 Respondents' Knowledge about NCW

The third question asked respondents for how long have they been dealing with NCW. 85 respondents out of the 100 surveyed have been dealing with the NCW for less than I year; while 35 respondents have been dealing with it from one to two years.



Figure 3 Dealing with NCW

The fourth question asked respondents about their educational background. 25 respondents were uneducated. 15 hold high school certificate, 7 had bachelor degree, and 25 had their post graduate education. So , as highlighted at figure 4 , sample represents variety of women with different educational backgrounds as to cover all educational standards of women in Egypt.

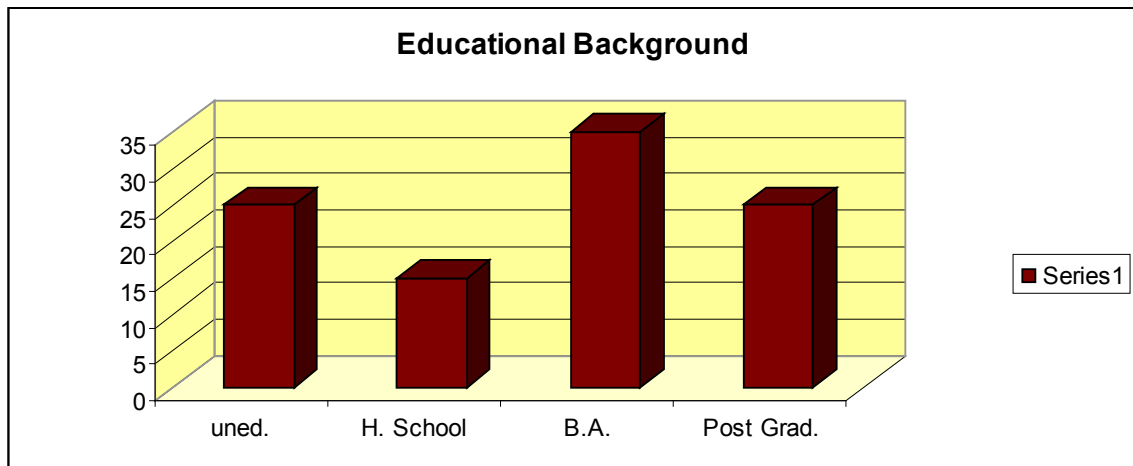


Figure 4 Respondents' educational background

The fifth question asked of whether they are satisfied with the NCW services or not. 15 were satisfied, 60 were neutral, 15 dissatisfied.

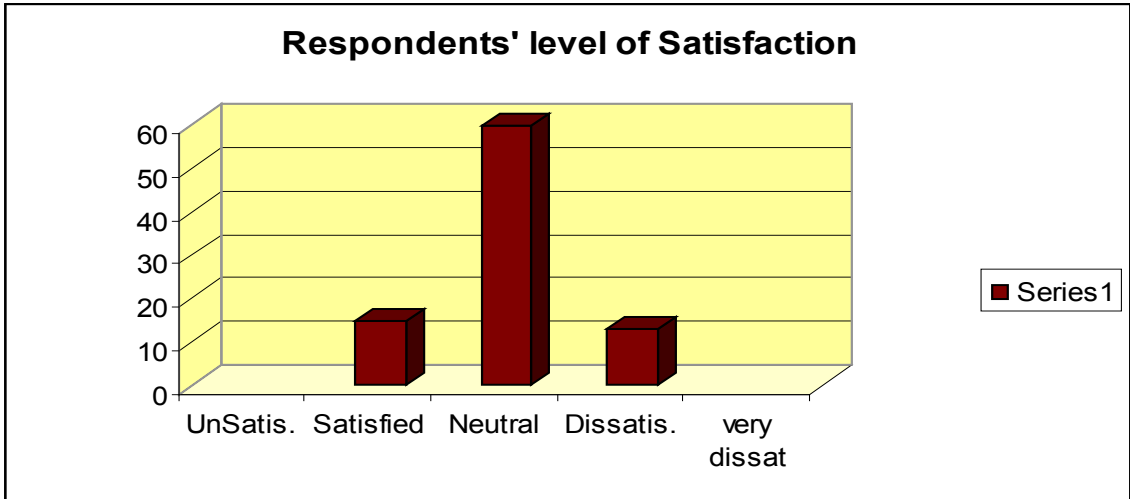


Figure 5 Respondents' Level of satisfaction

The sixth question asked of whether the solutions that NCW offers for women are satisfactory. 40 respondents said yes, while 60 said that they are not satisfied.

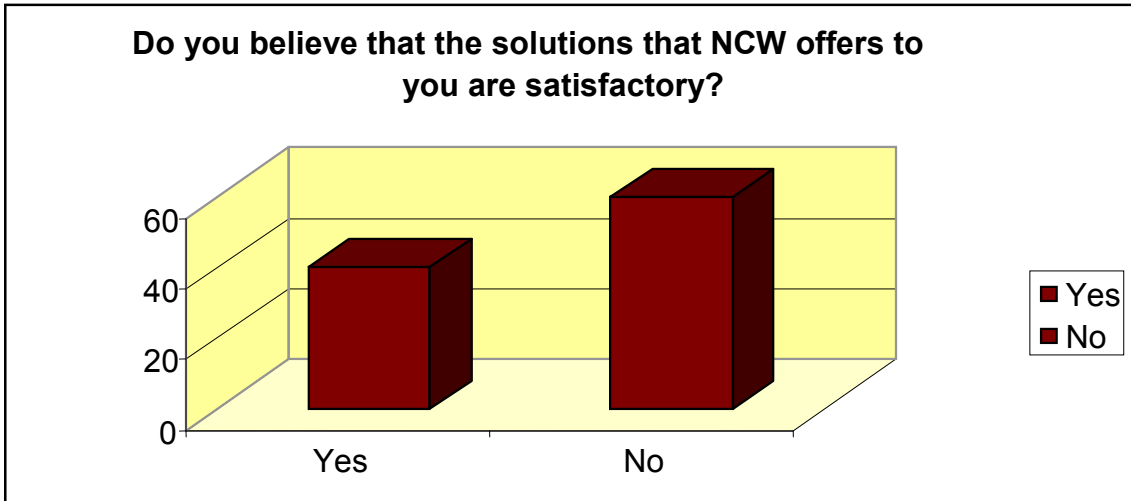


Figure 6 Respondents' satisfactory level toward NCW

The seventh question asked of whether NCW offers a variety of solutions to respondents' problems. 30 said yes, 70 said no.

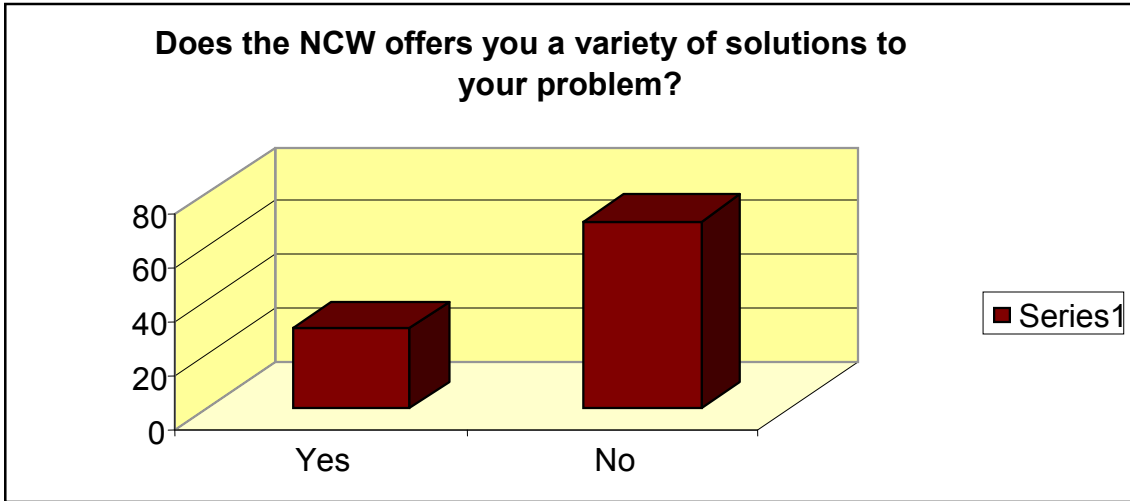


Figure 7 NCW offering of Solutions

The eighth question asked of whether NCW’s offices cover the whole governorates in Egypt. 70 respondents said no, while only 30 respondents said yes.

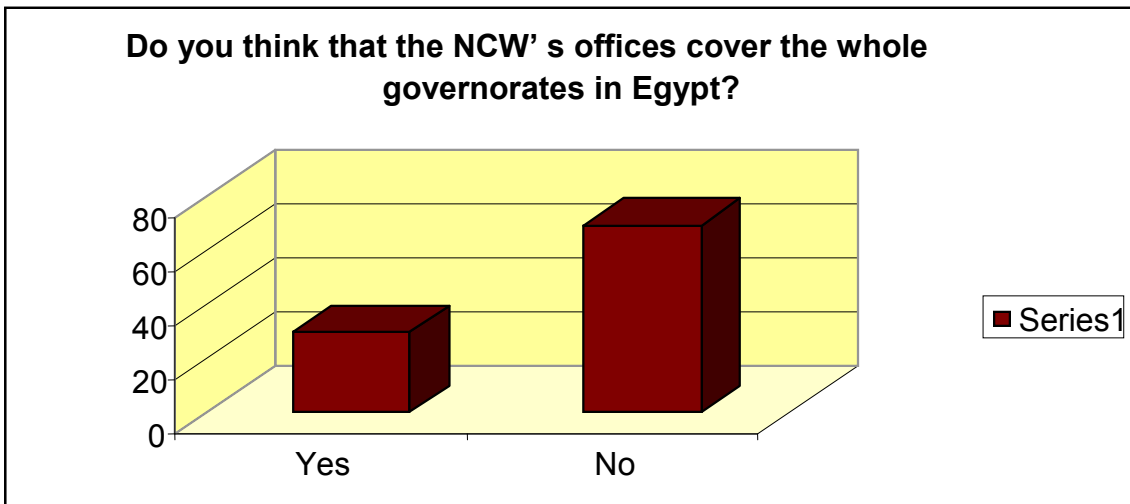


Figure 8 Respondents' opinion of whether NCW offices covers the whole governorates in Egypt

The ninth question asked of whether the beneficiaries or women dealing with the NCW are facing problems or any difficulties . 35 said yes, 65 said no.

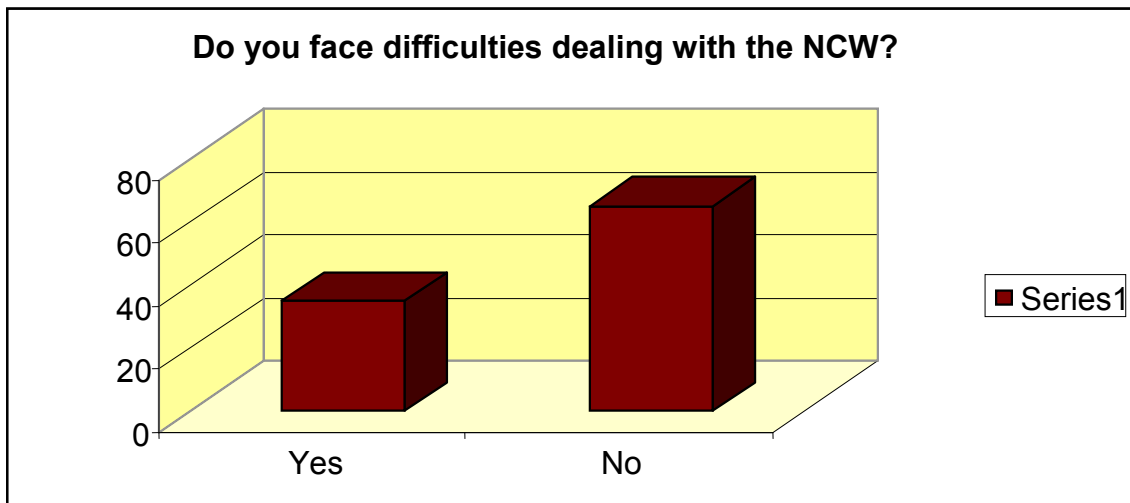


Figure 9 Respondents' opinion whether they face difficulties while dealing with NCW

The eleventh question asked respondents if they believe that NCW is offering the social support such as the ability to take a critical decision concerning their marriage like using El Klol3 law for example. 15 agree; 65 neutral; 15 disagree; 5 strongly disagree.

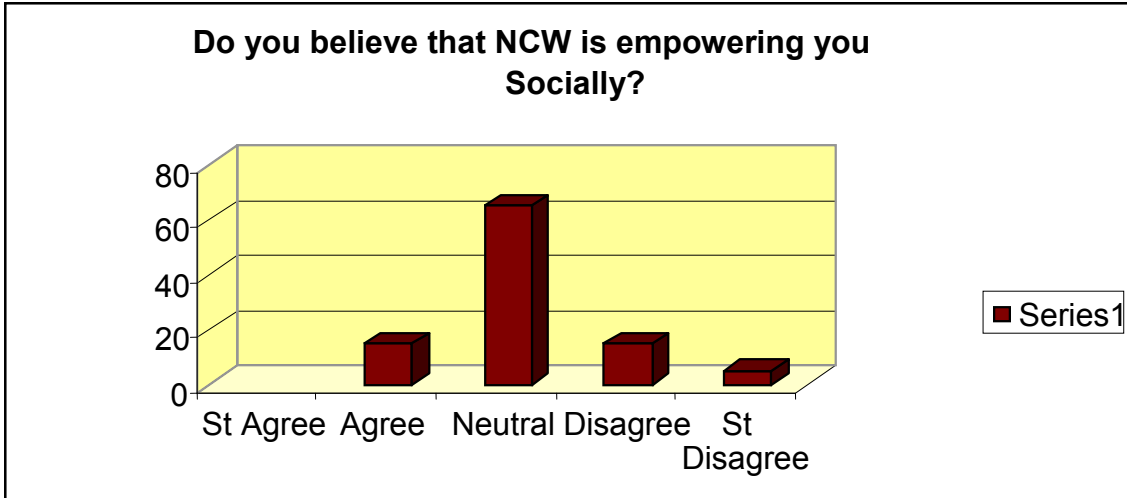


Figure 10 Respondents' opinion of whether the NCW is empowering them socially

The twelfth question asked whether NCW's programs is socially developing the Egyptian women. 5 said yes, 15 said no, 80 said not sure.

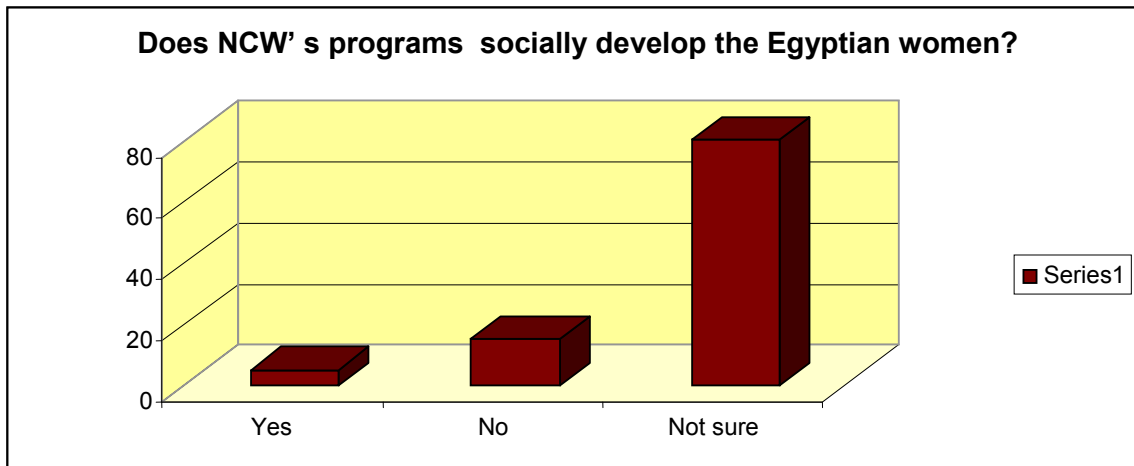


Figure 11 Respondents' opinion of whether NCW's program socially develop the Egyptian women

The thirteenth question asked whether NCW is encouraging you to be a politically active participant in Egypt. 10 said always; 15 said sometimes; 75 do not know.

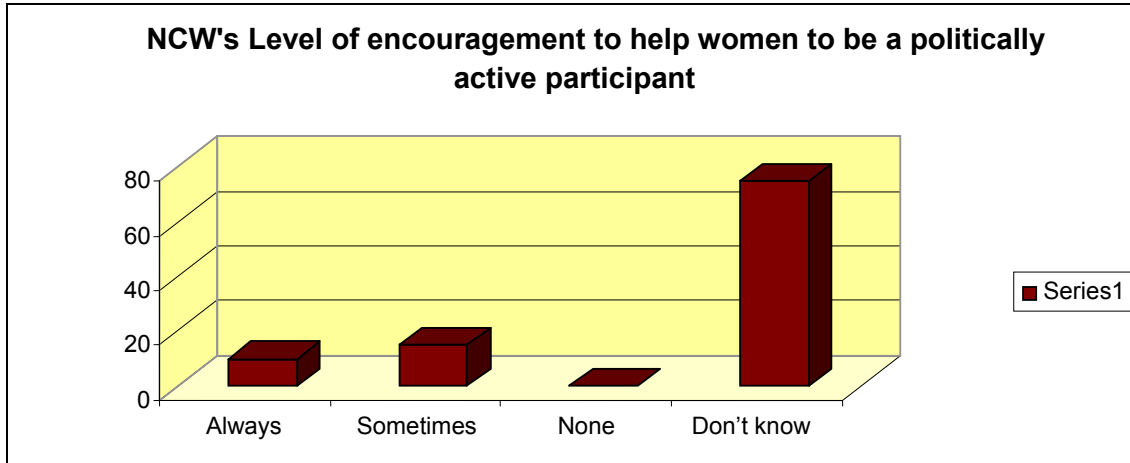


Figure 12 NCW's level of political encouragement

The fourteenth question asked about the type of political activities that the NCW encourages Egyptian women to participate in. 75: voting process. Zero: To encourage the NDP ideologies and/or activities. 10: To encourage you to express your political opinions even if they are opposing the NDP's ideologies. 15: allows you to express your political opinions freely.

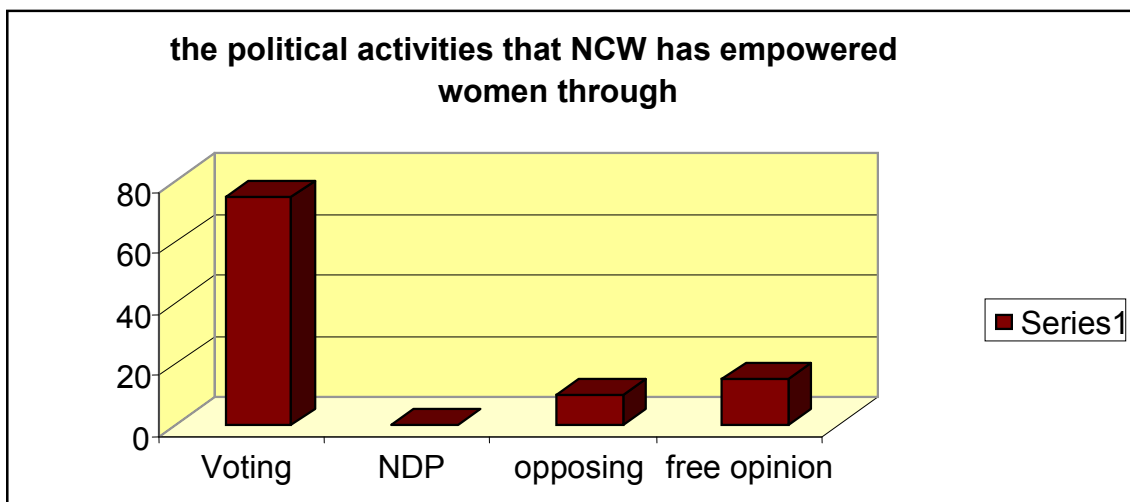


Figure 13 The Political activities that NCW empower women through

As pinpointed at figure 14, the fifteenth question asked of whether the economic activities of NCW are effective and beneficial. 10 respondents said yes. 10 said no. 80 were not sure.

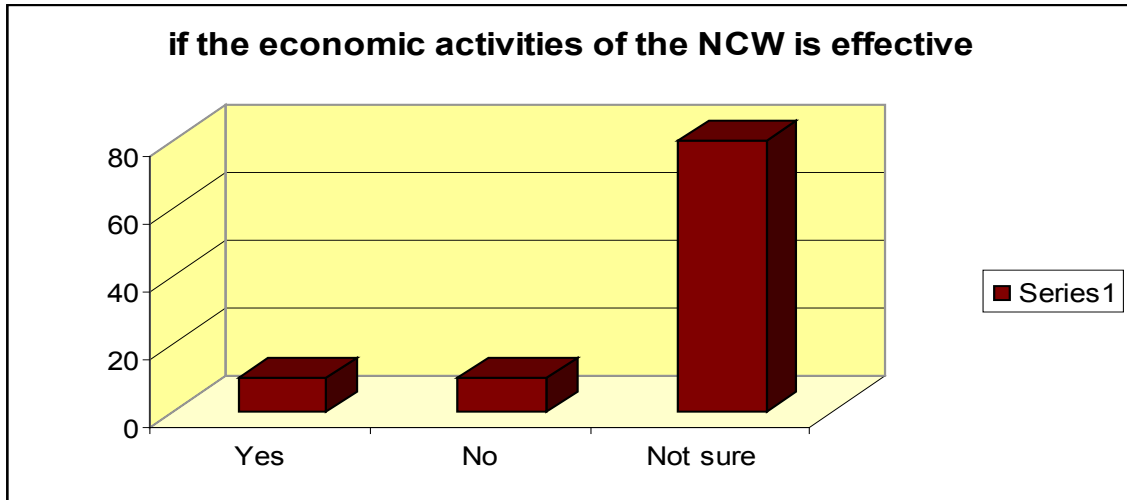


Figure 14 Respondents' evaluation for the economic activities of NCW

The seventeenth question asked whether the respondents believe that the employees in charge of the NCW are qualified to serve your problems. As figure 15 reflects, results showed that 85 said no, 15 said yes.

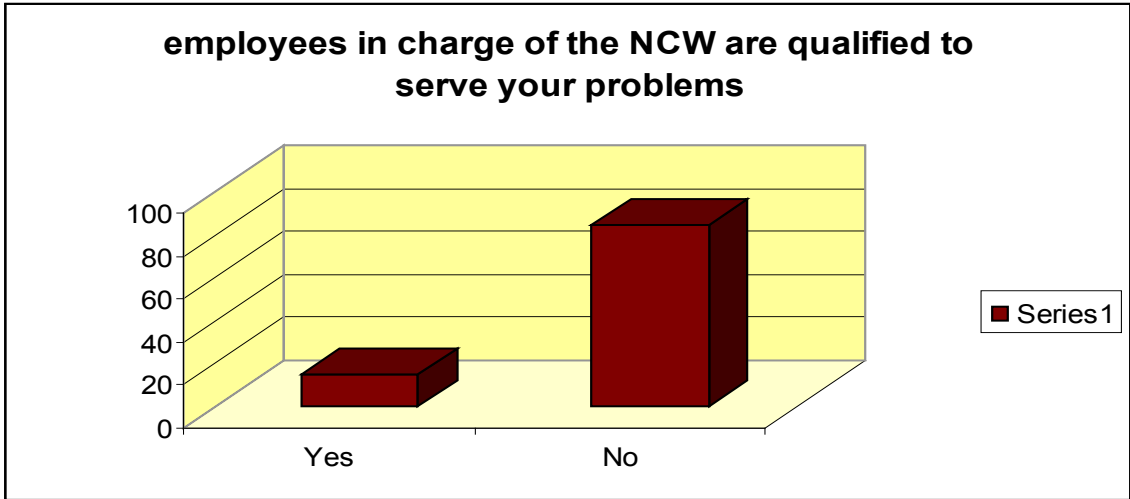


Figure 15 Respondents' evaluation for NCW employees

The eighteenth question asked whether the NCW offers suitable leading political positions for the Egyptian women. 10 said yes, 90 said no.

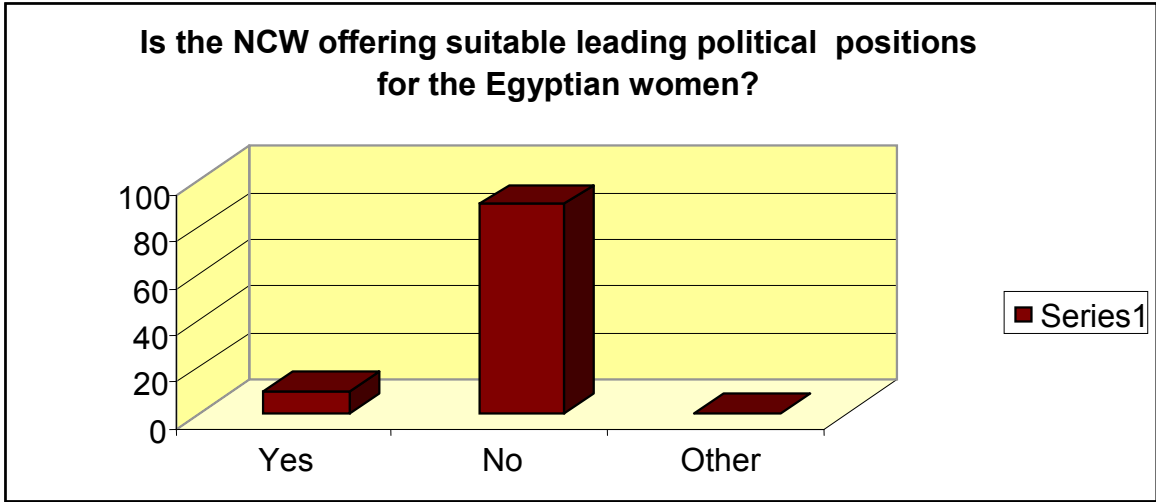


Figure 16 Respondents' evaluation of NCW offering

The nineteenth question asked whether the respondents believe that the NCW is supporting the decisions of its members on high positions. Figure 17 reflects that, 10 said yes, 15 said no, 75 were not sure.

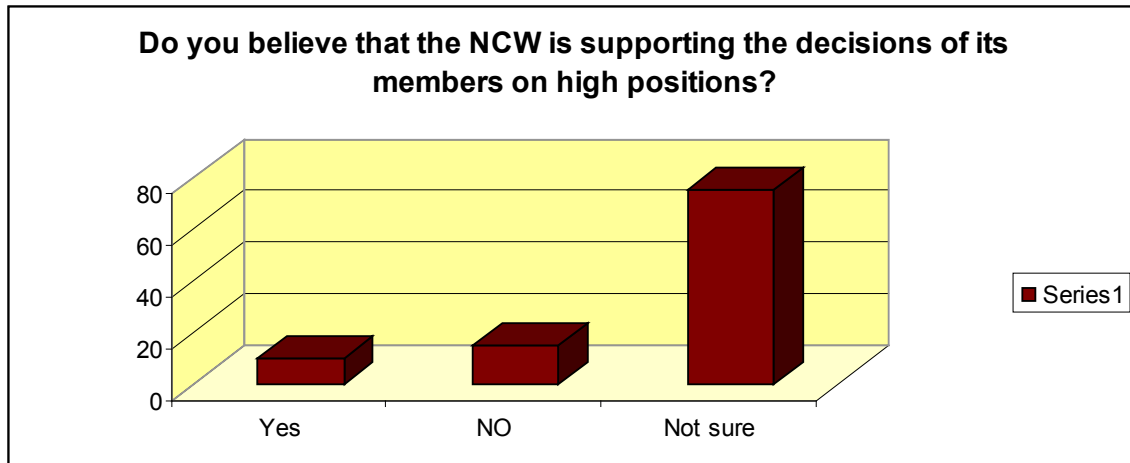


Figure 17 Respondents' evaluation of whether NCW is supporting the decisions of its members on high positions

The twentieth question asked whether the employees of the NCW are giving respondents enough time to discuss their problems. No body strongly agreed, 10 agreed, 65 were neutral, 25 disagreed, and no body strongly disagreed.

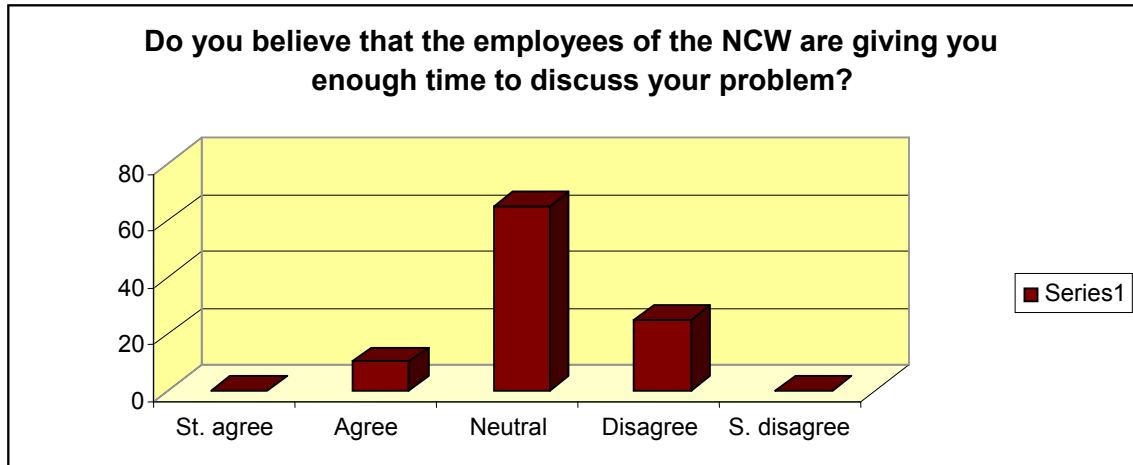


Figure 18 Respondents' evaluation for NCW service and employees

5.2 Survey Questions' Analysis for open Ended Questions:

In fact, the open ended questions were designed to measure the real opinions of sample the Egyptian women concerning the NCW and its services that are offered for the sake of all women despite their social , economic or educational level. The first open ended question asked about what should be changed in the NCW and most of the respondents recommended that the NCW should be known for all the Egyptian women as many of them either only heard about it and does not know anything about its activities and services ,or they do not know about it or about its existence at all. Indeed, most of those who did not hear about it at all are women from the middle or low social class or with a very limited educational background. This group are not aware of the NCW's services for women and they do not know that they can seek its help in case of any complain either socially like sexual harassment or unfairness and discrimination at work or economically in case of financial problems as many Egyptian women nowadays are households.

The second question asked respondents if the NCW programs for women is developing the Egyptian women socially or not. High percentage of respondents believe that the NCW's role in the Egyptian society is not clear and doubtful as they think that it is related to the National Democratic Party which means more power for the NCW's members. Other respondents who are few did not this question at all. Some of the respondents believe that the NCW should cover all social standards of the society and tackle issues related to women especially in the rural areas and upper Egypt as most those women suffer for gender discrimination and inferiority.

The third question respondents if the NCW's social programs are efficient and beneficial like the micro credits offered by the business center of the council. 80 % of the respondents mentioned that they do not know anything about the existence of such business center inside the NCW and that they do not know that the NCW is offering loans and micro credits for the Egyptian women. They thought that NGO's work in the charity field are the ones which are well known in the Egyptian society in offering such micro credits.

The fourth question asked the respondents if the NCW is giving Egyptian women the chance and courage to be involved in the political arena and to be members in the Egyptian Parliament. The majority of the respondents mentioned that it is very difficult for women to compete for the membership of the Parliament as we are living in a male dominated society. They believe that competition is unfair because the majority of the Egyptians will support men in the Parliament elections as they believe that they are more trusted to occupy such important and critical political position. Other respondents believe that the NCW can be beneficial for the candidate women in the political elections as its

head is the president's wife which means power and authority that can affect and help in women in their campaigns.

The fifth question asked the respondents whether they believe that the employees in charge of the NCW are qualified and efficient to serve them and solve their problems. The 80 % who said no justified their answer by mentioning their distrust in the criteria on which NCW's employees are selected. Most of them believe that most of the employees are hired because of having good connections as it is the case in most the public sector in Egypt and the NCW is part of the public sector but it operates under the supervision of the President directly. According to the respondents, this may lead to the existence of some unqualified employees together with the qualified ones. Other respondents who said yes justified their answer by the fact the wife's president is the head of the NCW which means that she will perfectly choose her staff to be qualified and presentable as she cares about the performance of the Council and its image locally and internationally.

The sixth open ended question asked whether the NCW offers suitable leading political positions for the Egyptian women. Indeed, 90 % of the respondents believe that it does not help women to occupy leading political positions as the number of women occupying political positions are very few compared to the number of men. The other 10% of the respondents are somehow optimistic because they realize that the number of women who shares in the political arena is relatively higher than before which means that the Egyptian women have realized that they have a certain role in the society and, according to the respondents , the NCW may be one of the reasons that encourage women to participate in the political field and express their opinions and views freely without fearing the dominance of males.

5.3 Depth Interviews Analysis

Ms I. M :

In an interview with Ms I. M, who occupy high position in the NCW, she mentioned some beneficial and real information about the NCW and its framework and performance. Ms I. M used to work for the NCW since its establishment. She is very happy with her experience there and she totally believes in its role and importance for serving the Egyptian women and empowering them. Ms I. M was very friendly during the interview and she was also very keen to clarify that the NCW is one of the public sector authorities but it does not operate under the control of the Prime minister ,however, the NCW is totally supervised by the President and under his control. She added also that the President is the one who hires the 30 permanent members of the NCW.

Ms I.M added that the NCW was established for the welfare and empowerment of the Egyptian women regardless of their political views. So, all Egyptian Parties are invited to the conferences held by the NCW to discuss women's issues and problems. Ms I.M also mentioned Ms Amina Shafik who is an NCW member and at the same time she is a member in EL Tagmao3 Party. She insisted on the idea of being unbiased to the NDP as most of the Egyptians think. She believes that the existence of the NCW in Egypt is essential as it has a very important role in guiding and empowering women in different fields either politically, economically or socially which is their main target.

According to Ms I.M, the main goal and the responsibility of the NCW can be summarized in four main points which are:

- 1) Creating the general policy of the country concerning all women's issues.
- 2) Following up the implementations of this general policy and issues related to women.

- 3) Preparing a five –year national plan for the improvement and development of the Egyptian woman politically, socially and economically.
- 4) Giving and showing opinion in the suggested laws before being presented to the legislators and revising the current laws to eliminate any discrimination against women.

Ms I.M added that the Council is divided into two structures. First, the political structure which consists of the permanent 30 members headed by Ms Suzane Mubarak and those 30 members are chosen by the president directly. Second, the administrative structure which consists of the employees who represent 15 Departments. She proceeded talking about the NCW’ s strategy and its agenda setting which should include new objective yearly that serve the interest of all Egyptian women and this year the main target is prevailing justice and fairness in the society and no gender discrimination. In a question about whether the NCW is serving the interest of its members by any means, Ms I.M answered that the members are not benefiting at all from the Council, the members are so dedicated to the council and its goals and that they exert too much effort to achieve the goals of the council. She confirmed that the members are chosen from different fields and they should occupy high ranks in their fields in order to benefit from their experiences.

She thinks that the NCW can be the reason for shedding the light on its members and enable them to be society stars compared to their colleagues working in the same filed. The Council has a certain objective every year and all the committees are working in coordination with each other to achieve this objective. Ms I.M confirmed that the NCW is not an executive authority, however, it comes up with suggestions and present it to the

government to take a decision and implement such suggestions. A conference is held yearly to discuss a certain objective with the participation of all committees of all the branches all over Egypt to submit their data and suggestions concerning the issue of the year. Finally, the Prime Minister is responsible as an executive authority and the one who has the power to take a final decision concerning the issue presented by the NCW and implement it.

Concerning the NCW's budget, there are two ways of funding. First, the country's budget and it is fixed and it is used to pay the salaries of the employees and it is used also for funding the internal expenses of the council. Second, the international grants and the sponsors who are responsible for funding the NCW's programs which cost a lot of money. According to Ms I.M, contacting the sponsors or the international organizations is done directly through the NCW's leaders. The NCW submit a proposal to the international organization and negotiate the grant that can be offered. Many agreements were signed with some international organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, EU, USAID, UNESCO, and FORD Foundation to help the NCW in achieving its goals without any financial obstacles. And for the first time in the United Nations' history to sign a mutual cooperation agreement with the NCW which lead to the maximum benefit from the council's resources and as a result many achievements were done such as the establishment of :

- 1) Women's center for improving and supporting women's skills in the filed of establishing and managing micro credits.
- 2) Library
- 3) A program for the involvement of women in the national plan.

- 4) Training program for raising the awareness of women's rights that are included in the international agreements.
- 5) Complaining center for women and following up the cases.
- 6) Training center
- 7) Researches

Ms I.M added that the NCW consist of eleven permanent technical committees which are responsible for the agenda setting , studies, and suggesting policies and plans in different fields . Those committees include beside the 30 permanent members of the NCW other experts and professionals and public figures such as Ms Ikbal Baraka (author), Ms Inaam Mohamed Aly (Director) and they are all chosen by the president.

Some of those committees are:

- 1) Education committee
- 2) Economic committee
- 3) NGOs committee
- 4) Culture committee

Ms I. M insisted on the fact that the NCW has its own sovereignty and independence in taking its decisions and it is not allowed for any foreign or local authority to interfere in its decision making process as the NCW as previously mentioned is totally supervised by the Egyptian president. She added that there is a frequent coordination with other organizations working in the same filed either international or local ones because they all work for one cause which is the empowerment of women socially, economically and politically. Moreover, Ms I.M mentioned that that NCW is not committed to the decisions taken by any other organization working in the same filed and vice versa. Thus, the

coordination and cooperation is taking place between the NCW and those organization without interfering in each others own policy or decision making process. Also, the NCW is benefiting from other women organizations in implementing its programs and performing its activities and they all have the same goal concerning women's empowerment.

She also claimed that the NCW does not have any political views as it does not differentiate between women because of their political views for example and they never reject the help or the support of any women because of her religion or political views. It was a real surprise to find out that the NCW does not have a membership and no women can join it because its permanent 30 members are directly chosen by the president. So, Egyptian women do not have the right to be members in the NCW but they can easily benefit from the service offered by it at any time without any restrictions.

Mr. M. E:

In an interview with Mr. M. E, who occupy high position in the NCW, he mentioned that the NCW is considered an independent authority that is not controlled by the government or the National Democratic Party. He added that despite belonging to the public sector, the NCW is not under the control or the authority or power of the prime minister.

On the other hand, Mr. M. E is confirming that the NCW is not supporting women in their political campaigns for the Parliament elections. Mr. M.E added that the NCW is offering workshops and training sessions for women to empower them politically and enhance their political skills and abilities in order to be professional representatives in the Parliament and to be qualified enough to occupy high political positions. He added that they have reached a high number of trainees in the political qualifying program. In a question about supporting Ms Amina Shafik ,member in El Tagmo3 party and a member

in the NCW, he answered that Supporting Ms Amina Shafik was one of the exceptions of the direct support from the NCW in its beginning as the plan was to create highly qualified members to build and establish the NCW. So, it was just a start to have qualified members supported directly by the NCW. But after the settlement of the NCW and declaring its main goal and strategy, supporting women politically is given to the Egyptian women through the training sessions and workshops to raise their awareness and enable them to compete with men in the election.

Mr. M. E clarified the well organized structure of the NCW management which is divided into three main parts. First, the political qualifying center which is responsible for improving the skills of women to be able to run for elections together with men which was very difficult in the past. Furthermore, such center is offering workshops which are taken seriously as a way of empowering women politically. Second, the business center which is responsible for offering micro credits for some cases and not all of the them. Also, this business center offers training sessions for women on how to manage a small business professionally. Moreover, this center is responsible for giving loans for household women and negotiate the loan's procedures with the bank. Such loans are given to women under certain conditions such as keeping educating their daughters. The NCW with the help of some other NGOs follow up with those beneficiaries to guarantee that they are educating their children and that they can manage the project and take the maximum benefit from the loan. Third, complain center which is responsible for receiving women's complains from their husbands or any gender discrimination against them at work. Mr. M.E believes that such structure is really perfect because dividing the specializations among people each is working in his part will lead to the maximum

performance because each employee is concentrating in his own work and exerting more effort in it and at the end all departments and committees are coordinating and cooperating together. That's why the NCW is professionally operated and managed.

According to Mr. M. E, the NCW's advocacy for women to be judges and to occupy judicial positions has achieved its objective .Nowadays in Egypt, women are qualified judges with a perfect performance. The NCW is also supporting laws which are put for the sake of women and empowering them socially such as the new law of alimony which states that the husband should be sent to prison if he did not pay the alimony. According to Mr. M.E , this is a positive step towards getting women their rights and guarantee them a suitable life after divorce.

Mr. M.E stated that that the Egyptian president took the initiative to declare the political will of the country to empower women politically and to give them their political rights and to allow them to share in the political arena and to be members in the Parliament. Such encouragement from the country's president gives the NCW the power and the will to discuss the importance of women's participation in the political arena and to come up with critical decisions concerning women's political role such as the quota issue which is discussed nowadays. The quota will enable women to have a fixed number of seats in the parliament and will allow to compete with each other without the interference of men in certain areas in Egypt. He added also that the policy of the NCW never differentiate between parties even if they are opposing parties concerning participation in the Council's conferences and meeting discussing women's issues. He confirmed that they invite all the Egyptian parties without ignoring any of them in any conference. In a question about inviting parties that have problems with the NDP such as

EL Ghad party headed by Ayman Nour, Mr. M. E answered that El Ghad party is also invited for the NCW's conferences as being one of the Egyptian parties who should have a representative in the NCW's conferences despite any problems between this party and the NDP. This is an example of the fairness of the NCW in sharing all the Egyptians in the NCW's goal despite their religion or political views. Mr. M.E ended his conversation by highlighting the importance of involving men in women's issues because the NCW's believes that efforts should be exerted to encourage men to accept women's existence with them in the political arena. This is a hard issue because men are hardly accept the importance of women's political role.

THE DISCUSSION

In this chapter, there will be more focus and elaboration on the main themes that were emerged throughout the thesis. It is an attempt to reach some conclusions concerning their implications. It will be also an attempt to answer and clarify the hypothesis and the research questions that were raised and mentioned in the beginning of this thesis

6.1 Linking Research Findings with the current situation :

The NCW is an Egyptian organization that was established for the sake of empowering the Egyptian women socially, politically and economically. Based on the Survey done on a random sample of Egyptian women aged from 17 to 60 years old and intensive interviews with NCW members, certain results were found. Some of those results were expected and others were not. In fact, the sample of women were chosen from different social standards and various educational backgrounds in order to see the effect of the NCW on their lives and whether it affects their lives or helped or empowered them socially, politically or economically. Mentioning women's opinions concerning the NCW efficiency is very important for the credibility of this research because the NCW is directly affecting women's life in Egypt.

The first hypothesis states that the role of NCW is affected by the policy of the current ruling regime represented in the National Democratic Party. Indeed and based on the survey done and interviews conducted with the NCW members, this hypothesis is accepted because the NCW is really affected by the current ruling regime as it operates directly under the supervision of the president and the president is responsible for choosing its 30 permanent members. But the NDP is not affecting the NCW' policy or

decision making as the NCW is not related at all to the NDP or any other Egyptian party. This is obvious in the idea of sharing all parties in the NCW conferences which discuss women's issues and problems. This means that by the end of current ruling regime the NCW will vanish or at least weaken because it is not supported by any party or authority. It is supported mainly by the president. Thus, by the end of his presidency , the NCW will not find any power from a high authority which will give the chance for other organizations working in the same field to speak up and to compete for being more powerful in the decision making process concerning women's issues in Egypt.

The second hypothesis states that the Egyptian women will be empowered politically, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women. The survey results showed that 75 % of the respondents are not sure about the ability of the NCW to empower women politically which really a big percentage. This is an indication that the Egyptian women do not feel the effect of the NCW in empowering women politically because they rarely find women in the political field which gives this impression about the NCW. Thus, supporting women politically is not obvious for the Egyptian women which means that the role of the NCW is very weak concerning this issue. Moreover, and according to the respondents, the role of the NCW in encouraging women for voting in the elections is very obvious as the number of women participating in the voting process totally increased compared to the previous years.

Ms I.M as an NCW member also stressed the role of the NCW in empowering women politically through the training sessions held by the NCW as a way to support and raise the awareness of the Egyptian women who are interested in politics. This means that in the near future , the Egyptian society will include many political public figures who

gained more skills through the NCW workshops which will make them qualified to occupy high positions in the political arena. This is a practical step towards empowering Egyptian women politically according to her interest either to be a member in the Parliament or at least to politically active as in the voting process for example. This means that the hypothesis is accepted.

Regarding the third hypothesis which states that the Egyptian women will be empowered socially, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women. In fact, the survey was done using a sample of women who are belonging to different social and educational backgrounds which means different standards of women and they were asked about their opinion in the services and programs that the NCW offers for the social empowerment of women such as El Khol' law and other laws related to empowering women socially and the programs offered by the business center there. The answers of a high percentage of the respondents were neutral or no not sure which means that such programs and services offered by the NCW is not reaching all segments of the Egyptian society .This means also that such services reach only small portion of the society especially the educated women. So, what about the less educated who are , in my opinion, in real need for such social empowerment because they are suffering more than the educated ones as they face many obstacles in their lives in order to survive especially if they are household women. Thus, such women are in real need of the social empowerment and support in order to face the burdens of life. This hypothesis is accepted due to results of the survey.

Thee fourth hypothesis states that Egyptian women will be empowered economically, if the NCW policies serve the interests of all segments of Egyptian women. Based on the

survey and the interviews conducted, 80 % of the respondents were not sure or neutral about the economic empowerment of the NCW for the Egyptian women. In an elaboration on their answers, most of them agreed that the micro credits offered by the NCW are not well known or may be they are very limited for few number of beneficiaries. Mr. M.E confirmed this fact in an interview with him as he stated that the micro credits offered by the NCW is very limited. He added that the procedures the NCW is tackling in offering help for women is done through helping them in receiving loans from banks in order to start a small project and the NCW with the help of some NGOs are following up with the beneficiary to make sure that she can professionally manage and operate her project. He proceeded, the NCW offers workshops also for women to help them in being qualified and acquiring skills in how to take a loan from a bank and how to manage a small business. This means that most of the beneficiaries in such case should be educated in order to be able to take the sessions and workshops offered by the NCW on the ability of taking a loan or managing a small business which means ignoring a big segment of women in the society who might be in urgent need for such micro credits in order to be able to survive. But the NCW is putting also a brilliant condition for a woman to benefit from their micro credits which is keeping educating her daughters. Indeed, this shows that the NCW policy is encouraging education of girls which is really important in order to be able with the challenges of life nowadays.

The fifth hypothesis states that the NCW members are benefiting from their power in serving their own interests and in reaching their goals. According to the interview with Ms I.M , the NCW members are not benefiting at all from their membership there ,on the contrary , they are offering their efforts and experiences each in his field. She confirmed

that the 30 permanent members of the NCW are totally dedicated to the cause and goal of the Council. There is more focus on those expert and qualified women as by being members in the NCW and chosen by the president directly which means more power. Indeed, the problem here is that such chance for being powerful is not given fairly for all Egyptian women. So, those members may not benefit directly from their positions at the NCW but they still have high authority and power in the country due to their positions. In fact, giving the chance for all Egyptian women to be members in the NCW according to certain criteria will give more credibility and trust for the Council and doubts that are spread among the society will vanish. Thus, based on the interviews , this hypothesis is rejected to a great extent.

The sixth hypothesis states that The NCW is indirectly serving the interests of the current ruling regime by controlling women's sector. Based on the results, half of this hypothesis is right and the other is wrong. Moreover, the NCW is directly supervised by the president and deal directly with him which means that its decisions will be based on the policy of the current regime and its interests. However, the second part of the hypothesis is unaccepted because controlling women's sector is not that easy and it means addressing all segments of women which is not the case at the NCW. The NCW is addressing certain segment of women and ignore others which makes it impossible for it to control or even affect all women's sector in Egypt. There is no doubt that the NCW is serving educated women and offer them more political empowerment by the workshops offered to raise their skills and makes them more qualified to occupy high positions.

6.2 Challenging the NCW framework and policy:

The NCW is a powerful authority which is responsible for discussing Egyptian women's issues and problems. The surprising result from the survey was that many women were not aware of the existence of the NCW. And some are aware of it but they do not know anything about its activities or aims. Other women who dealt with it before or know about its activities are not aware of all of its activities. This last group are interested only in the activity they need for their field of interest but they are not aware of other activities that the council offers for the Egyptian women.

So how can the NCW declare its advocacy for women's rights and the Council itself does not allow any woman to submit her papers to join the NCW and to be one of its members because the members are chosen by the president. This is a contradiction in the strategy of the NCW and totally against its declared policy as women's rights advocates. The council is representing the Egyptian women in the international conferences related to women and they speak on the behalf of all the Egyptian Women which makes it logical to open the gate for any Egyptian woman to be a member in the NCW so as to be able to express her own opinions and views. Also, the NCW has all the right to put the criteria according to which they can choose their members. But restricting the membership to special elite women chosen by the president is unfair for the rest of the Egyptian women as they do not have the same opportunity to express themselves freely in powerful authority like the NCW. Indeed, this a real challenge for the NCW to change its policy concerning membership in order to have more credibility in the Egyptian society and in order for the Egypt women to trust its goals and seek it in case of need and to stop linking between the NCW and the NDP.

6.3 Theorizing the Research Findings: A Linking Point:

Indeed, the research resulted in the importance of applying such theory on the Egyptian society but the point is who is applying this perspective and how they apply it. Applying a certain perspective or concept among a certain society should be tackled smartly and professionally according to the society's culture , norms, traditions and ability to accept other cultures. Actually, applying a certain view on the Egyptian society can be beneficial as long as it serves the interest of the society and its welfare and prosperity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Suggestions for Future Research:

This research was a real contribution in shedding the light on an Egyptian organization working on women's issues which is the NCW. For any researcher working on women's issues, field work and direct contact with women from the society is very important. Actually, conducting interviews gives more credibility for the research as it really expresses women's opinions concerning a certain issue that directly or indirectly affect them. Surveys are also beneficial in any research as it shows definite and real data for the research.. Also, being subjected to variety of views will totally enrich the research and make more credible.

7.2 Research Limitations:

During this research there were some obstacles in which the NCW members were so scared to give any information about the council. They were more than friendly and respectable in dealing but when it comes to giving information about the council they were so cautious.

7.3 Conclusion:

Finally, it is believed that tackling women's issues is a topic of great importance nowadays as the role of women is observed as an essential aspect in any society. Therefore , focusing on women's issues will be for the interest of the whole society

because the idea of gender equality is prevailing all over the world and many international organizations are supporting women's rights and gender equality. Egypt as a developing country realized the importance of women's role in the society and started to support such concept by establishing organizations such as the NCW and allowing also other private organizations to be established in order to work all together to achieve social justice between men and women. The crucial point here is that such organizations ignore the religious aspect and the real meaning of a family. Those organizations almost have the same target which is to empower women economically, politically and socially but what is the hidden reason behind this empowerment? Is it really for women's sake due to the obstacles women face from men in achieving their role in life ? Or is it a way of splitting between women & men as if they are two sides in a conflict?

For some people ,The existence of the NCW can be considered as an official declaration for the control and the support of the NDP over the NCW and also the huge facilities given to the NCW that will enable its members to practice their activities freely without fearing any interference from authority or any financial obstacles as it is the case in other NGOs working in the same filed which mainly depends on the donations. Some may think that power and important roles for activists in the civil society are preserved for the NCW and its members leaving the other organizations with tiny role or effect in women's issues. Thus, political and social empowerment are only restricted to the elites. Those elites are not in real need for the economic empowerment through micro credits given by the NCW for the poor women because all of them are financially good. So, when it comes to the political role of women and empowering them politically, the State is very keen to support the NCW. Thus, empowering women politically is not accepted

by the State through any NGO except the NCW. In fact, allowing other NGOs rather than the NCW to be women's advocates for women's social rights means the state's intention to be shown and viewed as democratic. However, this is a very smart way in allowing women to express themselves but the final and actual decisions concerning women's issues are taken by the NCW only. Thus, the other women's NGOs are only puppets in the hands of the NCW who are the real decision makers. Such weak NGOs' efforts are used as a support and advocates for the NCW's main aim but they never interfere in the decision making process. This unfair fact exists to the extent that the NCW has the power and authority to work on serious situations concerning women to get them their rights such as the lack of identity cards for many Egyptian women. (Nazir and Tomppert, 71). There is a disturbance in the political regime because of being biased to a certain group of women and giving them the official authority and power to take critical decisions concerning women's issues without being professional or experts in tackling such issues in some cases.

Indeed, the role of women and their rights is highly clarified in Islam & Christianity as mentioned before in this research .However, taking religion as a support to achieve certain goals such as implementing foreign concepts like feminism among the Egyptian society will lead to a real conflict between men and women. This has a significance which is the interest of such women was according to their own perspectives, culture and concepts which is, to a great extent, different from the Egyptian and Muslim culture. Thus, it is unfair to apply concepts and views for people who are different in culture and traditions. So, this is the main reason, in my opinion,

for the clash that is currently found between feminist activists in Egypt and people who are opposing them.

Moreover, this research is not against women's rights or feminism but tackling feminism as rescue from men's tyranny as those organizations claim must be based on real views which take into consideration the Egyptian culture, religion and traditions. In fact, elite women who live in the urban areas may accept such concept as it but the case is different in most of the rural areas where women are totally subordinate to men and they are completely attached to their traditions and culture. Indeed, the apparent reason from establishing the NCW is to empower the regime represented in Ms Suzan Mubarak and to give Ms. Suzan the authorized power. Furthermore, the existence of the NCW within an authoritarian regime means that women have a certain role through the NCW to serve the regime's interests together with the elites.

Adopting certain foreign and different ideas should be regulated and organized by scholars and experts in order to take what will suit the community and will be rejected as being unethical or against the norms, traditions and beliefs of such community. But seeking other cultures to solve the Egyptian society problems can be considered a weak and temporary solution as it will never be as strong as the Divine law and its regulations which guarantees all rights for human beings in general. Relying on other beliefs and ideas is accepted in some cases if they are smartly applied according to the community traditions and culture but applying and adopting them blindly means the great weakness of our culture and this is not a fact of course.

It is not appropriate to import thoughts from the West and applying it blindly without taking what is suitable for our society. Moreover, It is unfair and unacceptable to adopt

certain beliefs or ideas to serve the interests of the Egyptian elites. So, It is better to adopt values and ideas that suit our society and serve its people's interest. In fact , we are living in the time of globalization and this factor can never be ignored because it means that the whole world is affected to a great extent by the same conditions and aspects. Moreover, being affected by the foreign cultures especially of the super powers is a matter of fact such as using their language , however, such effect shouldn't affect our identity and language also. New and modern technology nowadays is controlled by such super powers and is delivered to Egypt for example by their language such as the internet . So, Egypt as a developing country should adapt to such globalization process and its consequences and benefit from it but without negatively affecting or vanishing our identity and culture. Thus and as a matter of fact , Egypt as a third world country should cope with the international variables and globalization by importing ideas and reformat such concepts according to our identity and culture. Despite, the French and British occupation to Egypt still the Egyptians preserve their own identity and culture and keep the Arabic language as their communication language and mother tongue. There is no doubt that Egypt was affected by such past occupations but they didn't eradicate our culture such as Algeria which is considering the French language as their main language and its people were totally affected by the imported culture. The English language is used in the Egyptian education because of its importance as an international language but the Arabic language is still superior. Thus, being exposed to other cultures and Knowing other languages is not a shame but letting it affect our language and identity is a great disaster .This fact affect women and men as members of the society but women are more affected because they bring up generations.

The NCW members can be considered as Secular feminists as they advocate for the women's rights and emancipation despite the religion aspect as there is no contradiction between women's rights and the Islamic regulations that the NCW totally neglect or marginalize in their agenda concerning women's rights as if there is a conflict between men and women and the NCW is the only rescue from men's tyranny. Nawal EL Sedawi was the first Egyptian radical woman who supported liberal feminism and adopted the emancipation and liberation of the Egyptian woman in general and specially from the Arab culture obsession with girls' virginity for example as she claimed . (Abu-Odeh,4)

The NCW agenda is tackling the same trend as it encourage women to get rid of their husbands. The NCW' s interest is not directly to separate between the spouses. However , one of its main goals is to prevail its beliefs and concepts which are affected by the feminism ideology. Moreover, and as mentioned before , applying and adopting certain beliefs and ideologies should be smartly chosen according to the culture , traditions , beliefs and norms at which such concepts are applied, otherwise they might be socially destructive. Achieving Power for certain elite women is the most important goal for the NCW through legislating certain laws for example claiming that this will empower the Egyptian women.

So, in order to improve women's role in Egypt, a well organized study should be done on the Egyptian society with all its standards in order to reach a balanced way for empowering women and achieving their rights keeping in mind the culture and religious aspects and the real importance of the family as the building unit of the society.

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Appendix I

Survey Questionnaire

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey aims to measure your satisfaction regarding the efficiency of the National Council for Women (NCW). The results of this survey will be used for a Masters' Thesis at the American University in Cairo. All your answers and comments will be kept confidential. Kindly answer all the following questions. Thanks in advance for your valuable cooperation.

1. Age:

- 20- 29
- 30- 39
- 40 -49
- 50 and above

2. Do you know what is the National Council for Women (NCW)?

- Yes
- No

3. How long have you been dealing with NCW:

- less than one year
- 1- 2 years
- 2-3 years
- Other, Please specify.....

4. What is your educational background?

- uneducated
- High School Degree
- B.A or B.S
- Post graduate

5. Are you satisfied with the service of NCW to you?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied

- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

6. Do you believe that the solutions that NCW offers to you are satisfactory?

- Yes
- No

7. Does the NCW offers you a variety of solutions to your problem:

- Yes
- No

8. Do you think that the NCW's offices cover the whole governorates in Egypt?

- Yes
- No

9. Do you face difficulties dealing with the NCW?

- Yes
- No

If no please skip question 9.

10. What do you like to be changed at the NCW?

11. Do you believe that NCW is empowering you socially? i.e. to encourage you to make your own life decisions such as to divorce your husband ‘El Khul3’?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. Do you think that NCW’s programs is socially developing the Egyptian women?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Please explain your answer if it is either “Yes” or “No”-----

13. Do you believe that NCW is encouraging you to be a politically active participant in Egypt?

- Always
- Sometimes
- None
- Does not know

If your answer is “ none ” or “ Does not know ”, please skip question 13

14. Please specify all the political activities that you believe NCW have empowered you to participate in:

- Voting processes
- To encourage the NDP ideologies and/or activities
- To encourage you to express your political opinions even if they are opposing the NDP’s ideologies.
- It allows you to express your political opinions freely

15. Do you believe that the economic activities of the NCW is effective? i.e. its micro-credit projects

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Please explain your answer if your answer is either yes or no,-----

16. Do you believe that the NCW is giving the women the chance of the representation of the Egyptian women in the Parliament?

1. Do you think that the employees in charge of the NCW are qualified to serve your problems?

- Yes
- No
- Please explain your answer, -----

18. Is the NCW offering suitable leading political positions for the Egyptian women?

- Yes
- No
- Other
- Please explain your answer,.....

19. Do you believe that the NCW is supporting the decisions of its members on high positions?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

20. Do you believe that the employees of the NCW is giving you enough time to discuss your problem?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Thank You for your Cooperation

Appendix Two

Interview Questions

Interview questions

- 1) What is the role of the National Council for Women (NCW) ?
- 2) What are the services offered by the NCW for its members ?
- 3) What are official institutions that support the NCW's decisions?
- 4) Is the NCW's budget enough with respect to the services offered by the it?
- 5) How is the budget divided on the NCW's programs?
- 6) What are the references of the NCW in taking its decisions?
- 7) Is there any aids or support given by international NGO's to the NCW?
- 8) What kind of support or grants given to the NCW by the international NGO's?
- 9) What are the criteria for women who are interested in joining the NCW ?
- 10) How does the NCW main branch connect with other branches in other governorates?
- 11) Is there a coordination with other international organizations interested in women's issues ?
- 12) Is there an international representation for the NCW in the international conferences?
- 13) Does the NCW support the public women figures who are nominated to occupy high positions in the country?
- 14) Are there any articles in the Egyptian constitution than can be considered as obstacles for the policy or the decision making of the NCW?
- 15) What is the role of women occupying high positions in the country in supporting the NCW and its policies?

- 16) Do the members meet frequently to discuss the agenda of the NCW?
- 17) Is there any transparency in presenting the agenda of the NCW and in taking decisions concerning the Egyptian women?