

### **The Reality of the Participation of the students at the University of Jordan in the Parliamentary Elections 2010 (from the gender perspective)**

This study aims at identifying: the level of participation of the students at the University of Jordan in the parliamentary elections 2010, the reasons for participation or non-participation of students in the parliamentary elections 2010, the most influential factors to increase the participation rate of the students in the upcoming parliamentary elections as well as identifying the attitudes of the students towards participating in the upcoming election, and specifically their attitudes towards the preferred gender choice of candidates to elect. To achieve the objectives of the study, both the descriptive and qualitative approaches were used and data were collected from a questionnaire form which was distributed to a representative sample of students from the University of Jordan.

The findings of the study indicate that the participation of the students both males and females in the parliamentary elections of 2010 has decreased for a variety of reasons including them being busy with matters in their lives, their lack of familiarity with all the details of the electoral system, their belief that the election process is useless, or unfair as well as not being convinced of the current election law or because of the difficulty of ensuring the credibility of the candidates. On the other hand, the results of the study show that the primary motivations for the students who participated in the elections are their view of the participation in the parliamentary elections as a national duty, or because they trust the candidate, or as an act of courtesy to their families or the candidates, or to support the candidate of their clan, or their belief that participating in the parliamentary elections is one of the political rights that everyone should enjoy to be able to express their opinions.

The results also show that there is an improvement in the proportion of males and females who have expressed their desire to participate in the upcoming elections by half of the sample. However, the rest of the students have cited a variety of reasons for not wanting to participate in the upcoming elections including the limits imposed on them by their clans and families to choose specific candidates and the immaturity of the political life in Jordan as they believe it is based on individual interests. The female students have added the absence of new candidates, especially those who represent young people. Other female respondents have also cited not being interested or lacking knowledge of politics as reasons for not wanting to participate in the upcoming elections.

The study also revealed that the apparent impact of cultural and political orientation, media role played by the visual media and social networking sites and the students' presence in a conscious and encouraging academic environment are proved to be more influential factors in increasing the students' participation in the parliamentary elections of 2010 in comparison with the factors associated with family in terms of its affiliation to political parties and the economic and marital status and the influence of friends and relatives.

The determinants for choosing a candidate in the upcoming elections according to the male respondents include personal traits and the ability of the candidates to accommodate the needs of their constituency, communicating with people and looking forward to serve the nation as a whole not just their clan, stressing the fact that candidates should be young and not former members of the parliament. A few have focused on the importance of having clan representatives provided that they are educated and experienced; some have refused candidates affiliated with political parties while others stressed the importance of amending the election law to ensure transparency in the election as a determinant in their participation in the upcoming elections. On the other hand, the determinants of the female students' choice include personal traits and being independent with no affiliations to the tribe or clan, or a particular party while a few female respondents preferred to choose to vote for members of their clans if they are efficient and responsible. In comparison with the male respondents a few female ones have actually favored voting for candidates who belong to political parties. The results of the study revealed that both male and female students are aware that the gender of the candidate makes no difference in electing him or her. This is because voting -from their point of view- must be for the most efficient candidates in terms of qualifications and experience and for those who have a decent history in working for and serving their community.