

## Review Article

# The Effect of Social Factors (Socialization) on the Educational Level of Sudanese Women

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## A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to identify Socialization and its impact on the educational level of women in North Kordofan. The study reviewed the concept of Socialization from the perspectives of psychology and sociology, including its forms, institutions, and role. The research problem was centered on the fact that many people are unaware of the role of Socialization and its influence on women's educational level, particularly in North Kordofan. The paper was based on the historical, descriptive, and analytical approach, while relying on interviews, observation, and discussion groups as research tools for data collection. The study concluded that the process of Socialization casts its shadow over women and society, affecting their trajectory and social mobility. The study indicates that 60% of married women are exposed to psychological violence, 23.3% are exposed to physical violence, and 10.9% suffer from sexual violence. Furthermore, 15.8% of unmarried women reported significant exposure to psychological violence. This is attributed to several factors in the community, such as low education rates and the customs and traditions that restrict women from claiming their rights, especially in rural communities. Girls also face difficulty accessing educational institutions, particularly university education outside the region, and challenges related to the families' economic status. The study recommends raising awareness, involving women in decision-making at all levels, and elevating the value of education, health, and primary healthcare. It also urges families to recognize the importance of education, especially for women in rural communities.

**Keywords:** Socialization, Woman, Educational Level, Gender, North Kordofan.

## Introduction

Women in North Kordofan, like in all traditional societies, are subject to specific and limited roles imposed upon them, such as family care and domestic chores. The process of Socialization ensures the preservation of the culture within its complex overall framework and shapes the consciousness of individuals to perform certain economic tasks and activities like agriculture.

The mental health of a community's members is considered a measure of its prosperity and progress. For community members to be active agents capable of making social progress, attention must be paid to Socialization, which social and psychological studies have thoroughly examined due to its crucial role in shaping the individual's and, consequently, the community's personality. Socialization is considered one of the most critical life processes an

individual undergoes, serving as the fundamental pillar upon which the individual and society's personality is built. It is characterized by continuity, encompassing all stages of human life from childhood to old age. No human gathering is devoid of a social system of Socialization processes, regardless of its size, though there are differences in style and values influenced by geographical and environmental variations while maintaining the overall goal.

The family represents one of the most important primary institutions of Socialization. It is the environment in which the individual is raised and their social personality is built. It is the comprehensive framework through which the individual can satisfy their various psychological and moral needs within the context of cultural, religious, and ethical values. Parents play a prominent role in this process.

### The Study Problem

The study's problem lies in identifying the effect of Socialization on the educational level of women in Sudan, given the many obstacles faced by women's education due to Socialization processes. These obstacles include cultural heritage and the complexities of the Bedouin environment in Sudan, especially in North Kordofan State, where women face many constraints that deprive them of opportunities for education and participation in public life. This is attributed to the nature of the extended family structure, which adheres to customs and traditions and where the woman's role is confined to being a housewife managing family affairs only. This perception has significantly constrained and stereotyped women.

However, women have a significant role in public life, starting with the Socialization process, which is strongly linked to the issue of education and learning, and their participation in public life as a mother, educator, producer, and political participant. The necessity of addressing the issue of women's education and its impact on Socialization stems from its role in addressing many social and psychological issues. The woman is considered the backbone of the family; if she is sound, the community thrives, and if she is corrupted, the community suffers.

The study's problem clearly revolves around explaining the impact of Socialization in North Kordofan society on the issue of women's education, which the community has recently started to appreciate, especially in rural areas where some still believe that a woman's life is only about marriage and forming a family, and education is not a necessity.

### Research Questions

The study questions are as follows:

- Does Socialization affect women's educational level?
- Does its influence extend to cast a shadow over the entire community?
- How can we address the imbalances in women's Socialization?

### Importance of the Study

The study's importance lies in raising the issue of Socialization, its roles, and its impact on women in North Kordofan.

### Study Objectives

This study aims to:

- Identify the effect of women's Socialization on education.
- Understand the impact of women's education on society.
- Determine the role of educated women in society.
- Identify strategies that can be used to address imbalances in women's education.

### Axis I: The Concept Of Socialization

Linguistically, according to Ibn Manzur's Lisan al-Arab, the word Tanshia (Socialization) comes from the verb nash'a, yansha'u, nushoo'an. Nash'a means to grow up and become old.<sup>1</sup>

The operational definition of Socialization is the process of transforming the individual from a biological being into a social individual through social interaction, thereby acquiring behaviors, standards, and values that contribute to the building of their personality, opening the door for integration into social life.

Thus, Socialization plays an active role in building or disrupting the individual's personality in all psychological and social aspects.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, this process is essential in human life, as it defines the cultural framework that colors their temperament, and in which they believe and adhere to.

Researcher's Operational Definition: Socialization is a process by which Socialization institutions, such as the family and school, seek to internalize and satisfy the desires of children so that they acquire sound behaviour based on the values, traditions, and cultures they acquire from their surrounding community.

### Basic Directions In The Study Of Socialization

Numerous social schools, including those of psychology, sociology, social psychology, and anthropology, have discussed the process of Socialization. This led to multiple contexts according to the differences in methodologies and angles of view.

### The Psychological Perspective

Proponents of this school believe that the individual's personality is formed and shaped in the early years of life, and any later influences are considered secondary compared to the childhood stage. The elements of the individual's personality pass through childhood through exposure to positive or negative values, which in this case may pose a threat to society.<sup>3</sup>

Sociologists defined it as the process by which socialized individuals can curb and regulate their impulses according to the requirements of society and its prevailing social system. Their behavior would contrast with unsocialized individuals, whose egoism in following their impulses leads to harming others and the well-being of society.

Psychologist Abu Al-Nil believes that Socialization is the process through which a balance is achieved between the individual's private desires and motives and the interests of others, represented by the cultural structure in which the individual lives, and the common use of prevalent community methods like honesty.<sup>4</sup>

The researcher believes that psychologists seek to interpret Socialization processes through the agreement of the self and the conformity of the individual's desires to live in the surrounding environment by studying the behaviors of both the sound and unsound individual.

### The Sociological Perspective

Sociologists believe that Socialization is the observation of social systems that have the potential to transform a human into a social individual capable of interacting and integrating with community members. It is the training of individuals for their future roles to become active members responsible for the continuation of generations, which leads to the creation of social cohesion.

From the above, we conclude that Socialization is a process targeting humans from their childhood, instilling in them the customs, traditions, and norms of the group they belong to, through the practice of socially agreed-upon patterns via interaction among individuals, which is the essence of the process.<sup>5</sup>

### The Anthropological Perspective

Anthropologists believe that one of the most important characteristics of human societies is their ability to preserve and transmit culture from one generation to the next. They see the child as absorbing the culture of the community they live in. The individual acquires their community's culture through various social situations they are exposed to during childhood. These situations differ from one community to another according to the prevailing culture; the community's culture determines the Socialization methods used.

From the above, we conclude that Socialization processes depend on three axes:

- **Axis 1:** Views Socialization as limited to childhood; all experiences and situations the individual is exposed to remain ingrained in their personality throughout their life.
- **Axis 2:** Views Socialization as a continuous process throughout the individual's life, during which they

transform from a biological being into a social being (influence and being influenced).

- **Axis 3:** Views Socialization as a process of integrating the community's culture into the individual's personality.

Socialization is thus an integration of these aspects.<sup>6</sup>

## Theories of Socialization

### Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychologist Freud, through psychoanalytic theory, believes that Socialization involves the child acquiring the standards and behavior of their parents. Through Socialization methods like reward and punishment, the child develops internal control, or what is called the conscience, which guides the child's, and later the adult's, behavior. Thus, imitation is considered one of the most prominent methods of Socialization.<sup>7</sup>

### Social Learning Theory

This theory posits that Socialization is a learning pattern that helps the individual perform their social roles, focusing on the individual's behavior. Socialization institutions employ certain means during the Socialization process, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Proponents of this theory give great importance to reinforcement in social learning. Albert Bandura believes that reinforcement alone is not sufficient to explain learning or certain behaviors that suddenly appear in the child. The concept of the observational learning model relies on the assumption that humans, as social beings, are influenced by the attitudes, feelings, actions, and behavior of others. This assumption has profound educational significance, considering that learning, in its fundamental concept, is a social process. Their views are based on the results generated by this behavior through reward and punishment (Rabeh Haroush, 2004).

### Social Role Theory

According to this theory, Socialization is merely an interaction between the self and the other, and it is significantly influenced by prevailing cultural standards, as well as the person's self-experience. The theory attempted to understand human behavior in its complex form, considering social behavior to include cultural, social, and personal elements.

The researcher notes that the theoretical views and interpretations of Socialization have varied according to the affiliation of thinkers and researchers, with each seeking to interpret it according to their specialization. However, all these interpretations fall under the scope of sociologists and psychologists due to their social contributions and logical explanations. All the presented theories seek to interpret complex human behavior despite the challenges, developments, and changes that have accompanied

societies. These theories remain explanatory for what happens in the social environment. Furthermore, a set of criticisms have been directed at these theories, especially when an unsound behavior occurs, leading to a focus on the surrounding family, social, economic, and cultural factors.

### **Characteristics Of Socialization**

Based on the definitions of Socialization presented earlier, the following characteristics can be deduced:

#### **Socialization is a Process of Social Shaping**

It works to transform the human from a biological, animalistic being into a human being possessing human and social qualifications, making them a socially mature being. This means that when an individual is born, they learn the behavioral patterns, social skills, standards, values, and social attitudes prevalent in the social environment. These are transmitted through the Socialization process to obtain the type of individual desired and to build the social attitudes the community wishes to pass on to its generations.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Socialization is a Process of Need Satisfaction**

One of the distinguishing features of Socialization is that it is a process of satisfying the individual's social needs. Many scholars have discussed the social needs of the individual that can be met through Socialization. These needs include biological needs, the need for security, the need for love, the need for appreciation, the need for information, and the need for belonging. Meeting these needs aids the sound social development of the child's personality.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Socialization is a Dynamic Process**

It occurs through interaction between individuals within a specific social environment, during which behavioral patterns are transmitted through the concept of the model. Observation is the core of the Socialization process; the individual observes the behavioral models before them and is psychologically affected by them. This effect transitions into a process of identification and compliance with the models. It is also an innate and continuous characteristic, starting with the birth of the child and continuing until old age.

#### **Socialization is a Learning Process**

Some scholars consider Socialization a process of learning social roles and skills that help the individual adapt to their social environment and satisfy their social needs.

#### **Socialization is a Process of Social Adaptation**

When a child is born, they lack the social skills that facilitate their life. They cannot live unless they acquire the social experiences and skills that enable them to deal with others of their kind, adapt, and understand them. This is achieved through Socialization, which is, in itself, a process

of social adaptation of the individual to their environment. Social adaptation enables the individual to respond to the demands of the community in which they live.<sup>9</sup>

The researcher believes that the process of social adaptation has a significant influence on women's issues in the study community. It is the result of the customs, traditions, and local cultures imposed by the community, which previously constrained women and confined them to routine women's issues, such as domestic concerns and sharing agricultural work with men, with little emphasis on education until recently. Social adaptation fosters development and interaction primarily through the family, especially the extended family.

#### **Socialization is a Complex Process**

It is inherently complex and compounded, involving many intertwined elements, starting from the human personality and its psychological structure, to the social environment and its values and behavioral models, to the individual's social perception towards their biological and genetic makeup, and to language and its ideological contents.

Furthermore, the means through which it occurs vary, and social institutions such as the family, school, and peer group are numerous. It cannot be attributed to a single factor or variable; every variable contributes a certain share, although there is a variation in influence from one element to another based on the individual's response and interaction with each element. The characteristics of Socialization represent a complex and integrated process where the family works to internalize children so that they align with these systems and adapt to community customs and traditions.

#### **Forms Of Socialization**

**Socialization takes two main forms:**

- Intended Socialization
- Unintended Socialization

First: Intended Socialization

This pattern of Socialization occurs in both the family and the school. The family teaches its children through its cultural system, standards, and attitudes, defining the ways, methods, and tools for internalizing this culture, its values, and standards. Similarly, school education at its various stages is intended education, with its goals, methods, curricula, and approaches related to raising and socializing the individual in a specific way.

Second: Unintended Socialization

This pattern occurs through religious institutions, media, radio, television, cinema, theater, and other institutions that contribute to the Socialization process through the following roles:

- The individual learns skills, meanings, and ideas by acquiring social standards that differ according to these institutions.
- It instills habits related to love and hate, success and failure, cooperation, and taking responsibility.
- It instills habits related to work, production, consumption, and other types of behavior, attitudes, and standards.<sup>10</sup>

The current reality, with an open sky full of the World Wide Web, creates significant competition between traditional Socialization institutions and cross-border technology. Learning has become an open process where positive knowledge can be easily and readily received, but it can also play a major role in producing deviant behavior in society. Therefore, the religious institution plays a major role in confronting intellectual subjugation by instilling virtuous religious values. The media also has a major role in confronting the technological challenges facing Socialization processes. The following institutions play a vital role in the Socialization process: the Role of the Family, the Role of the Mother, the Role of the Father, the Role of the Grandmother, the Role of the School, the Role of the Media, the Role of the Community.

The researcher believes that these social roles represent a connecting link tied to each other, especially in what is called the collective conscience. Every member of the family has a role towards community members, then the school has an important role in the learning process, the media has a role, and the community has a role, which aids in the process of social control. However, if there is a defect in these roles, the researcher believes it can be conceptualized by the functionalist theory of sociologist Émile Durkheim, who indicated in his theory that every system has a role, and if a defect occurs in one system, a defect will occur in the other social, economic, and political systems, which can be likened to the human body: if a defect occurs in one of its organs, the rest of the organs will be affected.

### Goals Of Socialization

There are a set of goals that Socialization seeks to achieve, including:

- The individual is not born social; thus, through Socialization, they can acquire the social characteristic.
- It aims to instill the community's culture into the individual's personality. There is a close and reciprocal relationship between culture and Socialization, as each influences and is influenced by the other.
- Controlling the individual's behavior and satisfying their needs in a way that aligns with the community's values.
- It seeks to instill the recognized attitudes and general values within the community.
- Instilling internal control factors, or what is called self-restraint, contained within the conscience, which becomes an essential part of their behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

It can be said that the process of Socialization is complex, with diverse directions and multiple goals, targeting many tasks and attempting by various means to achieve its aspirations. The content and substance of the Socialization process differ from one society to another, and the resulting personality differs according to the cultures that define the content of Socialization.

The researcher believes that Socialization aims to produce a conscious, sound individual capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. These institutions related to Socialization, primarily the family, aim to preserve and instill virtuous values in the child and prepare their internal environment by strengthening their personality and sense of psychological security. The school seeks to provide knowledge and cognitive awareness through education and schooling. The peer group also plays a major role, either a positive role by strengthening social bonds or a negative role leading to behavioral deviance.

### Negatives Of Socialization

Socialization institutions may commit grave errors that lead to suffering and behavioral and psychological problems, including:

- **Authoritarianism:** Imposing the opinion of parents or surrounding family members on the child, or limiting some desired behavior to satisfy their wishes, even by legitimate means.
- **Arousing Psychological Pain:** Mocking the child whenever they exhibit unwanted behavior or perform an action to satisfy a wish that conflicts with values and norms. This can also be done by belittling and diminishing their worth whenever they perform any kind of behavior.
- **Cruelty:** A method parents follow to enforce manners and rules consistent with their values by using beating or threatening with it, which leads to loss of self-confidence, lack of self-reliance, weak conscience, and hatred for the family and community.
- **Discrimination:** Parents resort to preferring one child over another, sometimes due to gender, which results in pathological behavior and repercussions that hinder the pattern of life.
- **Dependence:** Not allowing the individual to bear some responsibilities, such as the ability to make decisions, which produces a dependent and uninitiated personality that relies on others.
- **Overprotection:** Stemming from excessive fear of the outside world, which results in a non-social personality dominated by feelings of anxiety and fear.<sup>12</sup>

All these negatives play a major role in hindering the development process of women in the state, largely due to the family's fear for the woman from society. The researcher believes that there are other factors that play

a major role alongside the negatives of Socialization, which are economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and low-income levels for families. Also, political factors, and cultural factors that play a major role in the local community in the region, which are mainly controlled by inherited customs, traditions, and values that can be one of the most important constraints and negatives facing women's education, despite the community's awareness of the importance of education. Among the harmful cultures in the community against women is gender-based violence, in which harmful customs against women are practiced, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

The researcher's point of view is that the negatives of Socialization can be addressed as follows:

Source: Researcher's own work

The researcher believes, through this figure, that promoting positive values in the Socialization process helps eliminate the negatives faced by Socialization institutions. Equality among children and encouraging them without discrimination helps strengthen the spirit of teamwork and cooperation among them. Furthermore, dialogue between parents and children strengthens the bonds between them and helps identify the challenges they face in life. All this contributes to refining self-confidence and love for others. We observe in the figure above that the scale tips in favor of the positives over the negatives.

## Axis II: The Impact of Socialization on Women in North Kordofan

### The Physical Structure Of North Kordofan State

#### Geographical Location:

North Kordofan State is located between latitudes  $18^{\circ} 52'$  and  $16^{\circ} 36'$  North, and  $12^{\circ} 37'$  and  $14^{\circ} 12'$  South, and longitudes  $18^{\circ} 26'$  and  $32^{\circ} 12'$  East, and  $35^{\circ} 52'$  and  $65^{\circ} 26'$  West (Investment Commission, North Kordofan).

#### Climate:

The state is dominated by three environmental zones where the climate ranges from:

- **Desert:** Includes the northern parts of the state, characterized by high temperatures and low rainfall, averaging less than  $50\text{mm}$  per year. This desert region relatively lacks vegetation cover, leading to the spread of shifting sands.
- **Semi-Desert:** Includes the central and southern parts of the state, characterized by high temperatures, with rainfall ranging between  $50\text{mm}$  to  $400\text{mm}$  per year. Thorny shrubs like Hashab are spread in this area, in addition to seasonal grasses that provide

natural grazing for livestock. The soil is also suitable for traditional rain-fed agriculture (Investment Commission, North Kordofan).

#### Area

The area of North Kordofan State is estimated at  $188,474\text{km}^2$ . Ratzel expresses the size of the area by saying: "A large space preserves life." Area is important for the specific weight of agriculture, industry, and climate. The political value of a state is affected by the area it occupies, and it is not necessarily true that every large state is a great state.<sup>13</sup>

#### Borders

It is bordered to the north by River Nile State, to the west by West Kordofan and North Darfur States, to the south by South Kordofan State, and to the northeast by Khartoum State and to the east by White Nile State (Investment Commission, North Kordofan).

#### Administrative Division

The number of localities in the state is 8, represented by the localities of (Sheikan - Um Ruwaba - Al-Rahad - Bara - West Bara - Sodari - Um Dam - Jabra Al-Sheikh).

The most important aspect of cultural Socialization occurred in 1975, which was declared the International Women's Year by the United Nations. Despite this trend that promotes the role of women, we find that the Sudanese woman suffers greatly under a traditional, paternalistic, male-dominated society that places her in the category of a subordinate to the man. Furthermore, the Sudanese cultural heritage has exported a stereotypical image of women since the initial formation of this society, making her live without her tangible contributions to the community.

Socialization begins with the father, who is an extension of his community's customs and traditions, and consequently imposes them on the woman with strict adherence towards her, creating immense psychological and cultural pressure on the gender structure. Socialization begins with manifestations of joy when a male child is born, with sacrifices made and people hosted throughout the day, and the father is referred to as "Abu Fulan" (father of Fulan), even if a daughter preceded him. If it is a female, the congratulations are dull and devoid of expressions of joy, following the verse: ("And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face remains darkened, and he is silent").<sup>14</sup> Moreover, a woman who gives birth only to males acquires symbolic capital and psychological prestige, unlike one who gives birth only to females, which may even lead to divorce. The male is given psychological and moral privileges that the female cannot obtain. Thus, this view and standard are transferred to all family members and from there to the community, resulting in a distorted

perception that she is the weaker, lower in status, and less capable of thinking and innovation. She also receives direct support from the community in creating a mold whose future roles are difficult to transcend, and through which behavior and perception can be mobilized to confirm her modest, limited-area destiny.

### The Effect of Cultural Heritage

Her behavioral pattern is affirmed by establishing a distorted and negative image that stems from the memory of popular proverbs passed down from generation to generation, which degrade her value and solidify her incompetence. These sayings prepare her to perform roles inside the house and depict her as merely a vessel for procreation, ignoring her intellectual capacities affirmed by the Prophet's Sunnah: ("Take half of your religion from this Humayra").<sup>15</sup>

When the factor of cultural heritage emerges, religion becomes a marginalized factor. Modern studies have proven that there are no differences in the mental capacities between men and women. This biological equality is manipulated to create a distorted image that favors the man, thereby reinforcing gender superiority and subsequent control.<sup>16</sup>

Historical molds have produced many proverbs and anecdotes that speak of the woman's inability, weakness, and lack of resources. For example: ("The woman, even if she becomes an axe, won't split the head.") This proverb asserts her weakness and uselessness in matters that require great decisiveness and separation, to the extent that women themselves have become convinced of the truth of these molds and even use them among themselves when one of them attempts to accomplish a great task.

Another proverb: ("The woman is like an old 'Markoob'.") Markoob is a Sudanese term for a locally made shoe from cowhide. When it becomes old or exposed to rain, its usefulness decreases, and it is preferable to walk barefoot rather than wear it. This is a degradation of the woman's status, and those who say it see no harm in it due to their Socialization that shaped their normative view of women. Even the woman herself treats it as an objective reality because she is a victim of a unilateral social organization.

Through all this, we find that the community, through Socialization, draws an image of the woman that is difficult to escape from, using methods of direct support such as social acceptance if she remains within the stereotypical mold and the square of marginalization, and social disapproval if she seeks her identity and goes out into the broader community in search of a possible contribution and a mark that might change the reality of things, carrying the identity of her gender and completing a role that has been superseded.

We also find that the underestimation of women is a prominent feature in North Kordofan, where a man is

called ("Wad Al-Mara") (son of the woman) in a degrading way to belittle his status when he fails to keep a promise, acts inappropriately, or is cowardly in facing a situation.

In an interview conducted by the researcher with thirty women, 80% of the sample confirmed that they would not overstep the men's word, regardless of whether it was right or wrong. They added that they were raised this way and would pass it on to their daughters, representing the subconscious response that shapes their inner consciousness. When the same group was asked about the woman's role in society, they confined their role to raising children and managing household affairs. This situation deprives society of the woman's efforts in many life paths, especially in a fragile society like theirs, which is going through conflicts and tribal disputes, where the woman can be a good peace maker.

The researcher also used discussion groups and dialogues, targeting a segment of twenty-seven young women under thirty from different localities of the state. 90% of them believe that Socialization has weakened their ability to make decisions, and thus the girl has no say in her own affairs. The family is the one that decides which husband is suitable and which academic path she should follow. She is also deprived of exercising her right to political participation, considering it an exclusive right for men only, and if she participates, the community has an opinion about her.

Girls face difficulty accessing educational institutions, especially university education. It has become unacceptable to some families for them to go to universities outside the region, viewing this as conflicting with community values and traditions. On the other hand, 65% of them believe that families prioritize the education of male children during economic crises, which leads to a decline in opportunities for poor girls to obtain general education, especially university education, and consequently, job opportunities that guarantee their exit from the cycle of poverty.

In addition to the image of the weak being that society clothes the woman with, one who is in constant need of protection, which makes her enter society more fragile, suffering from a loss of self-confidence, and always waiting for someone to decide for her. They also held customs, traditions, and laws responsible for the woman's situation and her exclusionary status, keeping her away from decision-making and depriving the community of her great efforts.

As for education, the woman's situation is not promising, as the literacy rate among adults is 70% among women in the city and 20% in the countryside, compared to 86% among men. Women had gained advanced levels of education during the previous three decades due to awareness and the role of nomadic education and women's education, which was linked over decades of development to the

modernization trends of the economy and the need for women to work in jobs and skills. It is worth noting that there is a clear preference among women for working in the education and health sectors in the state, which 95% of the interviewees agreed upon, as these are acceptable professions according to the social heritage. Women play a major role in the education sector, as 60% of the teachers are women. Women also work in the health sector, in health and nursing professions, which has been observed recently in the state.

Gender-based violence is considered an extreme manifestation of the power imbalance between men and women. The existence of gender inequality makes women vulnerable to violence. The poorest and rural women are most exposed to violence. Many young women see the phenomenon of domestic violence as widespread in the community, specifically towards socially vulnerable groups such as women and children. The study indicates that 60% of married women are exposed to psychological violence, 23.3% are exposed to physical violence, and 10.9% suffer from sexual violence. Furthermore, 15.8% of unmarried women reported significant exposure to psychological violence. This is attributed to several factors in the community, such as the customs and traditions that restrict women from claiming their rights, especially in rural communities.

In the same context, Amal Khalil Youssef (2024), Head of the Gender Department (interview), indicates that the Peace and Development Studies Center at Kordofan University in the state is working extensively to raise community awareness about gender-based violence, which includes child marriage and harmful practices. She points out that customs and traditions in the community have driven women to suppress their rights to education, and the illiteracy rate has increased, which leads the community to push for child marriage to bring in money and improve income levels. She indicates that these practices lead to a high mortality rate among young girls and increased exposure to various types of violence.

The study also indicates that women's political participation in the community has reached 40% of its previous level, despite being a very slow process. There is a time lag between the granting of rights and their exercise, in addition to the slow progress of women reaching decision-making positions in the executive, legislative, and judicial fields, and in the private sector and the labor market. Women's participation in the executive field began to gain awareness late, but they have proven high competence in executive, legislative, and judicial decision-making, despite the challenges they face from society and the characteristics they are described with.

In an interview with a pioneering woman in the field of education and the executive field, Amal Khalil (2024, personal interview) explains the importance of education and its role in her reaching the position of Minister of Health in the state, despite the challenges she faces from the community, which questions women's participation at the executive and legislative levels. However, there are a set of motivations that helped her reach this stage. We find a small number of women in local governments, despite the positive trend.

### Key Study Findings

- Socialization plays a major role in issues of education and health and in confronting negative behaviors of children.
- Girls face difficulty accessing educational institutions, especially university education outside the region, and due to the families' economic status.
- Inherited customs, traditions, and values represent one of the most important constraints and negatives facing women's education, despite the community's awareness of the importance of education.
- Awareness of women's participation in the executive field started late, but they have shown high competence in executive, legislative, and judicial decision-making, with their participation rate reaching 40% of its previous level.
- There is a clear preference among women for working in the education and health sectors in the state, which 95% of the interviewees agreed upon, as these are acceptable professions according to the social heritage.
- Gender-based violence is considered an extreme manifestation of the power imbalance between men and women, to the extent that the existence of gender inequality makes women vulnerable to violence.
- Lack of a reference framework for dealing with violent practices against women.

### Recommendations

- Urging families about the importance of education, especially for women in rural communities.
- Sound religious education for children and no discrimination based on gender.
- Civil society organizations must play their role in raising awareness of the necessity of respecting gender and intensifying this through workshops, training courses, and seminars.
- Adopting curricula that enhance women's ability to make decisions.
- Supporting and prioritizing women's education.
- Enacting deterrent laws that criminalize the belittling of women.
- Involving women in decision-making at all levels.

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