

Changing the Approach to Voting for Muslim Women

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Анотація

Розглядається питання відсутності інтересу у жінок мусульманської віри до політичного життя країни та їх мала участь у виборах. Пропонується підвищити активність цієї групи виборців за допомогою спеціально-створеної Інтернет платформи для жінок, щоб забезпечувати їх необхідною інформативною підтримкою щодо їх кар'єрних та інших можливостей, соціальних та політичних подій. Рекомендується створити додаток на мобільний телефон, який буде надавати вихід на вищезгадану онлайн платформу, а також можливість голосування у виборах.

Ключові слова: вибори, голосування, виборча дільниця, мусульманські країни, електронна демократія.

Abstract

The issue of a very low involvement of Muslim women in political life and their not high attendance of polling place is analyzed. The author suggests enhancing the interest to social and political events in the country, elections in particular with a special Internet platform for women which will provide them the all the information about career opportunities, social and political life. There is also a recommendation to create an app for a smartphone which will be linked to the online platform and will enable voting without leaving home.

Keywords: elections, voting, polling place, Muslim countries, e-democracy.

The problem of encouraging people to participate in elections has existed since the voting system was established. For instance, American Presidential elections 2016 showed 58 % voters turnout [1]. The reasons for not attending a polling place are many, for example, there are people who can't come because they have physical disabilities, people who currently work or live abroad and lastly, people, who can't come to the elections due to the religious restrictions. Sure enough, election committees try to handle the issue by providing some special voting conditions for such groups, but still there are some inconveniences caused for the voters.

Besides, such groups of voters as muslim women are not considered to be special as according to the laws of the countries, they should attend a polling place to cast their vote. Therefore, there are no exceptions for such votes. But, on the other hand, the man of the house does have the legal right in Islamic law (shari'ah) to restrict freedom of movement for women[2] that means that there is a possibility that she won't be present at the elections. Thus, the situation is a concern and needs some recent improvement.

With the development of new technologies and constantly increasing use of the Internet, a lot of electronic tools which provide more democracy for citizens of different countries appear. E-democracy is considered a buzzword which means the use of information and communication technologies and strategies by "democratic sectors" within the political processes of local communities, states/regions, nations and on the global stage[3]. As an example, in the USA there are some special interconnected platforms that help government incentivize women for social engagement, i.e. OptIn and VoteCircle.

OptIn is a career platform built for women where they learn about their opportunities find and achieve their career opportunities, increase their self-esteem and skills [4]. And VoteCircle fights voter apathy and election waste by empowering modern voters and candidates with insights, social polling, and analytics[5]. The idea of creating such resources for women who are not much socially engaged due to some restrictions is sound. This way islamic women could be more politically aware and participate in different political events, such as elections.

Together with the Internet tools mentioned above, electronic voting system should also be implemented. The benefits of electronic voting system are numerous, they are definitely auditable, transparent, secure and accurate and accessible. What is electronic voting? Electronic voting is a type of vote which is done through electronic systems. Electronic voting also known as e-voting has include on its technology optical scanning

vote systems, punched cards and voting kiosks which includes transmission of ballots and votes via telephone, Internet or private computer networks. A voting machine is the combination of electromechanical, mechanical or electronic equipment which includes its software, hardware and all required documentation to program control and equipment which counts and casts votes, defined ballots, to display or report election result and to produce and maintain audit trail information. Electronic voting system has been launched in the USA, Australia, Canada, Belgium, Germany, Romania, France, Venezuela, Philippines, The European Union, Switzerland, Italy, Norway, Romania and United Kingdom [6].

In addition, all the mentioned above will not be productive without a good means for such an activity. The best instrument for that is surely smartphone as it is the most popular for mobile Internet access. In the USA, the government is very interested in building a special application for the 2020 Presidential race which will be installed on smartphones. Besides, smartphones are absolutely personal, in comparison to desktop computers which can be used by several people. Moreover, according to a recent survey by Ipsos, a market-research firm, rich Muslim-majority countries boast some of world's highest rates of smartphone penetration, with the United Arab Emirates ahead at 61%. But even in poorer Muslim lands adoption is respectable: 26% in Egypt, not much below Germany's 29%. More than a third of people in the Middle East now use the internet, slightly above the world average. Due to that there are a lot of issues caused by an immerse use of the Internet, social networking sites in particular in the countries. The internet's impact is even greater for Muslim women. "You can look after your family, have a job, and avoid workplace problems," says Kimberly Ben, a convert and freelance copywriter in Alabama, who publishes tips for Muslim women on running a business from home on MuslimahsWorkingAtHome.com [7].

Thus, taking into consideration that the use of the Internet and smartphones and other new technologies is enhancing, but the involvement into political life of muslim women is still not sufficient. That means that the voting system in Muslim countries should be renewed and updated. One of the ways to do it is to build a special platform for Muslim women where they can share their interests, learn about career opportunities and become more politically aware and socially engaged. The platform should also have a mobile version, which can be installed on a smartphone which will remind the women about the date and time of important political events as well as give a chance to vote from their homes.

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