

**Women's Employment
Complex Challenges and
Unenforced Laws
Dr Ahmed Khudhair Hussein**

2023

Women's Employment Complex Challenges and Unenforced Laws

Baghdad, June 2023

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About Heia Foundation for Cultural and Media Development

Heia Foundation for Cultural and Media Development, is a non-governmental, non-profit organization. It is officially registered with the Prime Ministry/No Gain Organizations Department since 2022. Its head office is in Baghdad. The foundation is concerned with media and women's affairs, especially those working in the field of journalism and media. The foundation aims to reduce hate speech towards women and eliminate discrimination on basis of sex in governmental and non-governmental organizations and media outlets. It also aims to improve the image of women,

improve their legal awareness, and enable them to assume all kinds of decision-making positions.

The organization has conducted many campaigns that are concerned with women's issues such as (His Prescence Solves the Crisis), (Partners But...) and (Break the Silence Barrier).

For more information, please visit the foundation's website **<https://www.heiaiq.org>**

About PartnersGlobal

Partners Global Organization was established in 1989 as a civil society organization concerned with building peace and societal integration and its head office is in Washington D.C. The organization works through a network of independent local canters in the world which supports positive and peaceful change.

PartnersGlobal/Iraq is a locally led, nonprofit, and nongovernmental organization that aims to build sustainable partnerships between the government, citizens, and civil society organizations in Iraq by promoting good governance, rule of law, economic development, and gender equality.

PartnersGlobal/Iraq is a leading non-profit organization in building sustainable peace in Iraq by promoting the principles of tolerance, diversity, and the basis of a resilient society at the community, local and national levels. Since 2008, the organization in Iraq has been working on collaborative leadership, building through consensus, and joint advocacy to support vulnerable communities by creating positive community relationships to realize a stable and sustainable future.

The organization is based in Baghdad and works in all governorates of Iraq to support civil society organizations through capacity building and supporting local community's

initiatives. This is done through cooperation with a range of donors such as the Governments of Canada and the United States, the National Democracy Foundation, and the UN Development Program.

PartnersGlobal/Iraq – has gathered local and international expertise to establish effective community integration and promote human rights principles. They are reflected in initiatives to empower Iraqi youth, and combat violent extremism, develop local services for displaced people, and promote community reconciliation in ISIS liberated areas. By these initiatives, PartnersGlobal/Iraq is taking multisectoral

approach to support peace and stability in the Iraqi society.

for more information, please visit the website:

<https://www.partnersglobal.org>

Empowering Working Women in Iraq

About the Project


In the period following ISIS, supporting the role of labor in the Iraqi labor force is an essential component in the economic and political construction in Iraq. The process of adopting the new labor law last year is in progress. Moreover, there is a need for creating 5-7 million new jobs to revive the Iraqi economy. All of this create a great opportunity to reintegrate Iraqi working women in the labor force. In order to take advantage of this opportunity, PartnersGlobal in coordination with the Canadian government is implementing a 42-month long project which aims to promote

women's protection and equal work opportunities for them in Iraq through achieving these outputs:

- Cutting harassment and increasing women's protection and equality in the workplace
- Developing good governance and women advocate networks that claim women's rights in the workplace

Moreover, the foundation has worked with the support of PartnersGlobal on the implementation of a project that targets working women in (Baghdad, Basra, Nineveh, Karbala, Diyala and Anbar) to detect women's awareness of their rights in the updated law of Labor No 37 for 2015. It

has also implemented a digital application that enables women to confidentially report incidents of harassment, discrimination, and blackmail they were subjected to in the workplace in order to take legal actions against the violators. The application also provides a free consultation service that answers legal queries within an hour of their submission.

To install _heia application and use its services please scan the QR code:



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Women's Employment:

Complex Challenges and Unenforced Laws

Dr. Ahmed Khudhair Hussein

1.Theoretical - Methodological Approach.⁽¹⁾

The Problem of The Study

As usual, the problem of women's employment overlaps with other problems, and gets extremely complicated, according to regional, cultural, and civil differences.

Some of these problems stem from the

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cultural heritage that supports women's subordination. It also makes them an entity that is limited to reproduction, domestic work, and maintaining the honor of the family. Moreover, the social outlook involves a lot of rejection and condemnation of women's employment. This is also supported by the Bedouin values that spread to the city due to socio-cultural cross-fertilization. Therefore, women are still subject to social discrimination, sexual harassment, and unequal pay. Moreover, they face discrimination in promotions, privileges, and holding positions of responsibility. They are also subjected to harassment, violence, death threats, and the

absence of official legal protections in the workplace. Other problems are related to the policies and laws that do not recognize the principle of equality between men and working women on one hand and between working women in state departments and the public sector on one hand, and women who work in other sectors on the other hand. This is evident in Article (65) of the Retirement and Social Security Law No. (39), which does not include any policies that regulate work or protections for employees who work in the private sector, which is devoid of policies and conditions for decent work as well as social protections, unlike the public sector.

Women's fear of revealing harassment and discrimination in the workplace is related to the social culture and its conservative value system. It is also due to the authoritarian style followed in the work environment, which lacks the simplest components of decent work environment such as insufficient lighting, noise, poor ventilation, nurseries, security cameras, and barriers that protect employees from customers or other employees.

Methodology and Objectives

This study adopts the survey approach through dialogue sessions based on in-depth interviews similar to (in-depth thinking sessions). The author conducted interviews

with women of different educational and social levels, with a focus on the age group (20-40) from different work environments (public sector, private sector) in Nineveh, Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, Anbar, and Basra. The study is divided into two parts.

The first part includes questions about the status of women in the workplace and the institutions where harassment is frequent. It also discusses mechanisms that prevents harassment and discrimination in the work environment. It also discusses the availability of tools that helps to prevent harassment in work environments such as separate bathrooms for women, partitions that guarantee privacy, and security

cameras. As well as the appropriate methods for women to disclose incidents of harassment and discrimination against them and the justifications for their silence on these issues.

The second part is dedicated to the policies and laws related to harassment and discrimination issues and their effectiveness in the workplace. As well as the importance of the presence of empowerment departments in government institutions and their effectiveness on topics related to gender gaps. In addition, the proposals of working women about the laws, development of work environments, and the women's empowerment departments to reduce harassment and discrimination.

After the in-depth interviews, the author created a questionnaire consisting of (13) main questions, addressed to (600) women. A hundred women in each governorate were selected by the cluster sample method according to the districts of the selected governorates, and women's areas of residence: (Baghdad, Nineveh, Basra, Diyala, Anbar, and Karbala). The questionnaire was carefully distributed according to the proportions of the population in each of the six governorates to the percentage of the selected sample, with a very small variation in the methodology in some governorates.

The survey included women aged (20) years to (40) years, and the questionnaire

was distributed directly by three social workers in Heia Foundation for Cultural and Media Development. They documented oral responses from the respondents and recorded the answers via tablets for 30 days from 1st May 2023 to 30th May 2023.

After The questionnaire was designed, it was sent to a group of experts and specialists in polls for approval. After making some minor amendments it was ready for distribution. The questionnaire comprises of questions that include variables of age, marital status, educational level, profession, and governorate. In addition, it includes open and closed questions related to behaviors and actions resulting from

harassment in the workplace as well as the nature of gender gaps. Table (1) shows the distribution of the study sample according to age, education, marital status, standard of living, and area.

Table (1) shows the distribution of the study sample

Distribution of the study sample	Iteration		Percentage
Ages	16-20	18	3%
	21-25	164	27.3%
	26-30	32	5.3%
	31-35	225	37.6%
	36-40	161	26.8%
Marital status	Married	221	36.8%
	single	200	33.3%
	Widow	92	15.3%
	Divorced	87	14.6%
Business Type	Public Sector	271	45.2%
	Private Sector	329	54.8%
education	Low education	51	8.5%
	Intermediate	341	56.8%

	education		
	Higher education	208	34.7%
Living situation	Income is Insufficient to meet the basic needs	296	49.3%
	Income is Sufficient to meet basic needs	271	45.2%
	High Income (lavishnes)	33	5.5%
Governorate	Baghdad	100	16.6%
	Basra	100	16.7%
	Nineveh	100	16.7%
	Anbar	100	16.7%
	Diyala	100	16.7%
	Karbala	100	16.6%

2. Gender discrimination in the workplace

Article 4 of the Iraqi Labor Law stipulates that (work is a right for every willing citizen. and the state should provide equal work opportunities without discrimination). Article 8 of the same law prohibits discrimination between workers, including

direct or indirect discrimination in all aspects of employment, including vocational training, recruitment, privileges and rights, or terms and conditions of employment.¹

Men are dominant in most areas of work, including leadership and government positions. Moreover, Gender discrimination involves pay, job opportunities, promotions, incentives, training, and development, and even the work environment itself. According to data² on recruitment in state departments and institutions for 2012, the number of males who were appointed in all institutions exceeded female appointments multiple

¹ Iraqi Labor Law, Article 4.

² Ministry of Planning, Central Bureau of Statistics, Gender Report in State Ministries, and Institutions for 2012, Baghdad, 2014, p. 8.

times. And this discrimination reached its maximum in the Ministry of Oil, as the percentage of employees who were appointed this year were men by 92.5% compared to 7.5% of women.

Moreover, the international reports issued by the United Nations Development Program on the economic situation of women in Iraq indicate that "there are many legal, social and economic challenges facing and distinguishing their participation in the economic activity, as the general assumptions within the Iraqi Tax Law, the Personal Status Law, and the Penal Code hinder the full exercise of Iraqi women their rights of free will and economic independence. They also restrict the role of women to motherhood and deprive

them of accessing their financial resources and social security ...etc.³

Protection against discrimination refers to the right of all women of not being treated less favorably in work because of their sex. This principle includes:

- Women should not be paid less than men for work of equal value.
- Maternity must not be a source of discrimination in work, employment, access to training, privileges and rights, conditions of employment or promotions.

³- Ahmed Kudhair Hussein, the reality of entrepreneurship among Iraqi youth opportunities& challenges, iq forum of policy-making consultants- London, 2021, p5.

- The purpose of protecting women should not be a source of discrimination, such as preventing women from performing certain tasks because they are considered not for women.
- Caregiving responsibilities should not be a source of discrimination, i.e. not employing women because employers assume that women cannot work regular hours, or they will need time off because of their domestic responsibilities⁴.

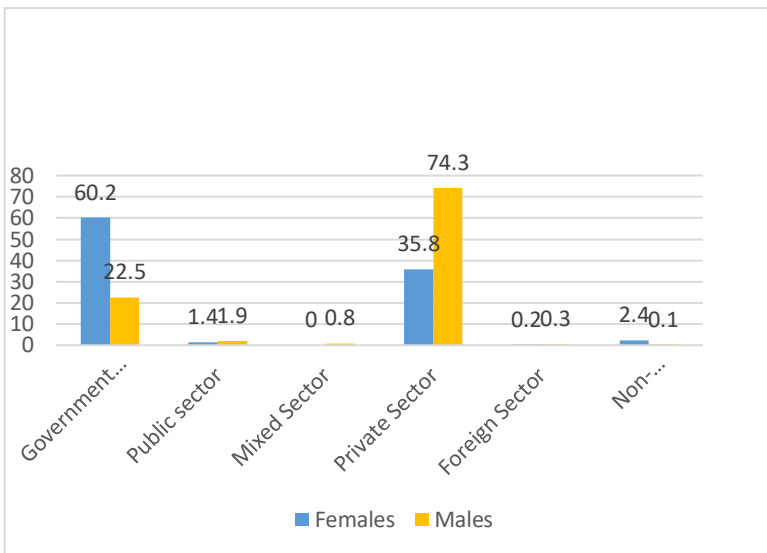
Young women in the age group (10-30) tend to work in the government sector more compared with young men in the same age

⁴- PartnersGlobal, Gender Equality: In the Iraqi Labor Law and Iraqi Labor Policy, Iraq, Baghdad, 2021, p. 16.

group and sector. The percentage of female workers in the government sector is 60% compared to 23% of young males. While young males are more active in the private sector (74%) compared to young women (36%). This is in line with the young women's view of working in the public sector as safer and more appropriate for them than the private sector.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of young men and women in paid work by sector and sex⁵.

⁵- National Survey of Youths for the year 2019, Iraqi Ministry of Planning, Central Bureau of Statistics, Iraq, Table (4-15), p. 46.



Discriminatory practices in the workplace continue to expand to include all aspects of work and occupation including wages, career advancements, social security laws and their coverage. There are still legal and social barriers to women's right to economic participation. They face

restrictions in gender-based jobs as well as restrictions on property tenure, the need for the husband's consent to work, and laws that prevent them from signing contracts or obtaining credit cards. They are also prevented from working in jobs that are common for men or face limited working hours. In the following, we will summarize the most important indicators of inequality between men and women in the workplace in various sectors based on the survey carried out in governorates of (Nineveh, Baghdad, Basra, Anbar, Karbala, and Diyala):

Discrimination in Treatment

The Iraqi Labor Law obliges employers to protect workers from all aspects of gender

discrimination and ensure equal pay for equal work. It also demands equal treatment for all workers in the same profession including women⁶. The inequality in treatment between men and women in the workplace varies according to the social environment. The reasons behind this are the social and cultural prejudices, by giving men more opportunities and privileges than women. As well as the perceptions of the role of women in society as limited to home and family care and that work outside the home is restricted to men. The most important factor is the shortage in the number of women working in some

⁶- Iraqi Labor Code, article 42 (2-n)

industries or fields. It makes women incapable to object to the discrimination practiced against them. This consequently leads women to lose their confidence and affects performance and productivity. Besides, it affects the company's image, diversity, and innovation because women cannot participate in creating innovative ideas. The data about the status of women in the work environment varies regarding discrimination they are exposed to in terms of appearance and dress code. Sometimes, discrimination is between two women, other times discrimination is between men and women, which may create a gender gap that

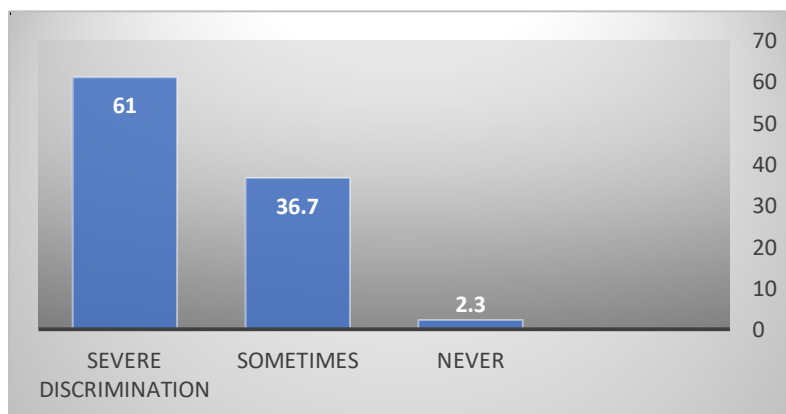
impacts the work environment in both sectors.

*((A young **woman (A.S.)** talks about the ongoing discrimination against her during her work in a government institution because she is less qualified than her colleagues in the department despite she was rewarded for having the highest achievement. She states that she was deprived of regular vacations and overtime pay, while her colleagues enjoyed all these rights))*

On the other hand, 61% of the 366 respondents stated that they were subjected to severe discrimination in the workplace, while (220) respondents (36.7%) stated that

they were subjected to discrimination sometimes, and 14 respondents (2.3%) expressed that they were not subjected to any discrimination in the workplace.

Figure 2 shows discrimination in the workplace.



The results of the survey show the correlation between discrimination against women in the workplace and their marital

status. Married women are mostly subjected to discrimination with 287 married women (47.8%), followed by unmarried women with 239 women (39.8%). While 32 widowed women (5.3%) and 28 divorced women (4.7%) reported that they were subjected to discrimination in the workplace.

Moreover, the results also revealed the correlation between the work sector and discrimination in the workplace. 277 out of the respondents (39.1%) reported that they were subjected to severe discrimination in the private sector compared with 136 women (23.4%) in the public sector.

Furthermore, the results of the survey also showed the relationship between the

working women's residence area and discrimination in the workplace. Women in Basra governorate are more likely to be severely discriminated against compared to other governorates in the study, i.e. about 99 women (16.5%) were subjected to discrimination in Basra governorate, followed by Karbala governorate where 97 women (16.2%), 84 women in Nineveh (14%) and 66 women in Baghdad (11%) reported that they were subjected to discrimination in treatment in Nineveh. Meanwhile, 99 women (16.5 %) reported that they were discriminated against sometimes. And finally, 20 women from Diyala governorate stated

that they were subjected to discrimination in the workplace.

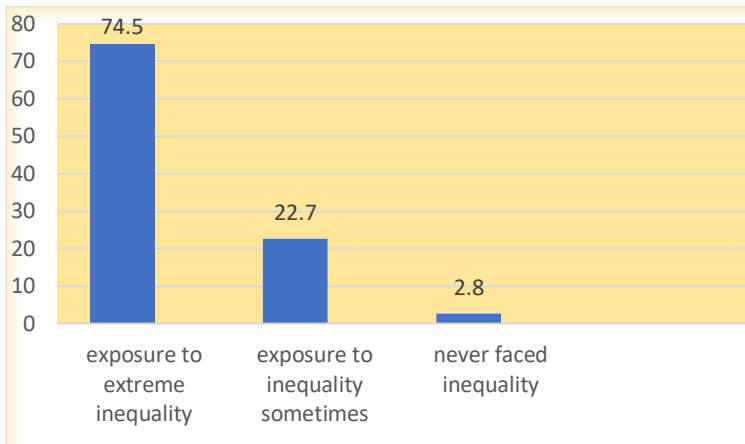
Discrimination in Assuming Positions of Responsibility

Inequality between men and women in assuming positions of responsibility contradicts the concept of gender equality, civil and human rights. It leads to narrowing the scope of women's work in reaching senior positions and leadership responsibilities without taking into consideration the qualifications, competencies, skills, or experience that they possess.

Based on the survey conducted within this study, approximately 447 respondents, (74.5%) revealed that they faced extreme inequality in assuming positions of

responsibility in the workplace. Meanwhile, (136) respondents (22.7%) answered that they sometimes face inequality in assuming positions of responsibility. Approximately, (17) respondents (2.8%) stated that they never faced inequality in assuming high positions in the workplace.

Figure 3 shows inequality or discrimination in positions of responsibility.



The results of the survey show the relationship between discrimination against women in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace and their marital status. It was found that 283 married women (47.3%) of the total respondents are subjected to discrimination, followed by 240 unmarried women (40%) who reported that they were subjected to inequality in assuming positions of responsibility. Moreover, 32 widowed women (5.3%) were

reported inequality in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace. Finally, 28 divorced women (4.7%) are exposed to inequality in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace.

Moreover, the survey revealed the correlation between the work sector and inequality in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace. 282 out of the total respondents (48.5%) were subjected to extreme inequality in holding positions of responsibility in the private sector compared with 160 women (27.5%) women in the public sector.

The results of the survey also showed that women in Basra governorate are

exposed more to extreme inequality in assuming high positions in the workplace compared with other governorates in the study. 99 women (16.5%) in Basra governorate reported that they faced extreme inequality in assuming positions of responsibility, followed by Baghdad governorate where 97 women (16.2%) stated that they are severely discriminated against in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace. Nearly 96 women (16%) are severely discriminated against in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace in Karbala. In the Nineveh governorate, 83 women 13.8% and 65 women 10.8% in Anbar governorate stated they were severely

discriminated against in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace. And finally, in Diyala governorate, 86 women 14.3% reported that they were sometimes discriminated against in assuming positions of responsibility in the workplace. This indicates that employment in Iraq is influenced by gender biases. When recruiting, men are prioritized at the expense of women in certain sectors and jobs. Moreover, traditions give men a higher status in the work environment.

-Discrimination in Salaries and Leaves

(A.D. from Basra governorate is an employee in a government institution. She states that "I am constantly discriminated against

because I am less qualified than my colleagues in the department although I have the highest rate of productivity. I am deprived of regular leaves and overtime pay, while my peers enjoy all these rights.”)

The Iraqi labor law prohibits “any violation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment for any reason and in all matters relating to vocational training, employment, privileges and rights, or terms and conditions of work.”⁷ The law stipulates that equal pay for equal work includes wages, benefits, remuneration, allowances, vocational training, and career

⁷ - GlobalPartners, Gender Equality: In the Iraqi Labor Law and Iraqi Labor Policy, previous source, p. 28.

advancements. Moreover, the employer is required to provide a system to deal with workers' complaints and grievances. Thus, a worker has the right to appeal against an employer if the latter does not comply with the principle of equal pay for equal work⁸.

Moreover, work environments lack justice and equality between men and women in terms of salaries and leaves. As well as the principles and policies of work, such as the inequality in wages between men and women without fair evaluation. Additionally, there is a huge gap between men and women in wages although they perform the

⁸ - Iraqi labor Code, article 41 (2-j).

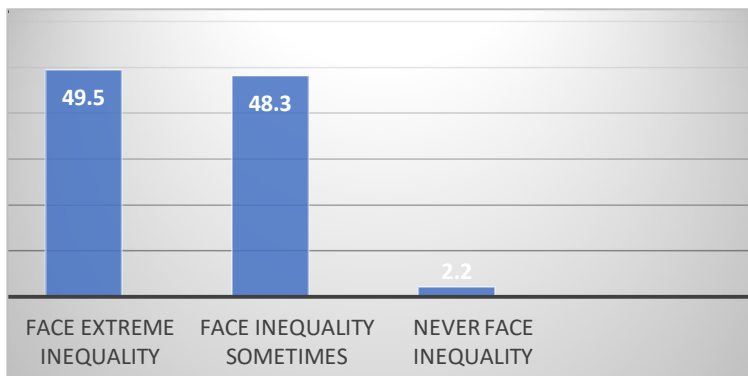
same tasks and have the same responsibilities.

A participant (A.B) talks about the discrimination against her in the workplace (sale department in a shopping center): “The manager at work differentiates between me and my colleagues in wages because of my hijab. He pays them more because I wear hijab and they don’t. I also am deprived of the allowances for sales I make, although I have the highest rate.”

On the other hand, about 297 respondents (49.5%) revealed that they were subjected to extreme inequality in salaries, bonuses, and leaves. 290 respondents (48.3%) answered that sometimes, they

experience inequality in salaries, bonuses, and leaves. Only 13 respondents (2.2%) stated that they never faced inequality in salaries, bonuses, and leaves.

Figure 4 shows inequality in pay and leaves.



The results of the survey reveal correlation between working women's marital status and inequality in salaries, bonuses, and

leaves. 288 married women (48%) and 239 unmarried women (39.7%) reported that they were subjected to extreme inequality in salaries and leaves. 32 widowed women (5.3%) and 28 divorced women (4.7%) reported that they were subjected to discrimination in salaries, bonuses, and leaves.

The results of the survey revealed the relationship between work sector and discrimination in salaries, bonuses and leaves. 172 women in the private sector (29.6%) reported that they faced extreme discrimination in salaries, bonuses, and leaves. While 119 women in the public sector (20.5%) faced extreme discrimination

in salaries, bonuses, and leaves. The findings indicate that cultural and social bias tends to favor males in different aspects, including salaries and bonuses. This may also involve the fact that it is harder for women to negotiate and demand a pay rise compared with men.

The results of the survey also showed the correlation between the governorate and discrimination in salaries, bonuses and leaves. it was found that more women in Basra governorate are exposed to extreme discrimination compared to other governorates within the study where 94 women (15.7%) reported that were exposed to extreme discrimination and equality in

salaries, bonuses and leaves. In the governorate of Karbala, about 85 women (14.2%) women reported that they are extremely discriminated against in salaries, bonuses, and leaves. While 88 women (14.7%) in Diyala governorate and 80 women (13.3%) in Nineveh governorate reported that they were sometimes subjected to discrimination in salaries, bonuses, and leaves in Diyala. Moreover, 66 women in Anbar (11%) and 70 women (11.7%) in Baghdad stated that they sometimes experienced discrimination in salaries, bonuses, and leaves.

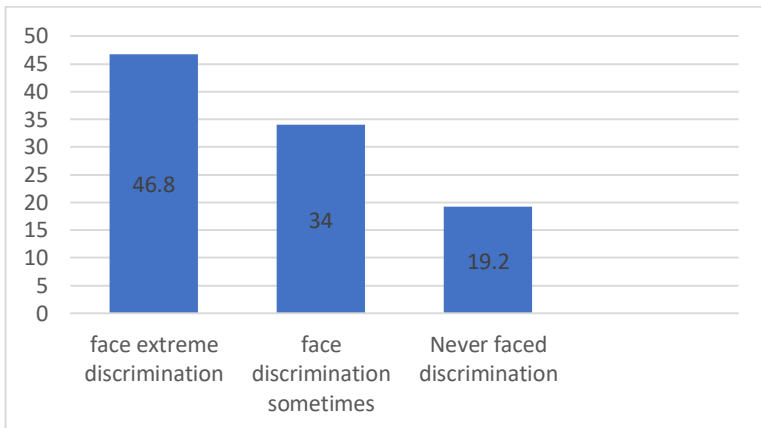
Discrimination in Chances of Promotion

Inequality in chances of promotion is a kind of gender discrimination. Many women face challenges in accessing promotion chances in the same way as men, including: the lack of clear criteria in making promotion decisions, cultural prejudice, customs and traditions that hinder women's chances of promotion, as well as society's limited assumptions of women's role and the preference of men.

The results of the survey show that 281 women (46.8%) reported that they were strongly subjected to discrimination and inequality in chances of promotion. Meanwhile, 204 respondents (34%) stated

that they were sometimes discriminated against in promotion opportunities. 115 respondents (19.2%) declared that they never were subjected to discrimination in promotion opportunities.

Figure 5 shows discrimination in chances of promotion.



The results of the survey show the attitudes towards women according to

women's marital status and its correlation to discrimination in chances of promotion. It was found that 219 married women (36.5%) were subjected to discrimination in chances of promotion compared with 206 unmarried women (34.4%). In addition, 32 widowed women (5.3%) and 28 divorced women (4.7%) were subjected to discrimination and inequality with men in chances of promotion.

Moreover, the results of the survey indicated that there is a relationship between the work sector and discrimination in chances of promotions. 146 women in the private sector (25.1%) reported that they experienced extreme inequality in the

chances of promotion. Meanwhile, 132 women in the public sector (22.7%) reported extreme inequality between men and women in chances of promotion.

The results of the survey also revealed that there is a correlation between the place of residence and discrimination in the chances of promotion. It was found that women in Basra governorate are more likely to be extremely discriminated against compared to other governorates in the study, with 99 women representing (16.5%). In the governorate of Karbala, about 96 women (16%) are subjected to extreme discrimination. While 88 women (14.7%) in Diyala and 81 women in Nineveh (13.5%)

reported that they are sometimes subjected to discrimination in chances of promotion in Diyala. In the governorate of Baghdad, 66 women (11%) reported that they faced extreme inequality in chances of promotion. Finally, in Anbar governorate 30 women (5%) stated that they are sometimes discriminated against in the chances of promotion.

Discrimination in Decision Making

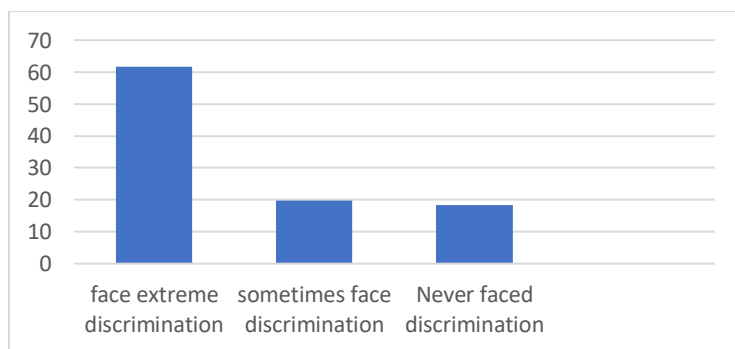
Discrimination in decision-making in the workplace is a result of multiple factors, including the traditional social system that women face in the workplace. It impacts women in decision-making due to the unclear assumptions or prejudices. Women

also face insufficient representation in decision-making positions, as well as the lack of promotion chances that qualify them to participate in important decision-making. Therefore, this institutional discrimination in making important decisions causes a lack of confidence and appreciation of women's capabilities and limits their role in decision-making.

On the other hand, about 371 respondents (61.8%), reported that they were subjected to extreme discrimination in making important decisions. Moreover, 119 respondents (19.8%), declared that they were sometimes subjected to extreme discrimination in making important

decisions. In addition, 110 respondent (18.3%) stated that they were not subjected to discrimination in making important decisions at all.

Figure 6 shows discrimination in decision-making.



The survey results show the attitudes towards women according to their marital status and its relationship with

discrimination in making important decisions. The results indicated that 218 married women (36.3%) are exposed to discrimination in decision making compared with 213 representing 35.5% that reported discrimination in decision-making. Moreover, 31 widowed women representing 5.2% and 28 divorced women representing 4.7% also reported that they were subjected to discrimination in making important decisions.

The survey results revealed the relationship between sectors of work and discrimination in making important decisions, indicating that women in the private sector, by 231 women representing 39.8%, are more

strongly exposed to discrimination in making important decisions compared to the public sector, with 134 women representing 23.1% strongly exposed to discrimination in making important decisions.

The survey results also showed the relationship between the women's place of residence and discrimination in making important decisions. Women in Basra Governorate are most vulnerable to discrimination, with 99 women representing 16.5% reporting that they were strongly exposed to discrimination in making important decisions. They are followed by Karbala Governorate where 96 women

(16.0%) reported that they were exposed to discrimination in making important decisions. In Diyala 85 women representing 14.2% were exposed to discrimination in making important decisions. In addition, in Baghdad, 67 women representing 11.2%, stated they were strongly exposed to discrimination in making important decisions, while in Nineveh Governorate 70 women representing 11.7% declared that they never faced discrimination in making important decisions. Finally, 69 women in Anbar Governorate (11.5%) reported that they never experienced discrimination in making important decisions.

Discrimination on the Basis of Ethnicity and Nationality

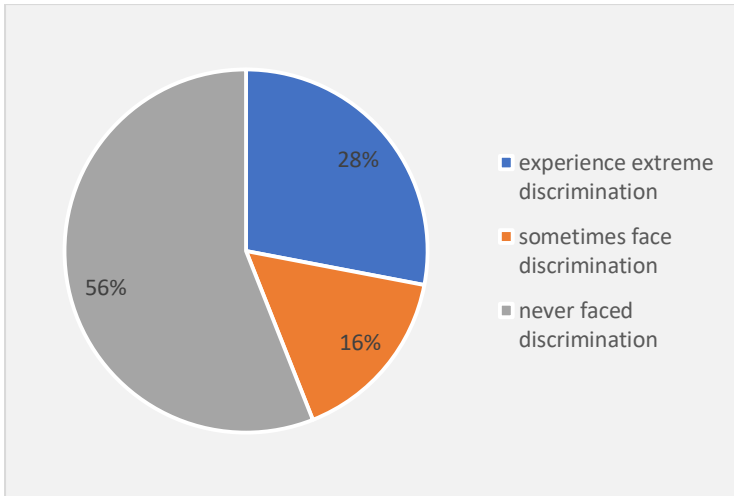
((A.S. a young woman from Baghdad who works in a military agency speaks about her experience with discrimination. She says that I am subjected to ongoing discrimination in treatment due to my national affiliation, and all the employees including the director of the department are all from the Iraqi majority while I am the only one who belongs to a national minority. I am subjected to negative discrimination in treatment and unfairness at work and I am assigned more tasks than my colleagues. I am deprived of my right to regular and sick leaves because the procedures for obtaining

sick leave require examination and treatment in a hospital located within the military institution. In addition, I am subjected to discrimination in assuming high positions, as they are usually granted to men and denied to women in general under the excuse of fearing for them.))

Discrimination on the basis of ethnic and national affiliation contradicts with the principles of equality and human rights. Because this type of discrimination is related to treating people on the basis of their race or gender rather than their skills and capabilities, it may also impact their chances of employment. Approximately 333 respondents representing 55.5%, reported

that they were strongly subjected to discrimination on the basis of ethnic and national affiliation, while 98 respondents, representing 16.3%, stated that they sometimes were subjected to discrimination on the basis of ethnic and national affiliation while 169 women (28.2%) stated that they never experienced discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and nationality.

Figure 7 shows discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and nationality



The results of the survey show the attitudes towards women according to their social status and its relationship with discrimination on the basis of ethnic and national affiliation; it is found that married women are subjected to discrimination with 203 women representing 33.8%, 170 unmarried women representing (28.3%)

reported that they were subjected to discrimination on the basis of ethnic and national affiliation. Meanwhile, 30 widowed women and 28 divorced women representing 5% and 4.7% respectively reported that they experienced discrimination because of ethnic and national affiliation.

Moreover, the results indicated that there is a correlation between the work sector and discrimination based on ethnic and national affiliation. 191 Women in the private sector compared with 135 in the public sector representing 32.9% and 23.2% respectively reported that they were strongly

subjected to discrimination because of national and ethnic affiliation.

Furthermore, the results of the survey showed that women in Nineveh governorate are strongly exposed to extreme discrimination compared to other governorates in the study where 99 women (16.5%) are severely discriminated against based on ethnic and national affiliation, followed by Basra governorate with 96 women representing 16%. In addition, 85 women in Diyala representing 14.2%, 67 women representing 11.2% in Baghdad and 30 women in Anbar representing 11.7% also reported that they were discriminated

against in decision-making on the basis of national and ethnic affiliation.

3. Mechanisms that prevent discrimination in the workplace

From the in-depth dialogues conducted by the author with women working in the public sector and the informal sector during the sessions held in the targeted governorates (Baghdad, Nineveh, Karbala, Anbar, Diyala, and Basra), we reached a set of preventative measures against discrimination in both private and public sector. They are explained below:

Private sector:

This sector suffers from large gender gaps.

The following recommendations may prevent discrimination in the private sector.

- 1- Enacting strict laws and regulations that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in employment. The laws must be comprehensive and guarantee women's rights to fair and equal chances of employment, promotion and pay.
- 2- Promoting awareness of women's rights and equality in the workplace especially gender equality. And implementing awareness campaigns and educational programs to

educate employees and employers of equality and discrimination issues.

- 3- Recruitment and promotion processes should be transparent and based on qualifications and competencies rather than sexism. Fair procedures should be followed to ensure fair evaluation of all employees as well as equal opportunities.
- 4- Encouraging programs and policies that support work-life balance for women and men. The policies should cover maternity and

paternity leaves, care leave and flexible working hours.

- 5- There must be effective mechanisms, such as a complaint box, for reporting complaints of discrimination in the workplace. Employees should be assured in reporting any abuses or discrimination that occur in the workplace without fear of retaliation or punishment. In addition, complaints must be addressed quickly and fairly.
- 6- Adopting diversity and inclusion programs to promote equality in the workplace. Such as encouraging

the recruitment and promotion of employees from diverse backgrounds. And promoting diversity in management, development opportunities and training.

- 7- Establishing clear and fair criteria for evaluation, promotions and salary determination to ensure equal remuneration for male and female employees.

Public sector

The public sector is subject to a set of mechanisms and laws aimed at preventing discrimination in the workplace. Below are

some of the mechanisms that were discussed based on the in-depth interviews:

- 1- Applying the principles of transparency and accountability in human resources management within the public sector, i.e., recruitment and promotion decisions should be based on specific criteria and transparent information, which reduces opportunities for discrimination.
- 2- Conducting a periodic assessment of the impact of policies and programs on equality in the workplace and reviewing relevant data and statistics and assessing progress and identifying areas that need improvement.

- 3- Conducting awareness and training programs for employees on equality and anti-discrimination issues. They should educate participants about relevant laws and policies. And promote awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- 4- Establish equality and anti-discrimination bodies and committees to develop appropriate policies and procedures and monitor their implementation. In addition, to receive complaints and reports and take the necessary measures to investigate and address them.

4. Harassment in the Work Environment

The issue of harassment was raised in Iraq many years ago. Various parties, including civil society organizations, have called for the need for policies and legislations to cut harassment and criminalize it. But these demands are not taken into account by the concerned authorities.

Harassment, in general, involves unwanted, verbal or physical sexual suggestions. It has multiple forms and various means depending on the place where it takes place and the power and influence enjoyed by the harasser. However, **harassment in the workplace** involves unwelcome sexual

suggestions that lead to a hostile work environment. Or when the receiving end considers such sexual suggestions immoral. Or when rejecting such behavior will or may negatively impact current or potential working conditions.

Harassment in the workplace includes physical actions or suggestions, requesting or imposing a sexual favor, making comments of a sexual nature, and displaying sexual posters, pictures or drawings. It also includes referring to a person in a derogatory or humiliating way because of gender-based prejudices, and making unwelcome suggestion, whether physical, verbal, or non-verbal, of a sexual nature in a direct or

implicit manner. All of these behaviors would create an intimidating, hostile, degrading or threatening work environment. They also lead to an unjustified interference with the performance of the worker subject to harassment.

Moreover, victims of sexual harassment suffer from all forms of harm to their employment, promotions, and reemployment. Rejecting the sexual suggestions has a negative impact on the work conditions when the offer of employment, conditions of employment, promotion, re-employment, or continuity of employment become dependent on the

person's acceptance of these unwanted sexual suggestions or tolerating them.⁹

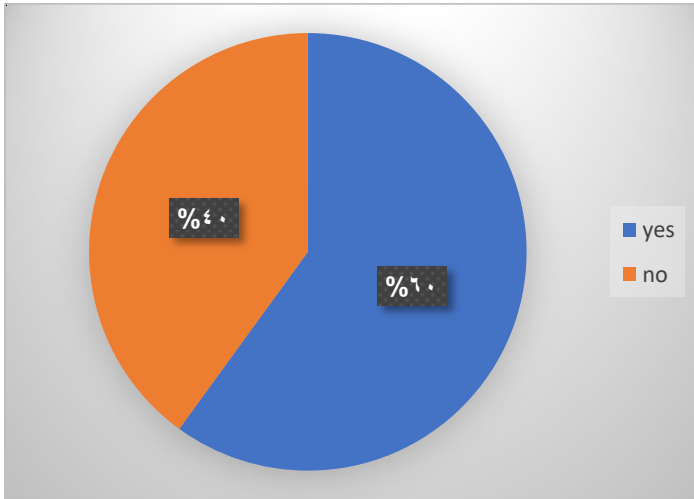
The Iraqi labor law defines sexual harassment as a physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature, or any other conduct based on sex that violates the dignity of men and women. And is undesirable, unreasonable, and degrading to the recipient. Any person who rejects or does not tolerate such conduct whether explicitly or implicitly will be subjected to a decision that affects his or her employment¹⁰.

⁹- Jordanian National Committee for Women Issues. The Study of Harassment in Jordan, Amman, 2017, p18-19.

¹⁰ - Iraqi Labor Law 2015, Article 10, (3)

When women in the selected governorates were asked about harassment in the workplace, they expressed shocking information that reflect their status in the work environment. More than half of the respondents (360 women representing 60%) in the study reported that they had been subjected to harassment, while 240 women, representing 40%, stated that they did not face harassment.

Figure 8 shows the rates of harassment.



The results of the survey suggest that there is a correlation between women's age and harassment. It was shown that the (21-25) age group is the most vulnerable group to harassment with 152 women representing 25.3%, followed by the age group (36-40) with 101 women representing 16.8% and the (31-35) age group in which 95 women

(15.8%) reported that they were subjected to harassment in the workplace.

Moreover, the results also indicate a relationship between women's educational level and being exposed to harassment. Women of intermediate education are more exposed to harassment compared with other educational levels. Approximately 302 women of intermediate education representing (50.1%), 40 women of low educational level representing (6.7%) and 18 women of high education level representing (3%) reported that they were subjected to harassment.

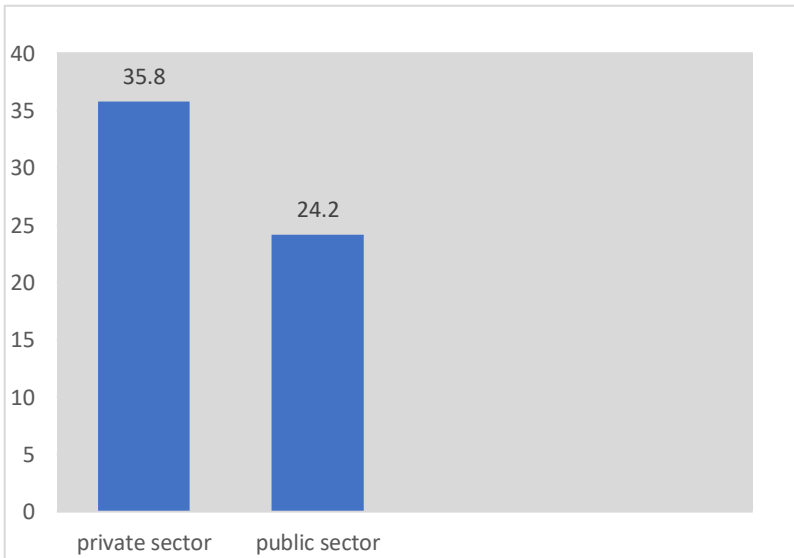
The results of the survey show the correlation between women's marital status and exposure to harassment. 143 unmarried women (23.8%), and 85 widowed women representing (14.2.%) reported that they were subjected to harassment in the workplace. In addition, 79 unmarried women representing 13.2% and 53 divorced women representing 8.8% reported that they were subjected to harassment in the workplace.

It was also found that women of very low income are exposed more to harassment with 247 women representing 41.2%. Moreover, 87 women (14.5%) whose income merely covers their essential needs also reported that they are exposed to

harassment in the workplace. Additionally, 26 women of high income reported that they were subjected to harassment in the workplace.

Moreover, the results revealed the relationship between the work sector and exposure to harassment. 215 women (35.8%) in the private sector reported that they were exposed to harassment compared with 145 women (24.2%) in the public sector who reported exposure to harassment in the workplace.

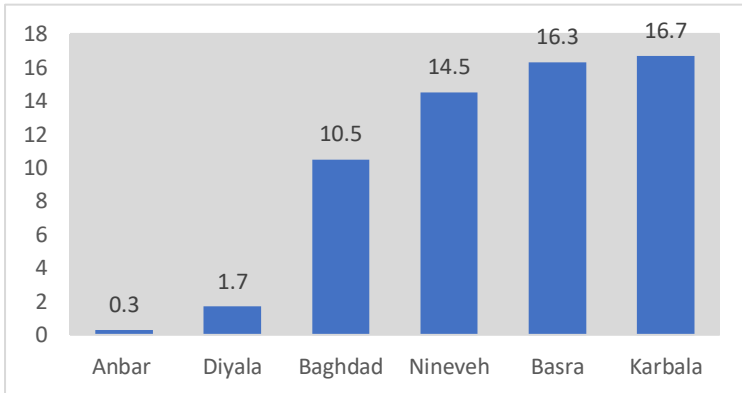
Figure (9) shows harassment in the private and public sectors.



The results of the survey also revealed the relationship between women's areas of residence and exposure to harassment in the workplace. it was revealed that women in Karbala governorate are more likely to be harassed compared to other selected governorates within the study. A hundred women representing 16.7% are exposed to

harassment, followed by Basra governorate where 98 women representing 16.3% are subjected to harassment in the workplace. Meanwhile, 87 women representing 14.5% in Nineveh governorate and 63 women representing 10.5% in Baghdad governorate stated that they were exposed to harassment in the workplace. In the governorate of Diyala only 10 women representing (1.7%) reported that they faced harassment in the workplace.

Figure (10) shows harassment in the governorates



Employers under the Iraqi labor law, have a specific set of duties regarding the protection of workers from harassment and gender discrimination. Employers must fulfil their duties without discrimination. In addition, the law stipulates that the employer must ensure equal treatment and same working conditions for all workers in

the same profession¹¹. Furthermore, the employer is responsible for ensuring healthy conditions in the workplace and take safety measures to protect workers during the performance of their work. In addition, the employer must provide a system for workers' complaints and grievances¹².

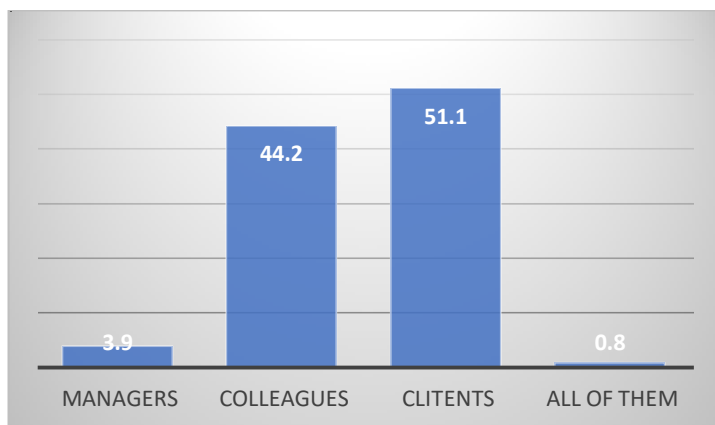
For finding out to identify harassers, the answers of those who stated that they were subjected to harassment were examined, which account for 60% of the total respondents. 184 women representing (51.1%) reported that they were harassed by clients, while 159 women representing

¹¹- Iraqi Labor Code, article 41 (2) (n)

¹²- Iraqi Labor Code, article 41 (2) (d)

(44.2%) stated that they were harassed by colleagues. In addition, 14 women representing (3.9%) were harassed by employers (managers), and 3 women (0.8%) were harassed by all above.

Figure (11) identifies harassers.



The results of the survey show the attitudes towards women according to their marital status and their correlation to the

person who committed harassment. 60 Unmarried women representing 16.7% and 74 widowed women representing 20.6% stated that they were harassed by colleagues. In addition, 23 divorced women representing 6.4% were subjected to harassment by colleagues.

Furthermore, the results of the survey revealed the sector of work and its relationship with the harasser. It was found that 103 women representing 29.3% in the private sector were subjected to harassment by colleagues compared to the public sector, where 54 women representing 15.3% reported that they were subjected to harassment by colleagues.

Moreover, the results indicated that women in Nineveh governorate are more likely to be harassed by colleagues compared to other governorates within the study. i.e., 74 women representing 20.6% reported that they were subjected to harassment by colleagues, followed by Karbala governorate where 83 women representing (23.1%) are harassed by clients. 57 women representing (16.4%) reported harassment by clients in Baghdad governorate, while 92 women in Basra representing (25.6%) stated that they were harassed by clients.

5. Types of Harassment

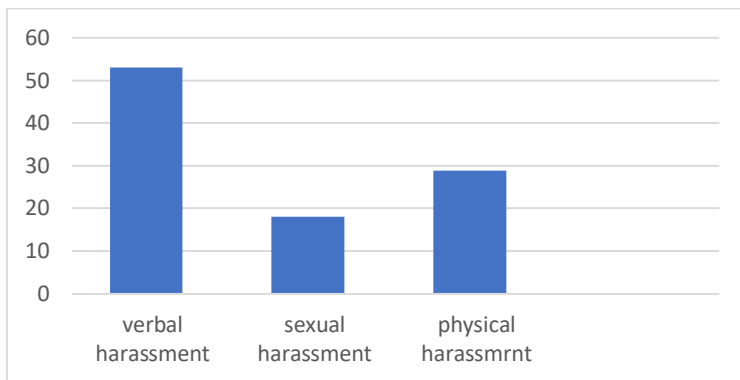
(A.N.) is a girl speaking about her experience with harassment, she says: One day I entered a law court in Fallujah. There is a way to inspect women. The inspector is a woman who harasses females. You know, there are academic people. There are educated people today. You deal with all classes in the same way. She thought this is normal. So we were three girls from Fallujah and they let us enter and inspected me in a way that I grabbed her hand and hit her then went the director of the court and said You have an inspector who is harassing women but he changed the topic. And they told me we will deal with the matter and solve the

problem. It turned out later that there are widows and divorced women that she inspected them the same way because of their fears. So I went to the director of the court and filed a complaint against her. She denied it and started crying. She said that frankly, I harass a lot of girls. I harass them, but they do not know.

When talking about the survey data, the current question (about place of harassment) represents a branching of the previous one (Have you been subjected to harassment?). It expresses the distribution of those who answered (yes) to the previous question which represent (60%) of the respondents. It also reflects the types of

harassment in the workplace. More than half of the study units concerned with the current study indicated that they were subjected to verbal harassment that is (191) women representing 53.1%. While (104) women representing 28.9% reported that they were subjected to physical harassment. Finally, 65 women representing 18.1% stated that they were exposed to sexual harassment (the total of percentages are 100.1%)

Figure (11) shows the types of harassment



The results of the survey show the attitudes towards women with regards to harassment and the relationship between women's marital status and the type of harassment. It was found that 72 married women representing 20% reported that they were verbally harassed. In addition, 73 unmarried women representing 30.3%

reported that they were physically harassed, and by 62 widowed women representing 17.2% were subjected to sexual harassment.

Furthermore, the results of the survey revealed the relationship between the work sector and the person who commits harassment. 97 women in the private sector representing 27.6%, are subjected to verbal harassment compared to the public sector where 88 women represented 25% declared that they were verbally harassed.

Meanwhile, 59 women (16.8%) in the private sector stated that they were subjected to sexual harassment and 52 women representing (14.8%) reported that they

were subjected to physical harassment in the public sector.

Moreover, women in Basra governorate are more vulnerable to verbal harassment compared to the governorates according to the survey. 92 women representing 25.6% were verbally harassed, followed by Karbala governorate where 74 women representing 20.6% reported verbal harassment. And 61 women representing 16.9% reported sexual harassment in Nineveh governorate. In Baghdad, 60 women representing 16.7% stated that they were physically harassed.

Harassment in the Iraqi work environment has several types including

verbal harassment, physical harassment, sexual harassment, and discrimination. Verbal harassment includes unwanted sexual comments, verbal abuse and sarcasm based on sex, and abusive sexual jokes targeting women. Physical harassment includes unwanted touching, sexual stuttering, cuddling, or getting physically close without consent, and any other type of unwanted touching. Sexual harassment includes sending unwanted sexual messages or images via e-mail or social media, promoting pornographic content in the work environment. Discrimination involves granting chances of promotion, jobs or practical benefits based on gender, in

addition to excluding women from training opportunities or important projects. As well as discrimination which involves granting chances of promotion on the basis of sex and excluding women from vocational training opportunities or important projects because of their gender.

Furthermore, the nature of harassment to which women are exposed to in the work environment varies according to their areas of residence. The working women in Baghdad, Nineveh, Diyala and Basra, who participated in the discussion session, declared that harassment occurs in the private sector because it lacks the regulating legal policies that protects their

rights as workers. In Anbar governorate, some participants stated that harassment has increased in the public and governmental institutions. It is delivered by the administration staff as they exploit their position for these purposes, as well as other employees and clients. Moreover, one of the participants mentioned that the phenomenon of harassment increased significantly and reached high levels of violence by using foul words and even physical assault due to the absence of proper upbringing, and the lack of control and deterrent tools in the concerned government institutions. Some attributed the exacerbation of this phenomenon to weak

religious scruples as well as sexual deprivation and repression caused by the traditional social system.

Women's justifications for silence on harassment they were subjected to can be summarized in the following points:

- 1- Fear of social consequences because the Iraqi society is a conservative society that holds onto conservative traditions and cultural values. Women fear revenge or humiliation if they talk about harassment they have been subjected to. They also for are afraid of being isolated or denounced by their families and society. In conclusion: there is no supporting environment

that provides protection for women and encourage them to talk about harassment.

- 2- Women fear that if they talk about harassment then their employment will be impacted. They may lose their jobs or marginalized. They may be looked down upon by managers and co-workers. All of these lead to women's reluctance to talk about harassment and hold them back from seeking help or acting actively.
- 3- Losing confidence in the legal system towards dealing with harassment cases. Women fear that their complaints will be ignored, or they

may be threatened or pressured for their silence, which hinder the sharing of their experiences or seeking justice.

4- Women may fear reprisals or threats from harassers or other people in the workplace. This may threaten their and their family's safety.

5- Lack of awareness and education about harassment issues, which makes it difficult for women to talk about it due to misconceptions or traditions that affects public's views and underestimate the importance of the problem, or they even do not believe it.

6- The lack of support when women were harassed. There may be a sense of isolation and loneliness when facing harassment, especially if fewer women share their experiences. Thus, they become reluctant to talk about harassment for fear of not understanding them or not providing the necessary support.

7- The absence of effective systems for reporting and tracking complaints. Thus, women are reluctant to talk about their traumatic experiences. This confirms that the Iraqi work environment lacks transparency and accountability.

6. The Frequency of Harassment

((A girl called (A.T) talks about her experience of harassment: “While I was in my car getting back from work, I saw three guys in a car. They were giving a signal and reducing their speed every few minutes. I was scared to the point that until today I still have an image of their car’s number plate in my mind. I decided to complain about them when I arrive using their plate number. Glory be to God, I didn't arrive, when they were trying to overtake me, they hit my car. When the police came, I told them I want to file a complaint against the guys because they

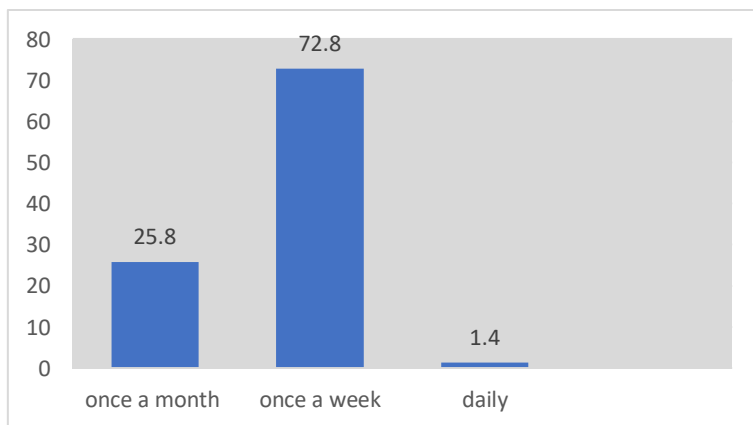
were harassing me and I have pictures as proof. I said do you think that I walk in the street taking pictures of people. Those were harassing me and made some gestures. He then said OK but you have to keep in mind that you have to attend court. At that moment, I changed my mind. Not because he mentioned my family my father or my husband as they have no problem with that. But found it hard to attend court and involve in the procedure of a lawsuit, the investigator, and the judge, so I left the matter.))

When exploring the attitudes towards women and how often they are harassed in the workplace, a branching question was

asked to those who answered "yes" who represent 60% of the total respondents.

The answers of the study units to the current question revealed the frequency at which women are harassed in the workplace. It was found that 262 women representing 72.8% are harassed once a week, followed by 93 women representing 25.8% who stated that they were harassed once a month, and finally 5 women representing 1.4% reported that they are harassed on a daily basis in the workplace.

Figure (13) shows frequency of harassment



The results of the survey show the attitudes towards women according to their marital status and its relationship with the frequency of harassment. It was found that unmarried women are subjected to harassment once a week by 82 women

representing 22.8%, followed by 79 widowed women representing 21.9% who stated that they were harassed once a week. And 69 married women representing 19.2% stated that they were harassed once a week.

Additionally, 32 divorced women representing 8.9% are harassed once a week.

On the other hand, the results reveal that 60 unmarried women representing 16.7% are harassed once a month, while 21 divorced women representing 5.8% are harassed once a month.

Moreover, the results of the survey revealed the correlation between the field of work and the frequency of harassment. It was found that 168 women in the private

sector representing 47.7% were harassed once a week while 92 women representing 26.1% in the public sector, were subjected to harassment once a week. And 51 women representing 14.5% were harassed once a month in the public sector, while 38 women representing 10.8% were subjected to harassment once a month in the private sector.

The results of the survey also revealed the correlation between women's place of residence and the frequency of harassment. Women in Basra governorate were subjected to harassment once a week compared to other governorates within the study by 92 women representing 25.6%. Additionally, 85

women in Karbala governorate representing 23.6% were subjected to harassment once a week. In addition, 77 women in Nineveh governorate representing 21.4% reported that they were objected to harassment once a week. Meanwhile, 61 Women in Baghdad representing 16.9% were harassed once a month, followed by Karbala governorate where 14 women representing (3.9%) were harassed once a month.

((A girl called (A.M.) in the governorate of Diyala talks about her experience of harassment: in the workplace, there was a person who wanted money from me and wanted to blackmail me, I told him that there is a community police, and I threatened to

call them. I threatened him and said If you are a man, then I will complain about you and let us face each other. For the first time, I threatened him and he said I know what I'll do. I replied: do whatever you like. I faced him and overcame all my fears and got rid of him.))

7.Barriers of Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace

The table below represents women's reactions to harassment. It signifies the data distribution of (60%) of those who answered (yes) to the question (Have you been subjected to harassment?). When analyzing women's reactions to harassment in the workplace, the answer (**I kept silent**) ranked

first among the attitudes of women after being harassed by 95.3%. (86.9%) answered **(I left work)**. (74.7%) answered **(I was confused and did not act)**. 74.7% answered **(I made concessions to stay at work)**. Additionally, (69.9%) replied **(I defied the harasser and prevented harassment)** while (57.5%) reported that they answered **(I filed a complaint to the concerned authorities)**. Additionally, (55.8%) chose the answer **(I escaped from the perpetrators of these behaviors and acts)** while (39.2%) replied **(I told a member of my family)**, and finally (40.6%) replied **(I told a friend)** of harassment after it was repeated.

Table 2 shows women's reactions after exposure to harassment.

Behavior	I followed it for the first time		followed it when the harassment was repeated		I didn't follow it.	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
I kept silent	343	95.3	4	1.1	13	3.6
I got confused and didn't act.	269	74.7	82	22.8	9	2.5
I left work	313	86.9	33	9.2	14	3.9
I escaped from the harasser	201	55.8	26	7.2	133	36.9
I submitted a complaint to the concerned authorities	207	57.5	64	17.8	89	24.7

I told a member of my family.	235	39.2	88	24.4	37	10.3
I made concession to stay in work	263	73.1	84	23.3	13	3.6
I told a friend	34	9.4	146	40.6	180	50
I repelled and prevented harassment	249	69.9	26	7.3	81	22.8

Description of Women's Attitudes

According to Their Reactions:

Based on the personal data related to the survey trends, we will clarify the nature of the relationship between personal variables such as (marital status, workplace, women's areas of residence) and reactions after exposure to harassment, to know the

effect of the variables on each other according to what was mentioned above:

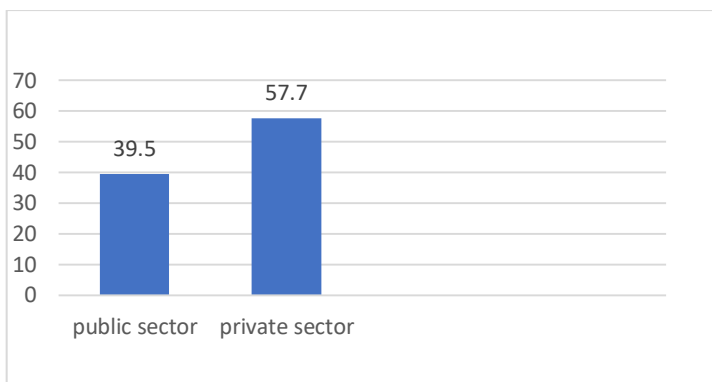
I Kept Silent

((A.M.) speaks about her experience of harassment: while I was working on a daily wage, in a supermarket I was harassed by some customers of the supermarket in which I work. I work in a popular area and people are not accustomed to a middle-aged girl working in a large supermarket. Harassment often occurs by touching my hand by young men when dealing with them which I ignore. In addition, I am subjected to verbal harassment because I don't wear hijab. However, I deal with them naturally as if I do

not understand what they mean by their words. This is repeated almost daily)).

When revealing the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and the reaction to harassment (silence), it was found that 139 unmarried women representing 38.6% kept silent. While 82 widowed women representing 22.8% and 74 married women representing 20.6% kept silent. Additionally, 48 divorced women representing (13.3%) also kept silent.

Figure 14 shows the percentages of women who kept silent (total 97.2%).



As for the field of work and its relationship with silence after harassment, it was found that 203 women representing 57.7% in the private sector kept silent compared with 139 women (39.5%) in the public sector. This indicates the lack of policies and procedures in the informal sector that deal with cases of sexual harassment. In addition, it reveals that the small business owners are not aware of the

importance of combating harassment or its risks. It also indicates the informal sector's lack of legal support and anti-harassment laws. This points out that it is difficult for women to obtain justice or hold abusers accountable in the absence of an effective legal system and mechanisms that enforce laws that protect women.

Moreover, it was found that 97 women (26.9%) in the governorate of Basra kept silent after being subjected to harassment while in the Nineveh governorate 83 women (23.1%) kept silent, and around 59 women (16.4%) kept silent in Baghdad governorate.

Fear of the negative consequences that women may face if they decide to disclose

harassment, forces them to keep silent. These consequences may include losing a job, hindering chances of promotion, or even further harassment or retaliations by the harasser. Moreover, women have no confidence in their organization taking their complaints seriously. Additionally, their professional or economic interests lay in continuing in their jobs. Or they fear that revealing harassment may lead to a deterioration in their professional status or a lack of work opportunities.

I Left Work

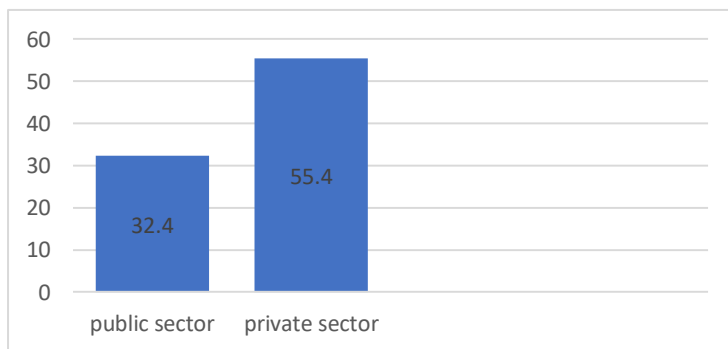
(A.T) talks about her experience of harassment: (I was harassed a year ago, in an interview for training in a well-known law firm in Baghdad. I was a fresh graduate of the Faculty of Law and needed to gain practical experience in this field. I got an appointment for an interview in a well-known law firm. During the interview I was harassed. He said that I must agree to some conditions to get this opportunity. When I inquired about the conditions, he said that he likes to conduct meetings outside the office and I must accompany him to any public or private place. Then he started praising the details of my body and said that

I must make concessions to be close to him. When I asked him that my work to be limited to the office and the court, he said that he did not have vacancy for me, and the way of dealing and talking to me changed, which forced me to ask to end the interview. On the other hand, he told me when I left the place that when I agree to his conditions, the office would be open to me. Although Article 10 first of the Iraqi labor law stipulates: This law prohibits sexual harassment in employment and occupation, whether during the search for a job, vocational training, employment, or in the terms and conditions of work. I did not file a complaint about this incident. This is because I was

scared that if I do, then I will not be able to practice my profession again. Additionally, I was sure that I will not win the case because I do not have concrete evidence and the harasser is a lawyer with great and extensive experience.

When revealing the nature of the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and what is the reaction (leaving work) after being subjected to harassment, 133 unmarried women (36.9%) and 77 widowed women (21.4%) reported that they left work. Moreover, 73 married women (20.3%) and 30 divorced women 8.3% also left work.)

Figure (15) Women who left work because of harassment in private and public sector.



Regarding the relationship between women's marital status and the reaction (leaving work) after being subjected to harassment, it was found that 195 women (55.4%) in the private sector, and 114 women (32.4%) in the public sector left work. Moreover, 98 women (27.2%) in the governorate of Karbala, and 97 women

(26.9%) in the governorate of Basra left work after being subjected to harassment.

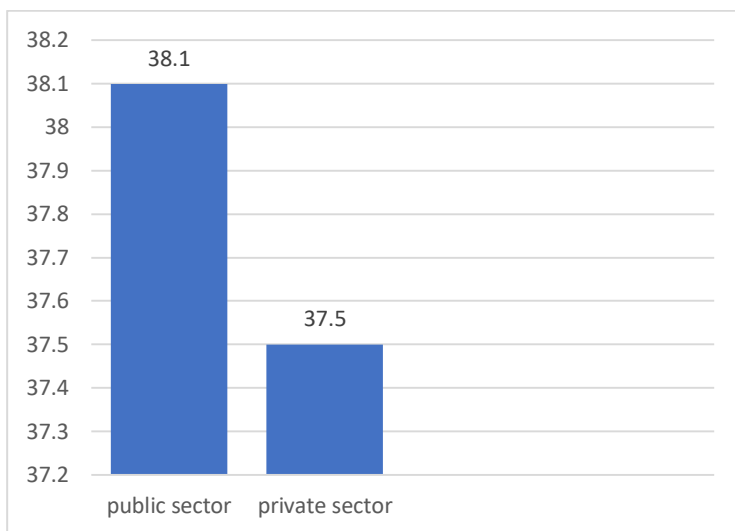
Furthermore, 76 women (21.1%) in the governorate of Nineveh, and (21.1%) in the governorate of Baghdad left work after harassment.

I Was Confused and Didn't Act

By examining the relationship between (women's marital status, place of residence and the workplace) and the reaction to harassment (I got confused and did not act), it was found that 141 married women representing 39.2% and 74 married women representing 20.6% did not take any actions against the harasser. Furthermore, 46

divorced women representing 12.8% and 8 widows representing 2.2% didn't act against the harasser.

Figure (16) shows women who were confused in both sectors after being harassed.



When examining the relationship between the reaction to harassment (I was confused

and did not act) it was found that 134 women representing 38.1% in the public sector and 132 women representing 37.5% in the private sector, did not take any action against the harasser. Moreover, it was found that 97 women representing 26.9% in Basra governorate will not take any action against harassment, while in Karbala governorate 96 women representing 26.7% reported that they will not act against harassment.

Moreover, in Baghdad governorate, 60 women representing (16.7%) stated that will not take any action towards harassment.

The results indicate women's fears and confusion because of the consequences, i.e. they may feel afraid of the possible negative

consequences if they disclose harassment, such as losing their jobs, being defamed, embarrassed. Additionally, they may feel ashamed to talk about sexual harassment incidents. Moreover, the culture surrounding the topic and social expectations lead to women's confusion and their unwillingness to raise the topic in front of others. And the most important aspect is uncertainty that they will get a positive response from employers, co-workers, or the legal system. They fear not recognizing their problem or not taking appropriate action to protect them and punish harassers.

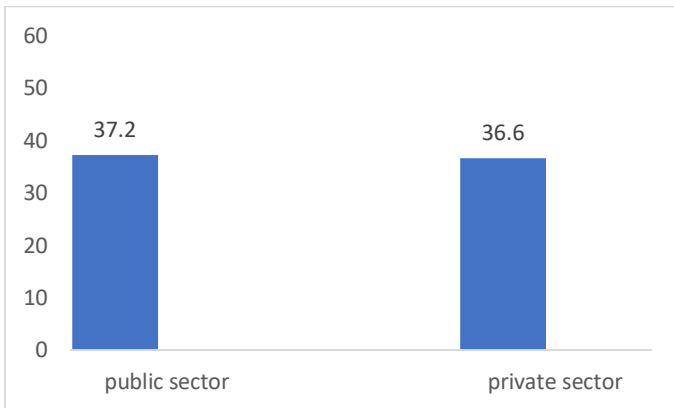
I Made Concessions to Stay in Employment

When exploring the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and the reaction (concessions were made to stay at work) after harassment, it was found that 139 unmarried women representing 38.6%, and 70 married women representing 19.4% made concessions to stay in employment towards after being subjected to harassment. Additionally, 45 divorced women (12.5%), and 9 widowed women (2.5%) made concessions to stay in the employment after being harassed.

Women's need for work as a source of income to meet their basic financial needs

and their family needs, and the lack of jobs or the economic pressure that they sometimes face make them tolerate harassment to stay in their work and maintain their income. Additionally, the negative consequences of reporting harassment, such as losing their job, threats, or retaliation from the harasser make them give up some of their rights or keep silent. Moreover, the social and cultural pressures urge them to keep silent and not to provoke controversy or complaints and comply with the social norms that encourage them to tolerate and ignore harassment and consider it embarrassing or taboo.

Figure (17) shows the rates of women who made concessions to stay in work in the public and private sectors



Regarding the relationship between the work sector and the reaction (I made concessions to stay at work), it was found that 131 women in the public sector representing 37.2%, and 129 women in the private representing 36.6% made concessions to stay at work after being

harassed. Meanwhile, 97 women representing 26.9% in Basra governorate, 95 women representing (26.4%) in Karbala governorate, and 60 women (16.7%) in Bagdad governorate stated that they made concessions to stay at work after being harassed.

I Defied and Prevented Harassment

((A.Q) an employee in a government institution (media woman) in a ministry, talks about her experience with harassment: I was harassed verbally by my director on several occasion. Each time I stop him until it reached the level of insulting him in front of other employees. He harassed me during the work hours without any reason or

justification which pushed me to insult him in front of the employees. I tried to stop the harassment more than once, but to no avail. His insistence on harassing me, because he is supported by a certain political party, forced me to go to the minister and inform him of the details of the incident. Because we live and work in a country where parties have authority and dominance, the minister did not take any action against the harasser. I was not able to stay at the same work, so I had to submit a transfer request to another department.))

When examining the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and the

reaction to harassment (I defied and prevented harassment), it was found that the 135 unmarried women representing 37.9%, and 74 married women (20.8%) repelled and prevented the act of harassment. Additionally, 33 divorced women (9.3%) and 7 women (2%) defied and prevented harassment.

Figure (18) shows rates of those who defied and prevented harassment in both sectors.

As for the fields of work and its relationship with the reaction (I repelled and prevented the harassment), it was found that 128 women in the private sector representing 36.4% stated that they defied and prevented the act of harassment compared with 119

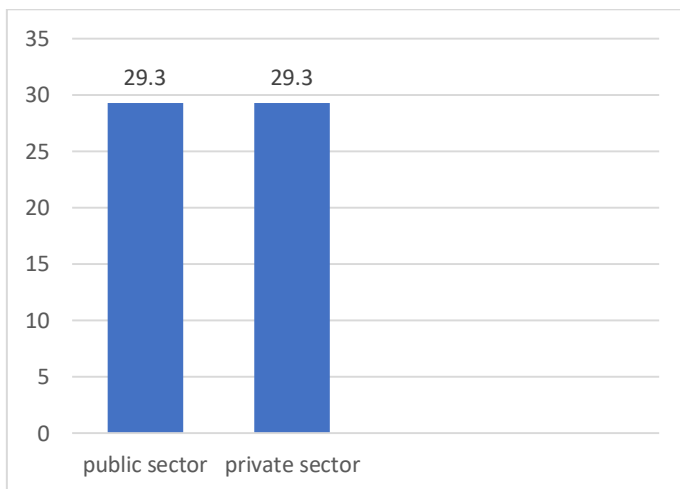
women representing 33.8% in the public sector who defied and prevented the act of harassment. Additionally, in Basra governorate 97 women (26.9%) while 94 women (26.4%) in Karbala governorate defied and prevented the act of harassment. Moreover, only 43 women (12.1%) in Baghdad governorate stated that they defied and prevented the act of harassment.

I Submitted a Complaint to the Related Authorities

When exploring the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and the reaction (I filed a complaint to the concerned authorities) after harassment, it was found that 87 unmarried

women representing 24.2%, and 68 married women representing 18.9% stated that they filed a complaint to the related authorities. Additionally, 45 divorced women (12.5%), and 7 widowed women (1.9%) reported that they filed a complaint against the harasser.

Figure 19 shows the percentage of women who filed complaints in the private and public sectors.



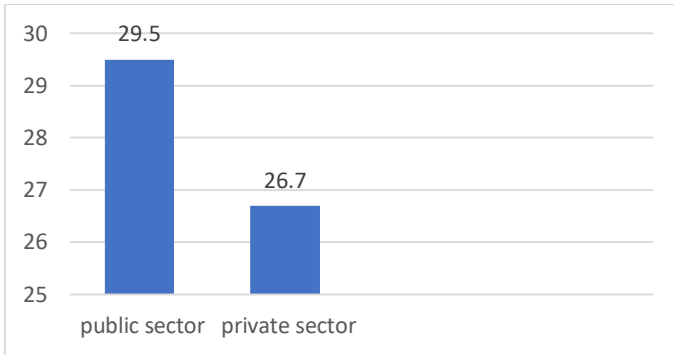
As for the fields of work and its relationship with the reaction (I repelled and prevented the act of harassment), it was found that the same number of women in both sectors (103 representing 29.3%) stated that they filed a complaint against the harasser. Additionally, in Basra governorate 93 women (25.8%) and 85 women (23.6%) in Karbala governorate filed a complaint against the harasser. Moreover, only 22 women (16.1%) in Baghdad governorate stated that filed a complaint to the related authorities against the harasser.

I Escaped from the Harasser

When exploring the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and the reaction (I escaped) after harassment, it was found that 78 unmarried women representing 21.7%, and 70 married women representing 19.4% stated that they escaped the harasser.

Additionally, 47 divorced women (13.1%), and 6 widowed women (1.7%) also reported that they escaped from the harasser.

Figure 20 shows the percentage of those who escaped from harassers in both sectors.



As for the field of work and its relationship with the reaction (I escaped from the harasser), it was found that 104 women representing 29.5% in the public sector, and 94 women representing 26.7% in the private stated that they escaped from the harasser. Additionally, in Basra governorate 92 women (25.6%) and 72 women (20%) in Karbala governorate reported that they escaped from the harasser. Moreover, only 24 women

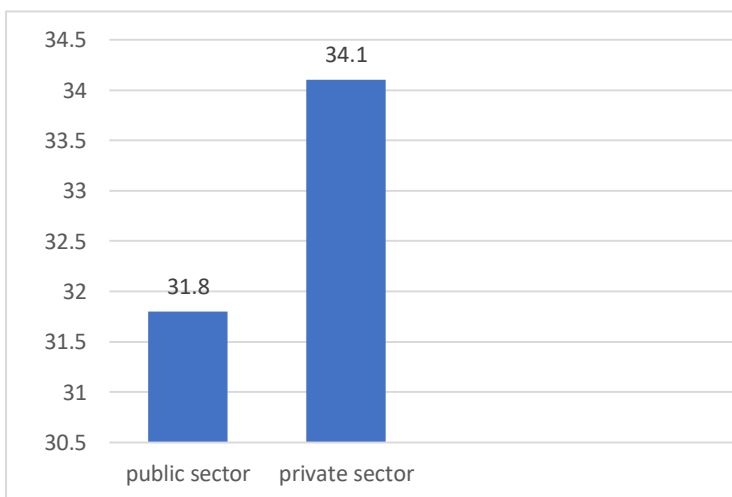
representing (16.7%) in Baghdad governorate reported that escaped from the harasser.

I Told a Member of My Family

When examining the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and telling a family member about the incident of harassment, it was found that the 131 unmarried women representing (36.4%), and 68 married women (18.9%) reported that they informed a family member of the incident of harassment. Additionally, 26 divorced women (7.3%) and 7 women (2.8%) stated that they informed a family member

of the harassment they were subjected to in the workplace.

Figure (21) shows the percentages of those who chose to tell their family of the harassment in the workplace.



As for the fields of work and their relationship with the reaction (escaping from the harasser) after being subjected to harassment, it was found out that women in the public sector, with a total of 104 women at a rate of 29.5%, escaped from the harasser, compared to the private sector which revealed 94 women at a rate of 26.7% who escaped from the harasser. Meanwhile, it was found that the women in Basra governorate who fled from the harasser were 92 women representing 25.6%, followed by Karbala governorate with 72 women representing 20%. Additionally, 24 women (6.7%) also escaped from the harasser in Baghdad governorate.

8. Actions and Behaviors of Harassers in the Workplace

This question reflects the nature of the actions and behaviors that a harasser engages in at the workplace, as shown in the table below. When analyzing women's perceptions of the actions and behaviors of the harasser at the workplace, the action of "staring at the body from top to bottom and vice versa" ranked first at a rate of 94.5%. This was followed by "using inappropriate words or comments", at a rate of (86.1%), then "pursuing and stalking through social media", at a rate of (82.5%), then "obstructing the path during movement or walking", at a rate of (75%), then "touching

clothes, hair or body", at a rate of (72.3%), then "receiving inappropriate text messages or provocative pictures", at a rate of (71.3%), then "asking personal questions about social or sexual life", at a rate of (68.1%), then "offering a service in exchange for doing a sexual act", at a rate of (59.4%), then "turning the conversation or dialogue into a sexual discussion" with a rate of (58.3%). Finally, "Asking to do sexual actions in front of a camera" was ranked last at a rate of (52.5%).

Table (3) shows the actions and behaviors of harassers

Actions and behaviors of harassers in the workplace	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
Staring at the body from top to bottom and vice versa	340	94.5	20	5.5
Obstruction of the road while moving or walking	270	75	90	25
Description with inappropriate phrases or comments	310	86.1	50	13.9
Whistling indicating harassment	226	62.7	134	37.3
Turning a discussion or dialogue into a sexual one	210	58.3	150	41.7
Ask personal questions about social or sexual life	245	68.1	115	31.9
Touching clothes, hair, or body	260	72.3	100	27.7

Offering to provide a service in exchange for committing a scandalous or sexual act	214	59.4	146	40.6
Receiving inappropriate text messages or explicit images	257	71.3	103	28.7
Social media tracking	297	82.5	63	17.5
Requesting to perform acts of a sexual nature in front of a camera	189	52.5	171	47.5

**A Description of Women's Reactions
According to the Actions and Behaviors of
Harassers:**

Based on the survey's data, the relationship between personal variables such as (marital status, workplace, and women's areas of residence) and the actions of

harassers in the workplace can be clarified to know the impact of the variables on each other as follows:

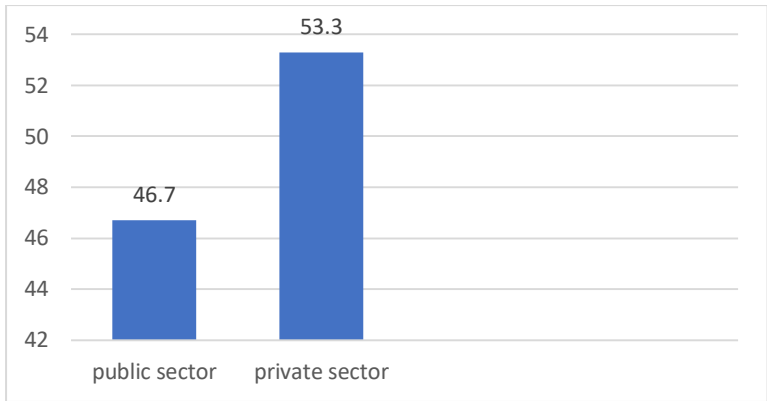
Staring at the Body from Top to Bottom and Vice Versa

The survey data show that 137 unmarried women (40.3%) and 121 married women (35.7%) as well as 59 widowed women (17.3%) and 23 divorced women (6.7%) reported that harassment in the workplace involved staring at them from top to bottom and vice versa.

When looking at the relationship between a harasser's behavior and the sector in which the harassed women work, it was found that 181 women representing 53.3% of female

workers who were harassed in the private sector, and 159 women representing 46.7% of those female workers that were harassed in the public sector reported that harassment involved staring at them from top to bottom and vice versa. Additionally, 96 women (26.7%) in Basra governorate and 92 women (25.5%) in Karbala governorate, as well as 79 women (21.9%) in Baghdad governorate, reported that the harasser stared at their bodies from top to bottom and vice versa.

Figure 22 shows the rates of those reported that harassment involved staring in both sectors:



Description with Inappropriate words or Comments

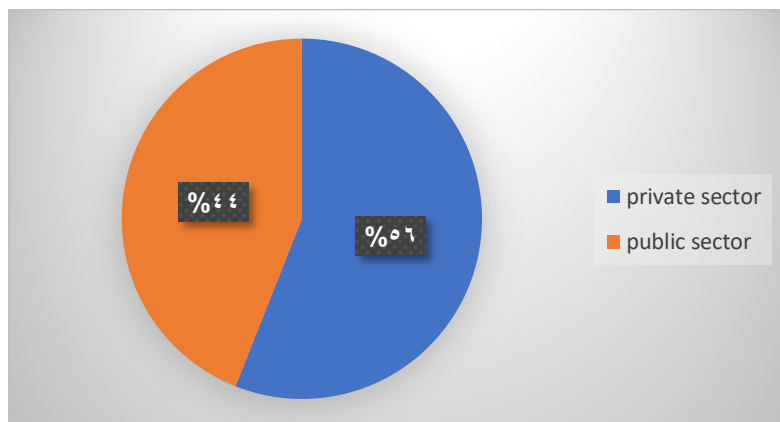
When revealing the nature of the relationship between (marital status, workplace, and women's area of residence) and what are the actions and behaviors carried out by harassers in the workplace (description with inappropriate phrases or comments), 133 unmarried women (36.9%)

revealed that behavior of the harasser involved using inappropriate comments in the workplace. Meanwhile, 127 married women (35.3%), 25 divorced women and 25 widowed women (6.9%) stated that the harasser described them with inappropriate words or comments.

As for the fields of work and their relationship with the behavior of harassers (description with inappropriate phrases or comments), it was found that 173 women 48% in the private sector and 137 women 38% in the public sector stated that the harasser's behavior included describing or commenting using inappropriate words. Meanwhile, 91 women in Baghdad

representing 25.3%, 88 women in Basra 24.5%, 70 women in Karbala representing 19.5% and 31 women in Nineveh governorate representing 8.6% reported that the harasser's behavior included describing or commenting using inappropriate words.

Figure 22 shows percentages of “describing with inappropriate words” in both sectors.



Tracking through social networking sites

When examining the nature of the relationship between marital status, workplace, and residential areas of women, as well as the actions and behaviors of the harassers in the workplace such as stalking and following through social media, the answers of married women revealed that harassers commonly engage in stalking and following through social media in the workplace. Specifically, 129 married women (35.8%) reported this behavior, while 109 married women (30.3%) and 33 divorced women (9.1%) reported the same behavior. Finally, 26 widowed women (7.3%) reported

the behavior of stalking and following through social media in the workplace.

In terms of the field of work and its relationship with the behavior of harassers, 197 women (48%) in the private sector reported the behavior of stalking and following through social media in the workplace, compared to 100 women (38%) in the public sector. Additionally, in terms of geographic areas, 82 women (22.7%) in Basra governorate reported the behavior, followed by 81 women (22.5%) in Baghdad governorate, and approximately 66 women (18.3%) in Karbala governorate reported the same behavior.

9. Iraqi Labor Law No. 37 of 2015

The Iraqi Council of Representatives passed the new Iraqi Labor Law No. 37 for 2015, which came into effect on February 7, 2016, replacing the previous labor law No. 71 for 1987. This law provides protection against discrimination and other protections in the workplace and applies to all workers in Iraq (Iraqis and foreigners), except for public sector employees who are appointed under the Civil Service Law. This law addresses the shortcomings of the old law and aligns Iraqi labor laws and legislation with the provisions of the international agreements issued by the International Labor Organization that have been approved by Iraq.

The law regulates all aspects of the relationship between employers and workers in the private sector, ensuring protection of their rights on the basis of social justice, equality, and decent work for all without discrimination. It specially protects against sexual harassment and gender discrimination and provides the protections related to maternity and paternity. The law addresses main employers who subcontract work or part of it under the same work conditions¹³.

The labor law regulates the following forms of work (temporary work, casual work, compulsory work, part-time work, and work without a specific duration). Additionally, the

¹³ PartenersGlobal, Equality between Genders in Iraqi labor law and the Iraqi labor policy, a previous resource, p12.

law prohibits all forms of forced labor and provides a special section for the rights of foreign workers, work leaves, and its special conditions. The law sets requirements for employment contracts, the rights of both parties, and mechanisms for resolving disputes. The most important aspect of the law is the formation of one or more labor courts in each governorate to look at disputes arising from labor agreements.

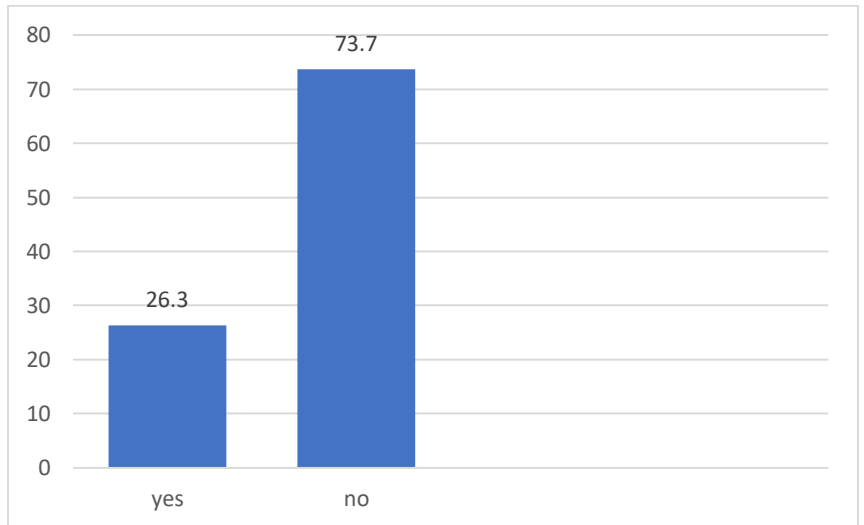
Each labor court is composed of a judge nominated by the Supreme Judicial Council, representative of the General Confederation of Trade Unions and a representative of the employers' federation. Labor courts have jurisdiction over civil and

criminal proceedings and disputes mentioned in the labor law as well as workers' wages, social security and the interim decisions that involve actions within their jurisdictions.

To examine women's knowledge and perceptions of the most important laws and policies related to women's status in the workplace or those that protect women's rights in work, a question was raised to detect women's awareness of the existence of the Iraqi Labor Law No. 37 for 2015 and its provisions related to harassment and discrimination in the workplace. 442 respondents (73.7%) stated that they were not aware of the existence of this law, while

158 respondents (26.3%) stated that they were aware of the laws and policies concerned with women's status in the workplace.

Figure (25) shows the extent of women's knowledge of the existence of the Iraqi Labor Law.



When women were asked about their experience with harassment, and their knowledge of the Iraqi Labor Law No. 37 of 2015, it was found that women who were subjected to harassment were aware of the Iraqi labor law with a rate of 139 women representing 23.2%. Additionally, 221 women (36.8%) were not aware of this law. The study also revealed that 76 women (12.7%) widowed women, 54 unmarried women representing 9%, and 18 married women (3%) were familiar with the same law. Moreover, 18 married women (3%) and 10 divorced women (1.7%) reported that they were familiar with this law.

The results of the survey revealed the fields of work and their relationship with women's knowledge of the existence of the Iraqi Labor Law No. 37 of 2015. It was found that 101 women (17.4%) in the private sector are familiar with the Iraqi Labor Law No. 37 of 2015 compared with 47 women (8.1%) in the public sector.

The results also revealed the correlation between women's place of residence and their awareness of the Iraqi labor Law No. 37 of 2015. Women in Nineveh governorate were more familiar with the law compared to other governorates within the study. 72 women representing 12% in Nineveh, and 43 women in the Baghdad governorate

representing 7.2% reported that they were familiar with law labor No. 37 of 2015. Additionally, 18 women in Karbala governorate representing 3% reported that they were familiar with law labor No. 37 of 2015. Meanwhile, 14 Women in Baghdad representing 2.3% stated that they were familiar with law labor No. 37 of 2015, followed by Anbar governorate where 4 women representing (0.7%) stated that they were familiar with the same law.

Despite the challenges facing the application of administrative laws related to harassment and discrimination due to the justice system in Iraq, awareness of harassment and workers' rights is still little in

some communities. It is difficult to apply the laws effectively if the surrounding culture permits or justifies harassment and discrimination. Reluctance to report cases of harassment and discrimination for fear of reprisals or negative consequences also plays a role in that. Moreover, Workers' low confidence in the justice system and the lack of protections affect working women's ability to exercise their rights and report violations.

10. Conclusion:

Based on the above, the current study reveals that there is harassment and discrimination against women in the workplace (**public sector, and private sector**). Discrimination can be in treatment,

chances of promotion, wages, and bonuses, or on the basis of nationality, religious affiliation or appearance. Harassment in the workplace has three types: verbal, physical, and sexual. The frequency to harassment in the workplace range between once a week, and once a month. despite that, women are committed to their work and do not care, as noticed in the respondent's answers who (kept silent). Some left work after harassment, others were confused and did not act, while others made concessions, or repelled and prevented harassment. In addition, some respondents filed complaints to the security authorities and others informed a friend or their families of

harassment. The nature of discrimination and harassment in the workplace varies according to women's areas of residence. Working women in the governorate of Baghdad, Nineveh, Diyala and Basra, who attended the discussion sessions mentioned that harassment occurs in the private sector because it lacks the regulatory legal policy cover that guarantees the rights of workers. While those in Anbar governorate stated that harassment increases significantly in the governmental institutions of the public sector by the administration's employees. This is because they exploit their positions for this purpose. Harassment also can come from clients and employees. A woman

mentioned in an interview that the phenomenon of harassment has worsened dangerously and reached the level of physical violence and foul language. According to her, this is due to the absence of family control and education, and the lack of control and preventive tools by the concerned government institutions. Others think that the aggravation of this phenomenon is due to the weakness of the religious scruples and sexual repression caused by the traditional social system. Therefore, it is necessary to work on the following:

- ✓ Women's empowerment departments should develop clear and comprehensive

internal policies and procedures to combat harassment and discrimination by learning about them as well as dealing with complaints and punish perpetrators.

- ✓ Women's empowerment departments should provide awareness and training to employees working in formal and informal institutions on the issues of harassment and discrimination, i.e. a clear understanding of the types of harassment and discrimination and their effects on individuals and society.
- ✓ Women's empowerment departments should establish effective and secure complaint mechanisms to receive and address complaints of harassment and

discrimination. These mechanisms must be accessible, reliable, and confidential.

- ✓ Women's empowerment departments should increase public awareness by organizing media campaigns and awareness events to raise awareness of harassment and discrimination, through television, radio, and social media.
- ✓ Cooperation and partnership between women's empowerment departments, society organizations and non-governmental organizations that are concerned with women's rights to provide assistance, support and expertise in combating harassment and discrimination.

- ✓ The Iraqi government should develop strict policies and laws to combat harassment and discrimination in the workplace and society in general, including clear procedures for dealing with complaints and punishing violators.
- ✓ Obliging informal institutions (the private sector) to develop policies to introduce the rights of workers, such as the number of working hours, legal status, what is prohibited at work, and procedures to identify harassment and discrimination and their punishment.
- ✓ Oblige committees and social workers in the ministry of Work and Social Affairs to follow up workers in informal workplaces,

talk to them to identify their most important needs, and deal with their complaints.

- ✓ Civil society organizations should concentrate their efforts to combat harmful practices and change the traditional stereotypes women face in the workplace such as harassment, discrimination, and extortion.
- ✓ Establish support networks within local communities for women that were subjected to harassment, discrimination and sexual extortion as a mean to enhance awareness and communication and facilitate social and vocational training.

- ✓ Social society organizations should design long term plans to monitor and document crimes of sexual harassment, discrimination and extortion in the workplace, as well as promoting services that support those women on the psychological, health and social levels.
- ✓ Amend the Iraqi Labor Law to facilitate the retirement with full pension of a working women if she has three children like the female employees in the Unified Retirement Law.

References:

- ✓ Iraqi Labor Law, Article 4.
- ✓ Ministry of Planning, Central Bureau of Statistics, Gender Report in State Ministries, and Institutions for the year 2012, Baghdad, 2014, p.
- ✓ Hussein, A K, The Reality of Entrepreneurship among Iraqi Youth Opportunities & Challenges, Iq forum of policy making consultants- London, 2021, p5.
- ✓ Partners Global, Gender Equality: In the Iraqi Labor Law and Labor Policy, Iraq, Baghdad, 2021.
- ✓ National Survey of Youth for 2019, Iraqi Ministry of Planning, Central Bureau of Statistics, Iraq, Table (4-15).

- ✓ Iraqi Labor Law, Article 42(2-n)
- ✓ Iraqi Labor Law, Article 41(2-j).
- ✓ Iraqi Labor Law, Article 41(2)(n)
- ✓ Iraqi Labor Law, Article 41(2)(d)

Appendix

The Questionnaire:

Dear Young lady,

Heia Foundation for Cultural and Media Development is willing to implement a survey titled (The Status of the Working Woman in Iraq).

This form was designed to investigate the views of young women from the targeted Iraqi governorates (Baghdad, Basra, Nineveh, Karbala, Anbar and Diyala) on several current issues concerning their lives. Thus, you were chosen to be within the study sample to fill this from which has the following questions.

please read the questionnaire and then answer them subjectively according to your actual views and experience. Please note there is no wrong answer but your participation and expressing your views freely are highly valued.

Regards.

Note:

Please circle the number of the answer, for example ①, following the instructions for each question.

First: Basic Details of Respondents:

1D. Age: 1. (16-20) 2. (21-25) 3. (26-30)

4. (31-35) 5. (36-40)

2D. Marital Status: 1. Married 2. Single 3.

Widow 4. Divorced

D3 :Field of work: 1. Government Sector 2.

Private Sector

4D. Education Level:

1. Illiterate (neither reads nor writes) **2.** Read and write **3.** Primary

4. Intermediate **5.** Preparatory **6.** institute

7. Degree **8.** Post Graduate Studies

5D. Which of the following situations best describes your family's income?

1. Not enough to meet our basic needs (food and living requirements)

2. Enough to meet our basic needs, but far from being a luxury

3. More than Enough (luxury)

6D. Governorate:

- 1. Baghdad 2. Nineveh 3. Basra 4. Anbar**
- 5. Karbala 6. Diyala**

Q7: have you been harassed in the workplace?

- 1. Yes**
- 2. No**

- If yes, who was the harasser?

- 1- Manager**
- 2- Co-worker**
- 3- Clients**
- 4- All of the above**

Q8: what kind of harassment you have experienced in the workplace?

1-Verbal harassment

2- Sexual harassment

3-Physical harassment

Q9: In your opinion, which of the following statements describes the actions and behaviors of harassers in the workplace?

(Please answer all parts)

Phrases	Yes	No
staring at the body from top to bottom and vice versa		
Obstructing the way while moving or walking		
Commenting in inappropriate terms..		

Whistling in a way that indicates harassment		
Turning a discussion or dialogue into a sexual one		
Ask personal questions about social or sexual life		
Touching clothes, hair, or body		
Offering to provide a service in exchange for a scandalous or sexual act		
Receiving inappropriate text messages or explicit sexual images		
Social media tracking		
Receive frequent and unwanted calls		
Requesting acts of a sexual nature in front of a mobile's camera		

Q10: What actions did you take after you were harassed in the workplace? (please answer all parts)

Behavior	I followed it for the first time	followed it when the harassment was repeated
I kept silent		
I was confused and didn't act.		
I left work		
I ran away from the harasser		
I repelled and prevented harassment		
I filed a complaint to the relevant authorities		

I informed a member of my family		
I made concessions to stay in business		
I told a friend about the incident		

Q11: How often do you experience harassment?

- 1- Once a month
- 2- Once a week
- 3- Daily
- 4- I never was exposed

Q12: Do you know if there is a legal article that punishes harassers?

- 1. Yes 2. No 3. I don't know

Q13: In your opinion, which of the statements below describe gender discrimination that you experience in the workplace? (Answer all parts)

Phrases	I am exposed to it strongly	I get exposed to it sometimes	I don't get exposed to it at all.
Discrimination in treatment between me and my co-workers.			
Lack of equal opportunities in positions of responsibility at work			
inequality in granting developmental and training opportunities			
inequality in salaries and bonuses at work			

unequal opportunities for promotion between men and women			
Ignoring women when making important decisions			
Discrimination in treatment on the basis of appearance			
discrimination in treatment because of ethnic and national affiliation			
discrimination in treatment because of religious affiliation			