



The state of awareness of women's rights among ordinary Sudanese women and the impact of the 2018 revolution on that awareness: A case study of women of the Al-Nasr District

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Abstract

This paper tries to discover the state of awareness of women's rights among ordinary Sudanese women. It also tries to find out the impact of the December 2018-2019 revolution on perceptions of ordinary women regarding their traditional social roles. Using a cross-sectional online survey, a structured questionnaire tool was selected to cover a sample of one hundred women settled at the *Al Nasr* district. The study finds an eloquent level of awareness of women's rights among the respondents. Additionally, the filed results reflect a high level of awareness of the revolution's three main slogans (freedom, peace, and justice). The results also clarify how the respondents correlate their rights with these slogans. Finally, the results demonstrate the positive impact of the revolution on the respondents' perceptions of the right of women to participate in public roles and the gendered-based distribution of household chores. Interestingly, despite the respondents' high status of awareness, nevertheless, their engagement at the revolutionary events was relatively poor. The paper suggests that could be attributed to the existence of subordinated social structures that are still holding Sudanese women back.

Key words: awareness, revolution, social roles, women participation, women's rights.

Introduction

Gender development is unattainable without women's awareness of their rights. Such awareness should not only be limited to the way women identify these rights, but more importantly, how these rights relate to the way they perceive themselves, their social roles, their rights to participate in the public domain.

On the 13th of December 2018 and the days after, huge numbers of students, youths, professors, groups of civil societies, women, and many other rural as well as urban people representing different social, economic, ethnic, and tribal backgrounds, went into the streets demanding an end to the al-Bashir's military-backed rule (1989-2019). At its surface, the peaceful revolution was guided by people sufferings from the prolonged economic deterioration, however, in reality, people were also demonstrating against corruption, tyranny, and political oppression.

The participation of women in all the revolution events was impressive and prominent. It was locally as well as internationally noticed, documented, and acknowledged. Instead of just playing narrative

gender roles -such as finding safe spaces for the revolutionists to hide in, to hand them out needed masks, water, food, and medical assistance, the Sudanese women had remarkably been engaged in unprecedented activities; for example, leading marches and protests, and participating in the sit-in. They suffered the risks of arrest, rape, and disappearance. Moreover, they played a vital role in covering day-to-day events, especially on social media. Doing so, they were able to forestall many of the regime's security forces' plans.

At the time of the revolution, Sudanese society welcomed women's engagement and appreciated their political role. The revolutionist women, as a consequence, were given the title *Kandaka*: the Nubian Warrior Queen (see the meaning of *Kandaka* at Casciarri & Manfredi, 2020, pp.31-32). Additionally, a new local notion, *Al-thwara Untha*: the revolution is a female, was specified as a description of the uprising. This new notion indicates the Sudanese celebration and satisfaction with women's participation in the revolution.

However, this overwhelming acceptance of women's role has soon been pushed down since sceptical social debates, especially on social media platforms, about women's rights and their ability to lead society emerged. The debate was a reaction to the New Transitional Government's decision to appoint two women as state governors. Many of the dissenting voices were guided by an anti-revolution political agenda, but at the same time, many others were expressing a hard-line cynical opinion against the decision, the potentiality of women to lead society.

The debate recalled and reinforced many of the well-known harmful gendered stereotypes that consider women as useless figures, especially at moments of serious situations. Sudanese culture is full of discourses, such as proverbs, that reflect "the patriarchal society's view that women do not have the mental and physical strength that men have. By doing so, the proverbs create destructive preconditions for legitimizing women's unprecedented dependence on men" as explained by (Hussein, 2009, p.103). Hussein (2019), furthermore, pointed to some proverbs that stress women's weakness, such as that most well-known proverb that says: "a woman, even if she is an axe, will never break a head" (p.104).

The root cause of Sudanese gender inequality, therefore, lies in its patriarch system that shapes traditional gender role beliefs. These beliefs determine gender power relations and gender responsibilities in the private aspects and the public domain as well. The importance of the patriarch system is that it, both directly or indirectly, pervades and shapes Sudanese legal, economic, and political, and social systems. The patriarch system creates what Said-Foqahaa & Maziad (2011) called a 'dual deprivation' phenomenon. In their words, the patriarch system restricts "women's abilities to make decisions concerning their own lives on the one hand, and restricting their capacity to delve into established institutional mechanism of decisions making process" (p.234).

Consequently, the partial social regression towards women's rights after their contribution to political changes could be understood within the above-explained context. In all, this sort of regression is not a unique phenomenon. For example, in her study, Chenoweth (2019, pp. 21-22) illustrated that "feminist scholars point out that after many campaigns in which women have played a crucial role in organizing and leading them, women and women's concerns are sidelined or even punished for their participation in the aftermath". In the same vein, Sherwood (2012) noticed that;

Women were integral to these [Arab Spring] uprising; ... women's rights activists know they must fight to institutionalize meaningful change. The political transformation across the region offers veritable opportunities for women to gain rights, but it is balanced with a danger of regression.... The call for wider ranging women's rights was heard, but many fear women's rights being curtailed paradoxically (p.83).

In other words, "[women's] active and sustained participation may in fact increase tactical innovation and resilience in movements, contributing to the movement's success. At the same time, women have been sidelined following major nonviolent campaigns, setting back their claims to equal rights" Principe (2017, p.2).

However, the iron chain of the Sudanese patriarch system has partially been weakened by the early girl education initiative guided by Mr Babikr Badri in 1920. After independence, girls' education was further developed, expanded, and encouraged. Strong Sudanese women movements emerged as a result and pushed forward issues of equality of women, women's rights'

consciousness, and gendered social and political actions. These developments have given women a proper space of freedom and respect in the societal domains.

From 1989 onward, this progress was reversed with the taking over of the al-Bashir's autocratic regime (1989-2019). Even though the regime had expanded education and allowed allied females to join the ruling party politics, nevertheless, records of human rights, in general, and that of women, in particular, witnessed a speedy deterioration (Tonnessen, 2014; Tønnessen, 2017; Enough Project Report, 2017). The regime "adopted a very hostile and aggressive attitude towards civic institutions such as trade unions, women's and student groups, political parties and civil society organizations" (Ali 2010, p. 439). Repression of activists was reported by Human Rights Watch (2016) to be "harassed, taunted, and humiliated, including sexually, for their work promoting or defending human rights and women's rights".

The regime had, furthermore, tried to re-structure the society on restrictive masculine bases of structural inequality and injustice. As illustrated by Abbas (2015) the regime "...translated their preoccupation with Sudanese women's appearance, clothing, behavior, movements, and overall public interactions into a set of restrict policies, decrees, and regulations, known as public order laws" (p. 357). A law of these was "framed so widely that it allows almost any mixed social gathering to be considered as a setting for fornication and enables the virtual exclusion of women from the public sphere" (SIGI 2012 cited in Sherwood 2012, p. 81). Through these policies the regime "had eroded ordinary women's freedom pushing them either to stay at home or to follow the government's image of good woman" (SIGI 2012 cited in Sherwood 2012, p. 81). Worse still, no laws were introduced by the regime to protect women from rape and sexual harassment.

The accumulated impacts of these policies were the reinforcement of the dynamics of the traditional harmful gender stereotyping. In line with this, the OHCHR (2014) reports that gender stereotyping "...poses a significant, yet largely unaddressed, challenge to the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of women's human rights" (p.2). Even among many educated women, these policies had limited their freedom of expression and movement to a considerable extent.

The value of women, their self-perceptions, their rights, and their roles had all been systematically distorted. According to Osman (2014), the al-Bashir government, ...proceeded to oppress women and to limit their role in the public sphere... These included the Public Order Act (POA), and the institution of a moral police force to control the way women dressed and behaved in public... The POA provided a pretext for detaining, beating and otherwise humiliating, large numbers of women and girls... Overall these developments set back the gains Sudanese women made in the post-independence years (pp. 51-52).

The above policies created great pressures on women to follow the regime's new codes of gendered behavior, nevertheless; these pressures have created a social conflict between (women's own desires) and those required by their (society). According to the Theory of Social Conflict (Coser 1964), such cases serve several positive functions. In the Sudanese case, one positive impact was the unprecedented participation of women in the revolution. The revolution formed a successful mechanism of social conflict that allowed women to reveal their awareness. Women's awareness, in turn, enabled them to revolt for democracy and freedom. In other words, "considering the negative experiences women all over Sudan had suffered at the hands of the three-decade regime, it seems only logical that because of their suffering under the oppressive public order law, for example, their consciousness, given an opening, might be pushed toward action" (Kadoda and Hale, 2020, p.74).

Research Objectives

The post-revolution Sudan is witnessing a gradual transformation into democracy and peace. There is a deep need for the cultivation of new peaceful power relational structures based on a profound awareness of human rights and that of women's. The revolution has offered women a golden opportunity to maintain their rights and to accelerate a positive transformation towards more equal gendered societal values. Given

that the social support for women's rights is still soft and unstable, it is important to discover the state of awareness of women's rights among ordinary women to set up genuine women's development agenda. Consequently, the paper's main objective is to discover the current state of awareness of women's rights among ordinary Sudanese women and to find out how the revolution has, positively or negatively, affected women's perceptions regarding their public rights, their different social roles, and their gendered-based distribution of household chores.

Questions

Taking women of the *al-Nasr* district as a case study, the paper addresses the following questions

Q1: What is the current state of awareness of women's rights among ordinary Sudanese women?

Q2: How ordinary women correlate the revolution's slogans with their rights as women?

Q3: How has the revolution shaped the perceptions of ordinary women regarding their rights and the traditional distribution of their societal roles?

Methodology

The Study Area: the *Al-Nasr* District

Administratively, the *Al-Nasr* district follows the *Sharq Al Neel* Locality, a part of *Bahri* City at the State of *Khartoum*. The district contains five areas; Squares one, two, 23, 24, 25, and 30. Most of the district's population is from the middle-class and are descended from different Sudanese ethnic groups.

Methods of Collecting Data

This is a cross-sectional online survey using a non-probability sampling technique. The data was collected in May, June, and July 2020. One important difficulty that faced the process of data collection was the restrictions imposed by Covid-19. Therefore, instead of face-to-face interviews, the authors used the snowball sampling approach via (WhatsApp) to distribute the paper's structured questionnaire. Another important difficulty that faced the authors was when they had tried, at first, to get random mobile phone numbers of women who live in the area to distribute the questionnaire. Many women refused to collaborate showing a distrust regarding the real intentions of the study. This was understandable due to the heavy hand of the security forces of the previous regime that made many people unwilling to participate in political issues.

As a consequence, the authors decided to limit the study area to include the squares (one) and (two) only. The logic behind this was that one of the authors is an inhabitant in the square (one) and has good social relations with many of her neighbours. Using the snowball sampling technique, she selected some of the contact numbers that existed on her mobile phone and convinced them to fill the questionnaire form and to send an empty copy to other women whom they know. All, it took about three months to distribute the questionnaire forms.

The third problem that faced the study was the non-existence of formal data about the number of the population and the number of women inhabits at the two squares. Alternatively, the authors relied on an informal rough estimation provided to them by the administrative officer of *Sharq Al Neel* Administrative Unity. She estimated the number of women inhabitants at the squares (one) and (two) as to be about 2000 one. Accordingly, the sample size was selected to be 1/5 of the total women population; the sample size equals 100 women.

The Questionnaire Format

The questionnaire included five main divisions. The first division shows the respondents' main attributes (education, occupation, and marital status). The second division includes questions about the respondents' levels of women's rights awareness in general, and how they relate the revolution's slogans to these rights. The third division revolves around the respondents' awareness regarding the participation of women in public affairs. The fourth division questions the respondents' standpoints concerning their participation in the revolution events. The final division covers questions that try to ascertain how the revolution has affected their direct consciousness related to their rights, their household chores, and social roles.

The Main Characteristics of the Respondents

The field survey shows that (39%) of the respondents are housewives, (33%) are employees, (16%) are students, and (8%) have self-employed work, while (4%) are without a job. Regarding their education levels, (63%) of the respondents identified themselves as university graduates, (26%) as post-graduates, (8%) have the Sudanese secondary certificate, the other (3%) was distributed among other less levels of education attainments like intermediate, basic education, and the informal education system of the *khalwa*. Additionally, (70%) of the respondents are married, (24%) of them are single women, (5%) identified themselves as divorced, and (1%) as widows. Regarding the distribution of the respondents' age, the survey field had almost covered all rates of age from 18 years old up to 59+ as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1
The Respondents' Age

Age	Percentage
18-22	10%
23-27	21%
28-32	18%
33-37	10%
38-42	10%
43-47	13%
48-53	9%
54-58	3%
59+	6%
Total	100%

Source: the fieldwork, 2020.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the respondents by age factor. If we sum up the percentages of the first three columns that represent younger respondents and compare them with the last three columns that represent the more aged groups, one can notice that there are more youth respondents (49%) than those of the latter (18%). Considering that the sample was then taken randomly, this observation is good because most of the women who participated in the revolution came from the younger aged groups.

The Fieldwork: Results and Discussion

This section tries to demonstrate and analyse the results of the field survey focusing on meanings, trends, and gendered connotations provided by the respondents. The paper elaborates the results in four parts as follows: Part one demonstrates and analyses the results of the fieldwork regarding the state of the respondents' awareness of women's rights, their legal rights, and the way they relate the 2018 revolution's three slogans (freedom, peace, and justice) to their rights as women. The second part shows and discusses the respondents' opinions regarding women's participation in the public domain. The third part demonstrates and discusses the respondents' participation in the 2018 revolution events. The last section, section four, illustrates the respondents' opinions about the impact of the 2018 revolution on the status of their rights' awareness.

Part One: the State of Women's Rights Awareness among the Respondents

The fieldwork results show that (57%) of the respondents believed that 'women's rights' as a concept aims to mitigate all forms of discrimination against women. In comparison, (30%) of the participants claimed that this concept points to gender equality, merely. On the same line, concerning the concept of 'women's political rights', (66%) of the participants has agreed that this concept covers all the following rights: (freedom of speech, freedom of associations, freedom of political participation, and freedom of formation of political parties), while (25%) of the respondents see that this concept means (freedom of political opinion). In our opinion, despite the differences in the respondents' understanding of the concepts of

(women's rights) and (women's political rights), the answers show a high status of awareness. It implies that all the previous efforts that had been exerted by the al-Bashir regime to subordinate women did not reshape their awareness in the way they were intended to.

Regarding the right of women to participate in public domains the statistical findings show that (96%) of the respondents assured that women's public participation is important, (87%) of them believed that women must participate in the coming elections, (89%) of them stressed that providing women their rights will increase their public participation, and finally, (90%) of them asserted that public participation increases women's self-confidence.

The above answers re-assured the high state of women's rights awareness among the respondents. The results show how ordinary women were able to challenge the harmful impact of the al-Bashir's aggressive policies; they were able to empower themselves, raise their rights awareness, and sustain their abilities.

The questionnaire moved a step forward and asked women about their opinions about two important overlooked stereotypes that usually deter women from their right to access to justice; the right of women to resort to courts in case of families' disputes and in case of being exposed to sexual harassment.

This step was an important one putting in mind that "wrongful gender stereotyping is a pervasive human rights violation. ... it is a frequent cause of discrimination against women and a contributing factor in violations of rights ranging from the right to an adequate standard of living through to the freedom from gender-based violence" OH CHR Commissioned Report (2013). The study found that (58%) of the respondents regarded women resorting to courts in cases of families' disputes is not a discreditable deed. Whereas (74%) of them confirmed that it is not a shameful deed for women to resort to courts if they were exposed to sexual harassment. It is so interesting to find out that most of the respondents are enjoying such high legal awareness. The two issues are widely regarded as taboo sensitive problems. On one hand, concerning issues related to rape and sexual harassment, families are usually fighting to keep them within their far possible limits. Most of the time the society is usually inculcated women as criminals rather than victims. On the other hand, it is a disgrace for a woman to report her relatives to a court in cases of disputes.

The respondents' high level of rights awareness could be attributed to the major socio-economic changes that took place during the last three decades. The large increase in university student enrolment in Sudan due to the 1991 higher education policy, the spread of different types of social platforms of social media, especially Facebook, in addition to the adverse impacts of the factors of droughts, displacement, poverty, and the escalation of civil wars have all reshaped many of Sudanese underlined cultural values. For instance, currently, several women are heading their families; more girls than ever are now able to select their husbands, to decide the type of education they prefer, to work, and to travel abroad.

The respondents were asked to show how they relate their rights to the revolution's three main slogans (freedom, peace, and justice). These three slogans have summarized the meaning of the revolution and the revolutionists' demands. The results showed that (68%) of the respondents understand the slogan of 'freedom' to mean their ability to take decisions without restraints, to freely select their husbands, and to unconditionally participate in the political and social domains. Regarding the slogan of 'peace', (90%) of the respondents understood it to mean all the following: personal security, peaceful transformation of power, safety from war, and social peace. Concerning the slogan of 'justice', (65%) of the respondents' acknowledge it to mean: comeuppance, the supremacy of rule of law, and the justness of women laws.

One key aspect of the 2018-2019 revolution was the use of social media as a democratization platform. It helped people to thoughtfully enhance relating the revolution's slogans to their lives. It was used by activists not only to define the several peaceful tactics that the revolutionists should undertake to win the struggle, and it also amalgamated their cause through the unification of the revolutionists' slogans (for more details about the impact of social media on Sudanese uprising behavior, see Attia et al., 2020). For example, "from the beginning of protests until the removal of President Omar Al Bashir, the general sentiment is that of anger and protest with the popular slogan –Taskot Bass (Just Fall) widely used" (UNDP, Sudan, Social Media Report, 2019, p.6). Moreover, as Robertson & Ayazi, 2019 (cited in Wajcman et al., 2020, p. 3) illustrated, "during Sudan's protest movement, particularly rural women who are typically constrained by deeply rooted patriarchal structures, recorded and shared their support on social media, such

as Facebook and Twitter". The field results reflect these facts showing how the respondents correlate the revolution's slogans with their personal and political lives.

Part Two: General Participation of the Respondents in the Public Domains

Women's inclination at public affairs' activities is important for their development. Studies were done by some scholars such as (Domingo et al., 2015, p.3) concluded that; "women's participation in local politics or associational life can improve their status within communities, particularly when they are seen to deliver concrete group benefits, and that women's access to employment outside the home can shift social norms that restrict women's mobility and participation in public life". She added,

Under enabling conditions, women's political participation, social activism and/or economic empowerment can progressively shift social norms. The economic literature signals how economic empowerment can result in changes in decision-making power dynamics around household decisions, including in some cases in ways that lower the risk of domestic violence and increase the acceptance of women controlling assets (p. 3).

In line with this argument, the fieldwork results showed that (41%) of the respondents reported themselves as active in public affairs; (34%) respondents stated that they have limited public participation, while (25%) respondents assured that they do not have general societal activities. This goes against a prevailing idea that claims ordinary Sudanese women are socially inactive. However, being an active woman is not an easy task if one takes into consideration the Sudanese relatively patriotic culture. Therefore, the questionnaire asked the respondents about the difficulties they usually face in convincing their social surroundings such as families and relatives about the importance of their activities in the public sphere. The results illustrated that (52%) of the respondents do not face any difficulties in this regard, while (27%) of them reported limited difficulties, along with (21%) of them who assured the existence of such difficulties. This means that about half of the respondents are surrounding by a supportive environment.

In the same vein, (45%) of the respondents reported that women are facing other problems such as double-burden work, unequal work opportunities, sexual harassment, and the struggle of finding qualified kindergartens for their kids when going outside their homes. The paper claims that the traditional distribution of social roles plays a decisive role in determining women's social and professional life. For example, the problem of double-burden, in many cases, puts huge pressure on women to make a choice either to accept marginal professional jobs or to stay at home. In general, social roles are strongly tied and shaped by culture, norms, and gender stereotyping. This fact was better explained by (Eagly, 1987)'s Social Role Theory that postulated,

Gender stereotypes are rooted in different roles assigned to women and men. Traditionally, women are frequently encountered in the role of the homemaker or in occupations similar to the domestic role..., whereas men typically take over the role of the breadwinner and are more often located at higher levels within the occupationally hierarchy (Eagly (1987) cited in Steffens & Viladot, 2015, p.92).

Accordingly, this study raises the important fact that the Sudanese labour market is still gender-blinded. Sudanese female labour force needs women-friendly policies to solve many of women's work-related problems.

Part Three: The Respondents' Participation at the 2018 Revolution Events

Although the field results reflected a reasonable level of public participation among the respondents, with sound support from their surroundings, nevertheless, the respondents showed limited participation at the 2018 revolutionary events. At this point and before presenting the field results, it is important to highlight that the respondents were asked to show whether their participation during the revolution was at the 'day-time' or during the 'night-time'. This was important because Sudanese norms prevent women to move outside their home at night (without their male guardians), except in very special cases such as emergencies. Within this context, the participation of women at the evenings embedded the risk of being blamed, or even punished, in case any unpleasantness occurs. This fact explains why the field results showed that only (36%) of the respondents had participated in the 'day-time' revolutionary activities

compared to (56%) of them who reported that they had not participated in any of the 'day-time' activities. Within the same vein, only (16%) of the respondents reported that they had participated in 'night-time' revolutionary activities, compared to (77%) who confirmed that they had not participated in any of the night-time' activities.

From the 6th of April up to the 3rd of June 2019, the revolutionists organized a sit-in in front of the Army General Command Buildings in the middle of Khartoum. This was a unique experience for Sudanese people to engage in such an inclusive democratic event. As described by Bahreldin (2020),

The sit-in was full of street life, evening uses, activities, volunteerism – and, above all, it was inclusive. Children, women, elders, wealthy, poor, Muslims, Christians, Africans, and Arabs were all observed in the sit-in space, supporting the sit-in different activities. Furthermore, the sit-in was safe, walkable, sittable, and attractive.

Nevertheless, only (35%) of the respondents reported their participation in the sit-in compared to (57%) of them who assured that they did not. Additionally, (95%) of the respondents reported that they had never spent any night in the sit-in, while (5%) of them reported that they had spent part of a night there. These statistics prove the authors' claim that Sudanese norms and culture are still hindering ordinary women's freedom. This claim was assured further by the field results that illustrated that only (36%) of the respondents' families had blessed their participation. In the same vein, (42%) of the respondents confirmed that the society, in general, was unsatisfied with women's engagement in the revolution.

In sum, the weak reports of the respondents' engagement in the revolution events as shown by the results, does not reflect low status of awareness, especially as (96%) of them assured their knowledge that women participation in the public sphere is important. Their limited engagement could be, consequently, attributed to the fact that,

Not all women challenge the dominant cultural norms for a number of reasons: they may benefit, at least in part, from the overall arrangements; they may fear the consequences of challenging existing norms and practices or lack the support mechanisms necessary to act; they may not have access to alternative views and ways of life; or they may not adhere to emancipatory values. Consequently, intentionally or unintentionally, women may reproduce and contribute to sustaining harmful practices that violate the rights of other women (Shaheed (2012) cited in OHCHR, 2013 Report).

Part Four: The Impact of the Revolution on the Respondents' Ideas and Perspectives

According to the field results, (63%) of the respondents confirmed that the revolution encouraged women to ask for their rights. Additionally, (60%) of the respondents assured that they are now more confident in themselves. Also, (63%) of them confirmed that after the revolution they became more capable to discuss political and social issues, and (61%) of them assured that after the revolution they became more able to express their opinions with their families. Moreover, (43%) of the respondents reported that after the revolution they became more involved in the family decisions making process, compared to (33%) who gave the opposite answer. Likewise, (47%) of the respondents stated that after the revolution they became more eager for gaining more freedom, compared to (31%) who gave the opposite answer. Similarly, (54%) of the respondents stated that after the revolution they became more desirous of getting financial independence, compared to (26%) who confirmed the existence of this desire, but 'to some extent'.

The impact of the revolution on the respondents' lives has extended to cover more areas. For example, (69%) of the respondents reported that after the revolution they became more sympathetic to gender-based physically and sexually victims; (55%) of them confirmed that after the revolution they became more rejecting the girl's early marriage, compared to (30%) who gave an opposite answer; and (82%) of the respondents are now less anxious about the society's opinion on them.

Regarding the traditional distribution of household chores, (72%) of the respondents reported that after the revolution they became more believing in the importance of the participation of men in the house activities; while (81%) of them reported that after the revolution they became more believing in the importance of the participation of men in raising children.

The above statistics are very important. They indicate that the revolution has positively affected many of the respondents' perceptions. The revolution, therefore, has played as an active agent of change. It has entirely impacted women's lives and encouraged them to take more independent decisions and opinions.

Findings

The field results demonstrated a high level of women's rights awareness among the respondents. It also revealed how the revolution's slogans can be related to their rights. Their high level of rights awareness enabled them to reject some prevailing gendered stereotypes like assuming the shameful of women resorting to courts in cases of sexual harassment or family disputes. This indicates a real change in women's values that tries to break the silence barrier that covers discussions of such issues. The respondents' awareness was also reflected in their opinion regarding the importance of women participating in the public domain. In all, it was so clear that the previous repressive efforts and policies undertaken by the al-Bashir regime were not successful in suppressing Sudanese women's awareness of their rights.

A good percentage of the respondents, (41%), reported themselves as active in public domains. This result is positive, especially when considering it within the context of the problems facing women. As authors, we were surprised to find out that the above indicators of a high level of awareness were not accompanied by equivalent participation in the revolution's events, especially during the sit-in event. In contrary to the risky nature of demonstrations, the sit-in was a safety unique experience for Sudanese people and was visited by masses of individuals and families, even from among the al-Bashir supporters. Therefore, we suggest that the respondents' poor participation could be attributed to their surrounding conservative norms.

The results proved that the revolution has great positive impacts on the respondents; especially in terms of awareness of their rights to engage in political, economic, and family discussions. This is a remarkable finding. The revolution has also positively affected their desire to get more freedom especially to be financially independent. Finally, the revolution has changed the way they see themselves, they reported that it made them more self-confident and more aware to redistribute their household chores and the burden of raising kids with their male-correspondents.

Conclusion

The 2018-2019 revolution was an opportunity for women to reassure their presence in the public domain. It offered them new social roles to play. Women's participation in the revolution was guided by their deep awareness of their rights. The revolution, on the other turn, has subsequently generated further awareness among ordinary women, even those who did not engage in the revolution's events.

The societal support for women's participation has paved the way for women to strengthen their positions within the embedded post-revolution socio-economic, political, and cultural structures. This could be regarded as a good indicator of a societal development shift towards more equitable gendered values. However, the current transformation to gender development is still soft and unstable. Consequently, efforts should be built on such changes through a constant assessment of the societal status of rights awareness. The higher the state of awareness among ordinary women is, the larger their opportunity to gain new effective roles in the public sphere. In other words, the state of rights awareness among ordinary women is critical in determining the extent to which they can advance their socio-political power in the future.

Sudanese women, even those who were inactive at the revolution, are influenced by the positive energy and impacts of the revolution. This should be exploited by women activists to create strong bases for gender empowerment. Women's awareness of their rights is a core value that can push Sudanese democratic political transformation forward.

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