

The Impact of Female MPs on the 17th Representative Council

Professor Mazen A. S. Alougili
Professor of international relations
Jordan University
Amman, Jordan.

Rasha Munir Katami
Graduate students
University of Jordan
Amman, Jordan.

Abstract

Women Have been for long isolated from the decision making and authority positions because of the social role that was created by people on how men and women vary and resemble within their society's perception based on their physical and physiological properties (Eagly and Wood:)¹ Although women have proven their abilities in the different fields, the patriarchal culture within the society, does not believe in women's abilities to hold decision making positions within the parliamentary dome, which adds more pressure on women who make it to the parliament to prove their abilities. This study believes that women's potentials and abilities are equal to those of men and can compete with them in all fields this can be seen through studying the performance of women MP's in practicing their oversight role and its effectiveness in the 17th parliamentary Council

Purpose of the study

In this study we will discuss how effective women MPs role in the parliament and how it developed during the 17th parliament through women's efficiency in practicing their role and the topics they covered when practicing their role in the parliament.

Historical discourse

Women in Jordan obtained their right to vote and run for the parliament in 1975 and therefore Jordan became one of the first Arab countries to give women the right to vote and for political representation in the parliament. (Al-Naqshabandi, 2000).

Nevertheless women did not join the parliament until 1993 when the first woman to join the parliament Mrs Toujan Faisal won a seat through the Circassia and Chechen quota who played a significant role in the parliament, afterwards Nuha Ma'ayta was elected internally in the parliament in 2001 after the death of Lutfi Albarghouthi one of the Members of the Parliament (Alhemesat, & Alzoubi, 2004)

The 14th parliament -(2003)- witnessed the creation of the quota system for women where six were assigned for women where they practiced their role as representatives of the nation as equal to men MPs. (Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, 2017)

Women showed a significance role in the parliament since the creation of the quota system and accordingly gained the trust and support from their male peers in the parliament this can be seen through electing women within the parliamentarians to hold positions such as president assistants and vice-presidents of the presidential office of the parliament as well as chair-person of the different committees, for example women in the 14th council were elected four times for the parliamentary presidential office; Nariman Al-Roussan in the first non-ordinary session and the fourth ordinary session as president Assistant, as well Ansaf Al-Khawaldeh who was elected in the first ordinary session as President Assistant, and Falak Al-Jamaani was elected as vice-president in the fourth

However, during the 15th council -(2007-2009)- only two women won seats as president assistant in the councils presidential office during the first ordinary session, moreover the 16th representative council elections were held in 2010 and the council was dissolved by a royal decree in 2012 and only one woman was elected as a president assistant Nariman Al-Roussan in the presidential office. The low representation of women during these councils maybe due to the short term of these councils and the low experience of women elected in these councils in the parliamentary work.

¹Alice.H.Eagly and Wendy Wood, ****, Social Role Theory, Ch49

However, according to Sigi-Jordan, a report on women participation in international parliaments by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) showed Jordan ranked 141th out of 193 countries and 13th out of 20 within the Arab region (Sigi-jordan.org) which shows a comparatively low participation rate for women in the parliamentary union in distinction to other countries, this hinder women from fulfilling their role as parliamentarians and gain new experiences.

The election law and its impact on the quota system for women

Year	Total Number of Candidates	Women Candidates	Women MPs elected under Quota	Women MPs elected outside Quota	Total No. of Women MPs elected	Total No. of MPs	% Women MPs
1989	647	12	0	0	0	80	0%
1993	536	3	0	1	1	80	1.25%
1997	524	17	0	0	0	80	0
2003	760	54	6	0	6	110	5.5%
2007	895	199	6	1	7	110	6.4%
2010	853	142	12	1	13	120	10.8%
2013	1528	215	15	3	18	150	12.0%
2016	1293	258	15	5	20	132	15%

Since 1989 with the return of the parliamentary life in Jordan, women's representation in the parliament was not effective although the law supported women to run for parliamentary candidacy, and this was because of many factors; the lack of a quota system for women to secure a seat for women within a patriarchal society, the election law during 1989 elections which was the Mass electoral law under which the bloc electoral system falls where voters can vote for a number of candidates equal to the number of seats in their constituency, moreover electorate can vote for candidates from several lists within their constituency, and the winners are the ones that can collect the majority number of votes within their constituency, during these elections 12 out of 647 candidates were women however, none of them won a seat in that parliament, this law did not support women to win seats in the parliament because of the patriarchal society where women received a very limited to no support from their families and tribes in addition the fact that women are followers to men in their family affected their decision making in the voting process, in addition to the perspective of the population towards women's public role.

Moreover during the period from 1993 until 2010 the government of Jordan adopted the one vote system the system where each voter can vote for only one candidate regardless of the number of seats in their constituencies, and the winners are the ones who collect the majority of votes, because of the nature of this system where each voter has only one vote and because of the societal beliefs which were discussed earlier, accordingly constituencies and political parties wanted to ensure the access of their candidates to the parliament and therefore they preferred to support their men candidates over women to secure a seat in the parliament, therefore the societal beliefs in addition to the nature of the law hindered women from accessing the parliament.

Therefore, in the 1993 elections only three out of 536 candidates were women, and only one woman won a seat through the quota seat for Chechnya and cirssian, that is not through the free competition, moreover in the 1997 elections 17 women nominated themselves to the parliament, however none of them won a seat in the parliament under the same election law (the one vote law).

However, in 2003 an amendment was made to the parliamentary law in Jordan to support women where a quota for women was created according to law (11) of the year 2003 which assigned 6 seats of the total parliamentary seats for women and kept women's right to nominate herself for the free competition, the creation of the quota for women encouraged women to nominate themselves for the parliamentary elections where 54 out of 760 candidates were women, however women only won their seats through quota system but not through the free competition, furthermore in the 2007 elections six women won their seats through the quota system and one woman through the free competition, moreover, the quota seats for women were increased in 2010 from 6 seats to 12 seats as a result of an increase in parliamentary seats from 110 to 120, where 13 women won their seats in the parliament where 12 women won their seats through the quota system and one made it through the free competition.

In the elections of 2013, the number of seats for the parliament increased from 120 to 150 and therefore the number of seats for the quota system was increased from 12 to 15 seats, moreover the election law as amended to become a mixed electoral system where each voter was given two votes, the first vote was according to the one vote unedited system where each electorate votes for one candidate of their constituency, and the winner is the candidate who succeed in collecting the highest number of votes according to majority counting system,

And the other vote is to the National constituency according to the proportional closed list system, and the upper balance counting system to determine the number of seats for the winning proportional list to the number of votes obtained, this system can support women to win a seat in the parliament only if women are assigned advanced orderliness, which was not applied during that elections, however women managed to win three seats through the free competition in addition to the women quota seats.

In 2016 in this electoral council the number of women's seats remained the same although the number of seats of the house of representatives was reduced from 150 to 130, moreover, regarding the electoral law, the proportional opened list system was adopted instead of the closed proportional list accordingly each voter was given an equal number of votes on the list, according to this electoral system women candidates are not considered to be within the maximum number of candidates on the list, which makes it in the interest of each list to include a woman in order to obtain additional votes for the list and without being included in the list at the expense of one of the male candidates, this system increased women's chances in gaining access to the parliament where five women won their seats through the free competition and 15 won their seats through the quota system.

Moreover, a quota for women in the parliament was created to guarantee women's access to the parliament in 2003 in accordance to his royal decree King Abdullah II to create a quota for women in the parliament where six seats out of 110 were assigned for women quota in the 14th parliamentary council ((Shalabi and Alsaad, 2012)

The increase in the number of women winning their seats through the free competition; shows the increase in women's potentials as representatives of the nation and their abilities to change people's perspective towards women's role in the parliament and to gain their trust.

The parliament in Jordan

The Jordanian Parliamentary is consisted of two Houses; the House of Senate which is appointed by his Majesty the King and the House of Representatives that is elected by the people which has three main roles : the legislative role where the parliament suggests or approves a law proposal that is submitted by the executive authority, the financial role: where the parliament discuss the public budget with the executive authority and monitor how the budget is being employed, and the oversight role where the parliament monitor the executive authority's completion for its liabilities (parliament.jo,2019)

Women MP's performance during the 17th parliamentary council

Women MPs in the 17th parliament were active during the sessions in sharing their views where 12.4% of the submitted interventions were done by women, this gained them the trust among their men peers and succeeded in holding positions such as chairperson of committees in around 12.1% of the committees during the lifetime of the 17th parliamentary council.(RASED,2016)

Regarding the legislative role of the parliament, 175 laws were approved during the different sessions of the 17th council, most laws- 67 laws- were approved on during the second parliamentary session, and the least were during the non-ordinary session – 28 laws, moreover 57 law proposals were submitted during the 17th council, seven of them were submitted by women MPs that is 12 % of the submitted proposals were submitted by women.(RASED,2016)

Women practiced their legislative role during the 17th parliament, three proposals and amendments were submitted by Rula Al-Hroub; creating an association for libarotary medicine, enhance the financial situation for the military retirees, and the criminal law to be more consistent with the International Human Rights requirements, Hind Al-Fayez Submitted one proposal to create an association for the technology and communication, while WafaaBani Mustafa submitted three proposals and amendments; amendments to the human trafficking law -which is considered to be of higher importance for the public interest especially with the increase in the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan during that period-, a suggestion to create an association for professors and academics who work at the different Jordanian universities, and a proposal to abolish the law 308, which decriminalize the criminal in rape cases, if he proposed for the victim (statistics of the legislative and oversight office at the house of representatives).

Accordingly, seven proposals and amendments were submitted by three women MPs who had practiced their legislative role through proposing laws and suggesting amendments covering different topics, and focusing on Human Rights and civil society .

The different topics that women have covered through submitting proposals and the participation in making law, shows that women MPs in Jordan do not only see themselves as only concerned with specific topics regarding women and family issues, rather they see themselves as part of the society as a whole and their job is to enhance the people's life through participating in the decision making process that ensure the well-being of the people and protect their civil and political rights, in addition to their social and economic rights.

The 17th parliament oversight achievements

Only 22% of the parliament sessions were oversight sessions distributed accordingly; 32.1% were held in the First Ordinary Session, 27.8% were held during the Second Ordinary Session.

Women and men MPs both used the oversight tools effectively, during the 17th parliament 3095 questions were submitted by MPs, 71% of the submitted questions by both men and women MPs were discussed; 19% of the questions were discussed by the government within the statutory period, and 83% were not listed on the House's agenda during the span of the 17th House (RASED,2016)

Through questions, Women MPs in focused on Administrative, Financial and Economics topics, followed by education, environment, and health topics, moreover the least topics that received attention from Women MPs were human and civil rights, legal affairs, media, women's rights, youth, tourism and culture, transportation and infrastructure, national security, foreign affairs, and natural resources and energy topics

According to the information collected from the legislative and oversight office of the House of Representatives, the usage of the questions of the women MPs during the 17th parliamentary council was as the below table (III) shows.

(Table III): No of Questions submitted according to each Woman MP

Name of MP	No. of Questions submitted	No. of Questions discussed
AmnehGharagheer	35	35
FatinKholiaifat	4	4
Fatimah Abu-Abtta	31	31
FalakJamaani	12	12
HamdiehAlHamaydeh	7	6
Hind Al-Fayez	17	15
Inssaf Al-Khawaldeh	3	1
Kholoud Al-Khatatbeh	2	2
Mariam Al-Lozi	14	13
Moyassar Al-Sordieh	16	15
Naayem Al-Ajarmeh	11	11
Najah Al-Azzeh	4	4
Reem Abu-Dalbouh	4	4
Rola Al-Hroub	137	128
Rudiena Al-Atti	5	5
Shah Al-Amareen	1	1
Tamamm Al-Rayatti	17	14
WafaaBani-Mustafa	30	30

Source: Data in this table provided by the Legislative and Oversight Office of the House of representatives.

Women MPs focused on national topics more than local ones, however some women only discussed local topics in their questions such as ReemAbuDalbouh who submitted four questions to cover different local topics, FatinKhuleifat submitted two questions out of four questions on local topics, moreover other women MPs were concerned only about national topics when submitting their questions; such as NajahAlazzeh who submitted four questions on different national topics, KholoudAlkhatatbeh submitted two questions on national security and administrative topics, MoyassarSordieh submitted 16 questions on different national topics where she focused on administrative topics, shaha Al-Amareen submitted only one question on a national economic and environmental topic, Rudainah Al-atti submitted five questions, 4 of them were on administrative topics and one of them was on a legal topic, InsafAlkhawaldeh submitted three questions on national administrative topic Mariam Allozi submitted 14 questions and focused on educational and administrative topics as to her long experience in the field of education, other women MPs submitted questions on both national and local levels on different topics where they focused on administrative ones, while foreign affairs received a minimal focus during the 17th parliamentary council alongside with women's affairs where only one question was submitted by NajahAlazzeh on woman's right in Jordan to pass her nationality to her children.

Interrogation in the 17th parliament

According to the study performed by Al-Hayyate Center (RASED) on the 17th Parliament performance (2016), 77 interrogations were submitted

According to the statistics collected from the legislative and oversight office at the house of representatives, women MPs submitted 37% of the total number of interrogations where RulaAlHroub submitted 28 interrogations on national and local matters, where 20 interrogations were discussed that is 71% of her interrogation, furthermore MoyassarSrodieh submitted only one interrogation which was discussed during oversight sessions.

Women MPs submitted 77% of the total number of interrogations where RulaAlHroub submitted 28 interrogations discussing different causes and focused on national and local administrative, economic and legal matters, where 78% of her interrogation requests were answered that is 20 interrogations were discussed during the sessions, furthermore MoyassarSrodieh submitted one interrogation on a national administrative matter, which she received an answer to during the oversight sessions (statistics of the oversight and legislative office of the house of representatives).

Women usage of the interrogation was limited, however 96.5% of the interrogations submitted by RulaAlHroub, and MoyassarSrodieh submitted only one interrogation, this shows that women were hesitating in evolving their usage of their oversight tools regarding questions that they were not convinced with their answers to turn them into interrogations, which makes them less effective in applying this tool in practicing their oversight role, moreover, more men than women submitted interrogation requests for their questions (statistics of the oversight and legislative office of the house of representatives).

Investigation during the 17th parliament

According to the House of Representatives statistics no investigation was submitted during the 17th parliament neither by male or female MPs (representatives.jo), this shows that MPs in general were hesitated to escalate accountability of the executive authority on public issues, and therefore a weak usage of oversight tools that the Jordanian Constitution has provided, this is might be because of their tend to practice their role as service providers for their constituencies which comes on the expense of their oversight role

General Debate in the 17th Parliament

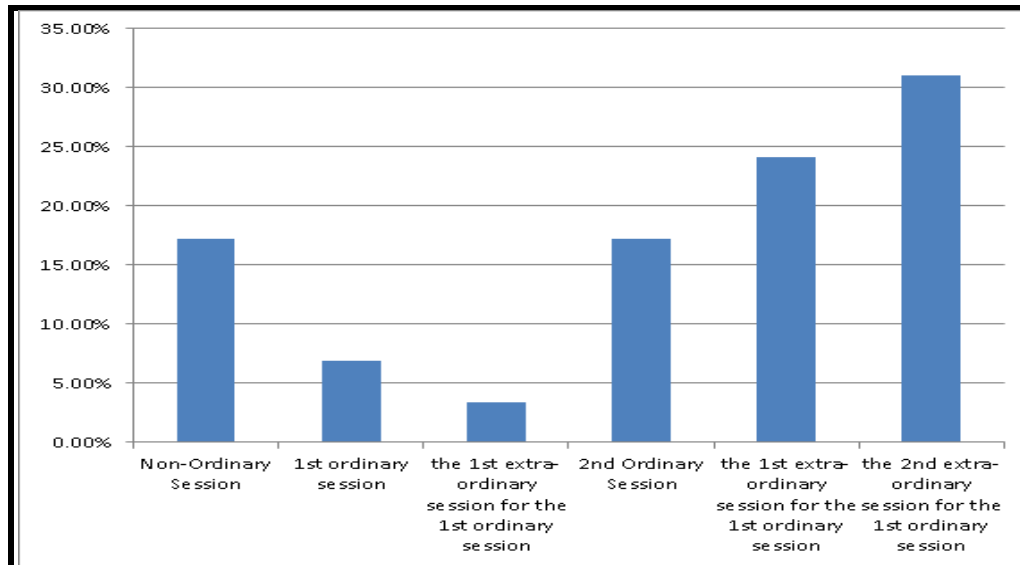
During the 17th Parliament 37 debate requests were submitted to the council, 38% of them were discussed; 40% of the submitted general debate were discussed during the first ordinary session, 60% were discussed during the second ordinary session., while in the non-ordinary session of the first ordinary session 15 debate requests were submitted and 35% of them were discussed during the council's oversight sessions, moreover during the third ordinary session only two debate requests were submitted to the council but they were not discussed(the House of representatives statistics)

According to the statistics of the oversight and legislative office of the House of Representatives, RodainaAlAtti submitted a debate request on the violations against Al-Aqssa and the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupations, RulaAlHroub submitted a debate request to discuss the consequence of the snowstorm -Alexa- and the paralysis it caused in different vital sectors especially the electricity roads, bakery and water sectors, NajjahAlazzeH submitted a general debate request to discuss a proposed agreement between the National Electricity Company in Jordan and an American company on behalf of a consortium of companies that are mostly Israelis companies, moreover WafaaBani-Mustafa submitted a request to discuss the energy and electricity emergent situation which affects the Jordanian people especially the less fortunate ones.

The above shows that women were interested in covering different national topics through submitting general debate requests rather than local ones; they have also discussed issues that directly affected people's well-being, safety and Human Rights

Expressing Desire (Suggestions), in the 17th parliament

During the 17th parliament 29 Expressing Desire (suggestions) were submitted; as graph (VII) shows that during the first ordinary session only three suggestions were submitted, while 21 suggestions were submitted during the second ordinary session, and five Desire Proposals were submitted during the non-ordinary session, and one in the third ordinary session, while no suggestions were submitted during the extra-ordinary session for the non-ordinary session, the 2nd extra-ordinary session for the first ordinary session and the third ordinary session. (RASED,2016).

Graph (VII) No. of General debate (suggestions) submitted during the 17th Parliament

Source: Data Provided by (RASED,2017)

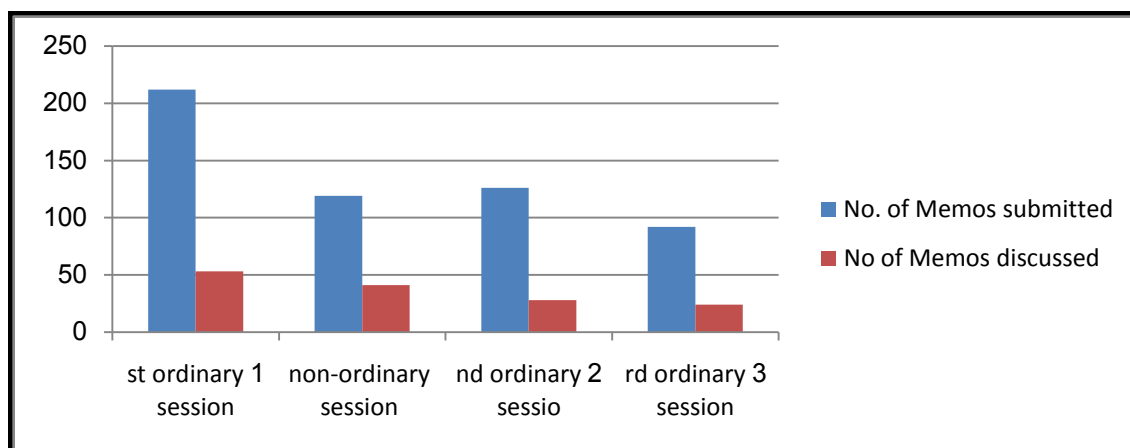
Women MPs have practiced their role in submitting suggestions on different matters including social and infrastructure amendments and development to enhance people's well-being, four suggestions were submitted by women either as a response to petitions and complaints they have received or as an initiative by the MP herself that aims to serve public's interest, accordingly two women submitted five suggestions, Fatima Abu Abttasubmitted two suggestion on educational and administration topics, and RulaAlhroub submitted three suggestions on administrative an health topics (legislative and oversight office of the house of representatives).

Complaints and petitions in the 17th parliament

The number of petitions and complaints submitted did not exceeds 9 petitions and complaints throughout the lifetime of the 17th parliamentary council, where two complaints were submitted during the non-ordinary session but were not discussed, and only one complaint during the first ordinary session, and 4 petitions and complaints during the second ordinary session, while no complaints or petitions was submitted during the third ordinary session (17th parliamentary Council statistics) Women submitted seven complaints and petitions during the 17th parliamentary council, which is more than half of the total number of complaints and petitions that were submitted to the council, this is an indicator of the effective role of women in practicing their oversight role in the parliament. Women MPs submitted six complaints and petitions focusing on the administrative and financial topics, while health and environment received the least attention only one complaint regarding the pollution that is caused by the metal greenhouse factory that is established in an agricultural neighborhood (legislative and oversight office of the house of representatives)

Memos in the 17thParliament

According to RASED (2016), 549 Memos were submitted during the 17th Parliamentary Council where only 27% of the submitted memos were discussed, the first ordinary session witnessed the largest number of Memos' submission, 212 memos were submitted during the session but only 25% of them were discussed, during the second ordinary session 126 memos were submitted, and only 22% of them were answered, during the first non-ordinary session 119 memos were submitted, and 34% of them were answered. the third ordinary session witnessed the lowest number of memos' submission, only 92 memos were submitted, and 26% of the submitted memos were answered, furthermore MPs submitted the highest number memos through groups where 289 memos were submitted, committees came next in submitting memos where MPs submitted 169 memos through their committees, moreover 90 memos were submitted by individual MPs and only one memo was submitted through a parliamentary bloc, Graph (VIII) shows the number of Memos submitted and the number of memos discussed during the 17th parliament

Graph (VIII) No. of Memos submitted and No. of Memos answered during the 17th Parliament

Source: Data Provided by (RASED,2017)

According to the House of representatives statistics Women submitted 46 memos during the 17th parliament as the following, most Women's memos discussed matters of labor rights, legal and health issues, in addition to other important memos regarding national matters, however Women MPs did not use memos to discuss women's matters, moreover women MPs were concerned about national matters.

Vote of Confidence in the 17th Parliament

According to the House of representatives statistics, Two sessions of vote for confidence had taken place during the 17th parliament where women MPs had effectively participated in the voting process. The first vote of confidence session had taken place in non-ordinary session where the government gained the confidence by 82 votes to 66 votes who voted against the government where one representative did not attend the session, however 13 women voted against the government while only five women gave confidence to the government (representatives.jo)

Another vote of confidence memo was submitted during the second ordinary session to the parliament, which was signed by Rula Alhroub in addition to other members where it was placed on the agenda to be discussed but was deferred to later sessions.

The results shows that 72% of women MPs voted against the government, which makes around 8.2% of the parliament, therefore women are no longer acting as followers or a passive member in the parliament rather they are making decisions based on their personal experience, they are even taking the initiative to submit a request to vote of confidence, this shows an effective practice of citizenship for women in the parliament, and a change in their role in the political field from being followers to their male peers, to a more effective, independent representatives of the nation (the legislative and oversight office of the house of representatives).

Accordingly, the complaints and petitions was the least used among the oversight tools, however women used this tool more effectively than men. Moreover, the general debate tool was the least frequently used by women MPs where only 4 memos were submitted by women.

Moreover, the most used tool by women was the question; 351 questions were submitted by all women MPs, and memos were used by 15 women submitting 40 memos. The reason behind this tool popularity is the simplicity of its procedure compared to the procedures of the other oversight tools, however women had effectively practiced their oversight role through actively using questions as an oversight tool, they were less effective in using the interrogation as an oversight tool, while there was an absence in using the investigation as an oversight tool not only by women but also by men MPs.

The topics that women MPs had covered during the 17th parliament showed how women had developed themselves to cover issues not only on women and family topics as they were expected to do, but rather they covered issues on different matters and on national level rather than just on local level, this shows how the understanding of citizenship has developed for these women to widen its boarder from the tribal and local boarders to a national level, where they are considered to be representatives of the nation rather than representatives of their district.

The difference between the western understanding of citizenship and the Arab understanding of citizenship for representatives is where they see themselves as individuals apart from their tribes and district, to representatives of the whole nation, which strengthen their effective performance of their oversight role, and therefore their effectiveness in practicing their citizenship according to Fergus.

This is considered to be an important factor to achieve effective citizenship rather than acting as passive element in the society, by adopting an initiative strategy to contribute to the enhancement of the society's economic and social life and participate with others in achieving these goals.

Conclusion

During the 17th Parliamentary Council 18 women won in the elections, three of them won their seats through the free competition, while the other 15 women won their seats through the quota system as required by the electoral law, furthermore women used the different oversight tools that are mentioned in the Rules of Procedures of the House of Representatives where focused on using the questions and memos; the reason behind these tools popularity is the simplicity of their procedure compared to other oversight tools' procedures, while the interrogation and suggestion were the least used by women in the parliament, however the investigation was not used as an oversight tool during the 17th parliamentary council neither by women nor by men.

Moreover, The different topics that women have covered through submitting proposals and the participation in making law, shows that women MPs in Jordan do not see themselves as only concerned with specific topics like women and family, they also see themselves as part of the whole society and their job is to enhance the society's life through participating in the decision-making process that ensure the well-being of the people.

