

# The Level of Political Reform Awareness in Jordan from the Perspective of Jordanian Political Parties' General Secretaries

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## Abstract

The study aimed at determining the level of awareness of the general secretaries of the Jordanian political parties' to the concept of political reform. The study sample consisted of (18) secretary-generals of different Jordanian political parties, thereby, a questionnaire was designed for this purpose, consisting of two dimensions; first: the concept and the implications of political reform with (20) paragraphs, second: the political parties with (26) paragraphs. The results showed that the level of awareness of the general secretaries of the Jordanian political parties to the concept of political reform was positive, with the arithmetic mean of (4.21) to the concept of political reform dimension and (3.98) to the political parties dimension, these results represent a high degree of orientation towards the degree of awareness of the general secretaries of the political parties towards political reform. The study showed the presences of statistical significant differences to the variables: gender, age, income and educational level, and the study also showed no statistically significant differences attributable to the variables: duration of membership in the party, the duration of a secretary general of the party or type of the political party. In light of the findings, the study recommended to conduct more studies, workshops and conferences on the subject matter to consolidate political awareness among the greatest number of citizens, members and leaders of the parties to the concept of political reform.

**Keywords:** General Secretaries, Political Parties, Political Reform

## 1.1 Introduction

The concept of awareness refers to the general range of factors related to the environment and to the extent of the human knowledge that can affect the impact of the environmental components and interactions, and then predict the future consequences; emerging the political awareness, which occupies a prominent place in the political environment, as on one hand it creates the intellectual structure of the political ideology, and on the other hand it determines the course of the political process itself. Thus, there is no political process without political awareness of the political interactions, inputs, outputs and operations.

Political awareness is not only important for politicians, but also for all members of the society, and due to the dialectic historical relationship between political science and other social sciences, the average citizen needs this political awareness to analyze the internal and external political environment away from passion, philosophies, slogans and prejudices, because the subjective analytical approach qualifies him to handle and adapt to his real world.

The importance of political awareness increases at the transition from the state of the individual to the state of the institutions, especially the "political parties", because they are formal institutions that represent the goals, interests and aspirations of different social and economic forces in the political life, as the political parties are embracing the entire political process, thus, it was necessary to possess a huge level of political knowledge.

The importance of political awareness increases in times of crises faced by the nations, that people start claiming to "reform", as in the case of the Arab countries with all its systems and institutions, formally and informally witnessing in the past three years the events of the so-called "Arab Spring"; those events that raised the frequency of claims of political reform. Hence, this study came to reveal the level of political awareness of the concept of political reform among the political parties represented by its general secretaries who are responsible for the proper political actions inside and outside the party.

## 1.2 Problem of the Study

In order to prepare the individual to be an active member in the community, it is imperative that the society civic institutions must play a key role in promoting awareness, and this will not work unless the leaders of the political parties possessed a high degree of political awareness that could be reflected through programs and plans for individuals to reach a good level of political awareness that can enable them to interpret and to understand the events and influences that are playing the key role in their future, for promoting the concept of political participation which will be reflected on their behavior when dealing with such issues, as political participation is a national duty no less important than any other duties.

Accordingly, the problem of this study comes from the importance of the role of the general secretaries of the political parties in the political participation of the reform processes, thereby the general secretaries awareness of the political reform concept will reflect its impact on the consciousness of the members of the party on the one hand, and the members of the community on the other hand.

This study is a serious attempt to shed light on the level of political awareness among the secretaries general towards the concept of political reform, especially since political life in Jordan is characterized by the multiplicity of political parties.

### 1.3 Questions of the Study

**The first question:** What is the level of political awareness among the secretaries-general of the Jordanian political parties to the concept of political reform from their point of view?

**The second question:** Is there a statistically significant difference in the degree of political awareness among the secretaries-general of the Jordanian political parties towards the concept of political reform due to the variables: gender, age, level of education, type of work, duration of membership in the party, duration as a secretary general and type of the party?

### 1.4 Importance of the Study

From the perspective of the researchers, this is the only study investigating the level of awareness of the secretaries general of political parties in Jordan to the concept of political reform, which will contribute in adding value to this subject, by inviting decision-makers in Jordan and in the political parties to start procedural discussions about the important issues pertaining the structure of the political parties such as the enrichment tools of the political life in Jordan, and this also opens the way for the elites and individuals to engage in the political life and power and maturing the political experience in Jordan to become a model in the Arab region.

Thus, the importance of this study stems out of the actual involvement of those people, "the secretaries-general of the political parties" in the Jordanian political life.

### 1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study aims at:

- 1- Identifying the level of political awareness among the general secretaries of political parties in Jordan, towards the concept of political reform.
- 2- Identifying the difference in the level of political awareness among the general secretaries of the Jordanian political parties towards the concept of political reform due to the variables: gender, age, and level of education, type of work, duration of membership in the party, duration as a secretary general and type of the party.

### 1.6 Procedural Definitions:

#### 1.6.1 Political Awareness:

The level of awareness of the general secretaries of political parties in Jordan, towards the concept of political reform, and their contributions in the reform process, beside their ability to understand, respond and interact in the actions taken in this area upon a scale prepared for this purpose.

#### 1.6.2 Political Party:

Every political organization consisting of a group of Jordanians, and founded according to the provisions of the Constitution to participate in the political life and to achieve specific goals related to the political affairs economically and socially, and working through legitimate and peaceful measures.

#### 1.6.3 Secretary General of the Party:

It is the first leadership position in a political party, and is filled by election and for a specific limited period.

### 1.7 Study Population and Study Limitations

This study included the general secretaries of the 24 political parties officially licensed in Jordan under the law of the political parties in 2012 according to official data released by the Jordanian Ministry of Interior, the

questionnaires were distributed to all the secretaries general of these parties, and (18) secretary-general responded.

## **1.8 Literature Review**

### *1.8.1 The Concept of Political Awareness*

Awareness in language is the understanding, and the clear cognition (Ibn Mnzoor, 1970), and procedurally as for philosophers and scientists, it has many definitions; the word "awareness" has a Latin origin with the meaning of knowing things on an ongoing basis, beside the meaning of the continuous conscious of oneself (Assaf, 2013).

Political awareness is one of the benefits of social development, because of the human need for developing tools to interact with nature and the ability to interact with it, then to distinguish between what is essential and non-essential, and to understand the causal phenomena (Majid, 1995).

Political awareness is a necessity of life in the Middle Eastern communities, where people live in a state of intellectual stagnation; as they are no longer interested in political participation or political decision-making which are the themes of political awareness (Al-Barwari, 2006).

Political awareness helps individuals analyzing local and international political status scientifically, because the surrounding environment is witnessing daily political issues that are dividing individuals each according to emotional positions, as awareness can be traced into three levels of the human behavior: perception and knowledge, conscience, and will. Psychologists also defined awareness as the human being self feeling (Bakar, 2000).

Awareness definitions varied according to the ideological and the environmental characteristics of the human societies, socialists have focused on the class that constitutes the political awareness within human societies, as the class analyzes and consider things from the perspective of the interests of individuals, here, politics revolve around economy, especially for the classes that constitute the main focus of socialism, and according to the economic relations in terms of their impact on policy, Marx refers to that by saying: "ideas always fail as they are far away from interest" (Kuldv, 1978).

The general sense of awareness, as a conscious of reality and its implications, contains two aspects; individual aspect as a result of an individual and collective aspect as a product of social life in all its interactions, thus, the features of awareness are determined and shaped in the context of a given society in a given time (Chalabi, 2001).

Awareness begins with the human natural feeling of imperfection as deficiency is an integral part of life itself; this would push human beings to engage the constant search process motivated by their thirst for knowledge (Freir, 1998).

Political awareness is an interaction of ideas, information, beliefs, and perceptions about the political power, law and order and the political rights, thereby it is an integral part of the social existence (Ali, 1997).

Other scientists consider political awareness as relevant to the social functional perspective, as a set of values, attitudes and political principles that allow the individual to participate effectively in society (Al-Qani & Al-Jamal, 1996).

Finally, we conclude that political awareness includes three parts: The first part is cognitive forming the set of ideas and principles possessed by the individual about political matters, secondly comes the emotional part which appears in the values and attitudes toward political matters; where these two parts are translated behaviorally as the actual activities and the active participation in the political life, thirdly, and as a result of the first two parts comes the third part, as the skills part, which is governed by the factors of the official discourse of the state, media, political participation, personal experiences, the limited overall vision, critical cognition, responsibility, and the need for change.

### *1.8.2 Previous Studies*

Although this study is considered as the first of its kind to address the issue of political awareness among party leaders in Jordan, the researchers have analyzed the studies that dealt with the concept of political awareness.

Al-Sharah, and Barakat study (2006), entitled "The religious parties and their role in the foreign policy in Israel," which aimed at identifying the role of religious parties in the Israeli foreign policy, indicating the limited role of the religious parties in the making processes of foreign policy.

Bashir (2007) study entitled: "The impact of media in the occupied territories on the formation of political awareness of the Palestinian university students: A proposed model for building a good citizenship" , which aimed at analyzing the impact of the media in the occupied territories on the formation of political awareness in order to create a model of good citizenship, where the study found that the media had a major role in the political awareness among the Palestinian university students.

Another important study of Nassar (2004) entitled "Political awareness and national belongingness in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait". The study results showed weakness of political participation among students, and also showed low level of political awareness in general, but high among female students compared to male students, finding that the correlation between political awareness and national belongingness is positive, as increasing political awareness among the students will increase their national belongingness.

Also Aljorsh (2012) conducted a study entitled: "Awareness and political participation among Yemeni citizens", examining the nature of political participation among Yemeni citizens, aiming at analyzing the relationship between awareness and political participation among Yemeni citizens, finding that there is a statistically significant difference attributable to the type and level of education, residence, age ,and educational level.

Finally, Al-Awamleh and Shnikat (2012) Study entitled: "The level of awareness of Al-Balqa Applied University students to the concept and dimensions of the political culture", which aimed at investigating the level of awareness of Al-Balqa Applied University students to the concept of political culture, showing that students' awareness of the of political culture was high in the area of political participation, and medium in the concepts of political knowledge and political values.

## 1.9 Results

### 1.9.1 Results related to the study variables

Results related to the study variables: Gender, age, income, level of education, type of work, duration of membership in the party ,and duration as a Secretary General ,are shown in Table (1) with its frequencies and percentages.

Table (1): Frequencies and percentages of the study variables

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	16	88.89
	Female	2	11.11
Age	Less than 45	4	22.22
	More than 45	14	77.78
Income	Less than 500 JDs	6	33.33
	More than 500JDs	12	66.67
Level of Education	High school	1	5.56
	First Degree	8	44.44
	Higher Education	9	50.00
Type of Work	Public	5	27.78
	Private	13	72.22
Duration of Membership in the Party	Less than (4) years	7	38.89
	(4-7) years	3	16.67
	More than (7) years	8	44.44
Duration as a Secretary General	One period	8	44.44
	Two periods	9	50.00
	Three periods and more	1	5.56
Type of the party	Islamic	2	11.11
	Leftist	2	11.11
	Moderate	11	61.11
	Nationalist	3	16.67
Total		18	100%

### 1.9.2 Results of the responses of the study sample

1.9.2.1 Results concerning the responses of the study sample for the paragraphs of the concept and implications of political reform.

Table (2): Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample for the paragraphs of the concept and implications of political reform

Level	Paragraph	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I understand the achievement of political reform on the basis of a fair election and equality among citizen rights	4.55	0.68
2	adoption of political reform reflects the seriousness of the government to adopt and activate the orientations of the reform law and practice	4.50	0.68
3	I understand that political reform is based on a parliamentary monarchy system upon a strong parliamentary base.	4.46	0.72
4	I understand that political reform is based on the legitimacy that will protect public rights.	4.42	0.79
5	I accept the adoption of the reform on the participation of relevant sectors of society in the reform processes and programs.	4.35	0.89
6	I understand that political reform is based on a Parliament representing the true will of the people.	4.27	0.93
7	I understand that political reform is based on a government far away from suspicions of corruption.	4.27	0.95
8	I accept that political reform is based on the consensus of the political forces	4.24	0.96
9	I understand that political reform is the convergence of the vision of government with the vision of the people.	4.20	0.96
10	I understand that the law of elections, parties, and all laws related to public rights are the fundamental laws of political reform.	4.18	1.04
11	I understand that election is a fundamental pillar of the democratic system.	4.18	1.04
12	There must be an honest environment as a critical factor in the success of political reform process.	4.17	1.14
13	I understand that economic reform is an essential pillar of the political reform.	4.13	1.14
14	Corruption is the most prominent obstacle that challenges the political reform efforts in Jordan.	4.13	0.99
15	I am building a society that respects law and subjected to independent judicial system	4.12	1.12
16	I understand that there is no democracy without respecting political pluralism and allowing power devolution.	4.04	1.03
17	I would like to promote stability, security and national unity to help in the process of political reform.	4.02	1.15
18	Understanding the strong role of media, which contributes on the success of the reform process?	4.02	1.02
19	The philosophy of political reform is based on the distribution and the separation of powers.	4.01	1.21
20	Political reform must include all components of the state, starting from the Constitution and ending with the laws that govern political life.	3.96	1.24
<b>Average</b>		<b>4.21</b>	<b>0.48</b>

The arithmetic means in table (2) for the paragraphs of the concept and implications of political reform ranged between (4.55 – 3.96), and the highest paragraph came "I understand the achievement of political reform on the basis of a fair election and equality among citizen rights" with the arithmetic mean of (4.55) and with the standard deviation of (0.68), while the lowest paragraph came "Political reform must include all components of the state, starting from the Constitution and ending with the laws that govern political life", with the arithmetic mean of (3.96) and with the standard deviation of (1.24), and the total average of (4.21) for the arithmetic mean and (0.48) for the standard deviation, which reflects a high degree of political awareness with the secretaries general of the Jordanian political parties for the concept of political reform.

*1.9.2.2 Results concerning the responses of the study sample for the paragraphs of the political parties.*

The arithmetic means in table (3) for the paragraphs of the political parties ranged between (4.27 – 3.67), and the highest paragraph came "I understand that the party organization is an urgent need and has an active role in supporting the process of political reform" with the arithmetic mean of (4.27) and with the standard deviation of (0.93), while the lowest paragraph came "I agree with the establishment of civic society institutions as an alternative of the political parties", with the arithmetic mean of (3.67) and with the standard deviation of (1.29), and the total average of (3.98) for the arithmetic mean and (0.48) for the standard deviation, which reflects a high degree of political awareness with the secretaries general of the Jordanian political parties for the concept of political reform.

Table (3): Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample for the paragraphs of the of the political parties

Level	Paragraph	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I understand that the party organization is an urgent need and has an active role in supporting the process of political reform.	4.27	0.93
2	I understand the need for the independency of political party	4.27	0.95
3	I pay attention cautiously to the contribution of the parties in the fragmentation of the society and the disruption of national unity.	4.24	0.96
4	Aware of the contribution of political parties to achieve national unity.	4.20	0.96
5	I accept the existence of two major parties for the devolution of power, rather than the large number of political parties in Jordan	4.18	1.04
6	I understand cautiously the idea that belonging to political parties interferes with belonging to homeland.	4.18	1.04
7	Accept the idea of having an organizational structure of the party for the distribution of powers to help achieving political reform.	4.17	1.14
8	I listen to political issues more than others across different media.	4.13	1.14
9	Accept others' opinions in the deliberations between the parties.	4.13	0.99
10	I accept the devolution of power in leadership positions in the party.	4.12	1.12
11	I participate in the elections and party meetings permanently and regularly.	4.04	1.03

12	I understand that financial independence of the party increases the credibility of the party.	4.02	1.15
13	I understand that the continuity of the party and his chronological age contributes in increasing the effectiveness of the party.	4.02	1.02
14	I understand that the multiplicity of party branches in the provinces helps individuals to join political parties.	4.01	1.21
15	The list system in the general election law in 2012 had strengthened the partisan phenomenon.	3.96	1.24
16	I understand that political awareness leads to increase political belongingness of the political parties.	3.95	1.12
17	Pay attention to what is published in local and international media regularly about political participation.	3.91	1.12
18	I respond to the resolutions that move me away from the general secretariat position of the party, but remaining as a member.	3.85	1.12
19	I understand that media promotes political awareness through programs for the advancement of political reform.	3.81	1.19
20	I respond to partisan bulletins and data as its prominent role in increasing awareness as a requirement of the political reform.	3.81	1.10
21	Responding to the idea of plurality of parties represented in the Parliament as an essential role in supporting Jordan's political reform.	3.80	1.13
22	I understand that political parties are the most important tools of political competition.	3.74	1.17
23	The strength of the political parties contributes in the success of the programs of political reform.	3.72	1.15
24	I consider political parties in contemporary democracies the mainstay of participation and political pluralism and in the devolution of power.	3.71	1.27
25	I prefer merging a number of political parties in one-party to increase the effectiveness of these parties in the political reform process.	3.68	1.31
26	I agree with the establishment of civic society institutions as an alternative of the political parties.	3.67	1.29
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.98</b>	<b>0.48</b>

### 1.9.2.3 Results of the study variables

1.9.2.3.1 Gender: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (4).

Table (4): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square for gender variable

Gender	Frequencies	Percentages
Male	16	88.98
Female	2	11.11
Total	18	100
Chi- square	12.56	0.00*

Results in table (4) show that the value of the Chi -square for gender variable is (12.56), which reflects a statistically significant difference, where the results indicated that the differences are in favor of males in the awareness of the political reform.

*1.9.2.3.2 Age: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (5).*

Table (5): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square for age variable

age	Frequencies	Percentages
Less than 45 years	4	22.22
More than 45 years	14	77.78
Total	18	100
Chi -square	13.56	0.00*

Results in table (5) show that the value of the Chi- square for age variable is (13.56), which reflects a statistically significant difference, where the results indicated that the differences are in favor of the age category of (more than 45 years) in the awareness of the political reform.

*1.9.2.3.3 Income: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (6).*

Table (6): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square for income variable

Income	Frequencies	Percentages
500 JDs and less	6	33.33
More than 500 JDs	12	66.67
Total	18	100
Chi- square	15.66	0.00*

Results in table (6) show that the value of the Chi- square for income variable is (15.66), which reflects a statistically significant difference, where the results indicated that the differences are in favor of the income category of (more than 500 JDs) in the awareness of the political reform.

*1.9.2.3.4 Level of education: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (7).*

Table (7): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi -square for level of education variable

level of education	Frequencies	Percentages
High school	1	5.56
First degree	8	44.44
Higher education	9	50.00
Total	18	100
Chi -square	16.10	0.00*

Results in table (7) show that the value of the Chi square for level of education variable is (16.10), which reflects a statistically significant difference, where the results indicated that the differences are in favor of the education level category of (higher education) in the awareness of the political reform.

*1.9.2.3.5 Type of work: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (8).*



Table (8): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square for the type of work variable

Type of work	Frequencies	Percentages
Public	5	27.78
Private	13	72.22
Total	18	100
Chi -square	7.11	0.09

The result in table (8) shows that the value of the Chi -Square for the type of work variable is (7.11), which reflects no statistically significant difference.

*1.9.2.3.6 Duration in the party: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (9).*

Table (9): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square for duration in the party variable

Duration in the party	Frequencies	Percentages
Less than 4 years	7	38.89
4 – 7 years	3	16.67
More than 7 years	8	44.44
Total	18	100
Chi- square	5.66	0.12

The result in table (9) shows that the value of the Chi Square for the duration in the party variable is (5.66), which reflects no statistically significant difference.

*1.9.2.3.7 Duration as a Secretary General: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (10).*

Table (10): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square for duration as a Secretary General variable

Duration as a Secretary General	Frequencies	Percentages
One period	8	44.44
Two periods	9	50.00
Three periods and more	1	5.56
Total	18	100
Chi-square	6.91	0.11

The result in table (10) shows that the value of the Chi -Square for the duration as a Secretary General variable is (5.66), which reflects no statistically significant difference.

*1.9.2.3.8 type of party: Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square were calculated as in table (11).*

Table (11): Frequencies and percentages and the value of Chi- square for type of the party variable

Type of the party	Frequencies	Percentages
Islamic	2	11.11
Leftist	2	11.11
Moderate	11	61.11
Nationalist	3	16.67
Total	18	100
Chi-square	6.91	0.11

The result in table (11) shows that the value of the Chi -Square for type of the party variable is (6.91), which reflects no statistically significant difference.

### 1.10 Discussion

According to the concept and implications of political reform dimension, results indicated that the answers of the study sample correspond with a high degree of awareness for the general secretaries of the political parties in Jordan toward the political reform, which can be explained by the fact that the general secretaries of these parties have a high political experience through working with different political organizations, and they have a major role in the process of the political reform development in the light of their broad expertise in this area.

- Results also showed and in the light of the gender variable a statistically significant difference in favor of males in the awareness towards political reform, and the attribute of this result is due to the nature of the social structure in the Jordanian society which is characterized by the social male domination, where the majority of those assimilated into the political process in the Jordanian society are males.
- In the light of the age variable, results showed that the age category (more than 45 years) has more awareness about political reform and the attribute of this result is due to the political maturity and experience accumulated in the political practices.
- Results also showed, in light of income variable that there are statistically significant differences in favor of those with the income of (more than 500 JDs), the is due to the relatively of all social components, higher income associated with higher experts and more years of working.
- Results also showed, in light of the level of education variable that there are statistically significant differences in favor of those with educational level (higher education) compared with other educational levels, this result reflects the role of culture and knowledge in raising the level of awareness, and in the understanding in-depth the processes of the evolution of society, especially in the understanding of the political problems facing the Jordanian society.
- Results also showed and in the light of the type of work variable that there are no statistically significant differences and this is due to the work connection with culture, regardless its type.
- Results also showed and in the light of the duration in the party variable that there are no statistically significant differences and this is due to the educated political culture in the party for all members, regardless the duration of membership.
- Results also showed and in the light of the duration as a Secretary General variable that there are no statistically significant differences, because the political activates of the secretary general in not affected with time and this goes in line with the duration in the party variable.
- Results also showed and in the light of the type of the party variable that there are no statistically significant differences, but the results also indicated that moderate parties are more aware of the importance of the political reform in Jordan as they are the majority.

### 1.11 Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

- 1- The government should adopt more opened political programs about political parties in the Jordanian society, because of its positive impact on raising the awareness of the political and economical issues.
- 2- Activating the role of the Ministry of Political Development in the organized political life in Jordan.
- 3- Amend the laws and regulations governing political life, and the amendment of the parties and elections law, for the creation of mutual trust between the government and political activists who are demanding it.
- 4- Lifting all restrictions that are related to the political parties activists, which will have a positive impact in improving it.
- 5- Encourage similar studies and in-depth understanding of the political process in Jordan, especially the aspects that are not covered by this study.
- 6- Civic institutions and research centers should adopt scientific studies on political awareness in the Jordanian society.

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