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Perceptions of Educated Women Through the Lens of the Intellectual Class

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Abstract

General Background: The mental image held by society's educated class plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of women, especially in transitional democracies. **Specific Background:** In Iraq, where historical, cultural, and political contexts intersect, the representation of educated women remains complex and often contradictory. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite their increasing visibility, there is a lack of analytical studies that explore how the educated elite perceive their female counterparts. **Aim:** This research investigates the mental image of the educated Iraqi woman as perceived by the educated class, focusing on her electoral role, professional competence, cultural awareness, and concept of freedom. **Results:** The study reveals a nuanced perception—educated women are largely viewed as intellectually capable and socially resilient, yet still challenged by prevailing stereotypes and traditional norms. **Novelty:** By employing a descriptive-analytical method and drawing from literary and media representations, this study offers a multidimensional analysis rarely addressed in prior Iraqi scholarship. **Implications:** These findings provide insight for media, policymakers, and educators seeking to reform public narratives and support the advancement of women's roles in intellectual and civic life.

Highlights:

- Highlights how educated elites shape perceptions of women in Iraq.

- Explores media and literature's role in constructing gendered images.

- Offers insights for policy and narrative reform in transitional societies.

Keywords: Educated Women, Mental Image, Iraqi Intellectuals, Gender Representation, Media Influence

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Introduction

A. Methodological Framework

1. First: Research Problem:

The research tries to answer a major question (What is the mental image formed by the Iraqi intellectual about the educated Iraqi woman? To answer this question, the following sub-questions must be answered:

a.   What are the features of the mental image of the educated Iraqi woman in the eyes of the educated class?

b.   How did historical, social and cultural factors contribute to the formation of this image?

c.   What is the role of the media and literature in promoting or distorting this image?

d.   Who is the best intellectual and who is the worst? And why?

e.   Is there a correlation between the interlocutors, which means that one is influenced by the other?

2. Second: Research Hypothesis:

Since the mental image represents a cognitive system of the individual, and despite the many criticisms of educated women from different classes in society, in some media outlets, especially social networking sites, the research tries to stand at the level of culture in reality and its conformity with the mental image of intellectuals and what level of culture has, is she really educated or does she claim culture and does the Iraqi media present a different image of educated women? Did Iraqi literature contribute to highlighting the educated woman as a symbol of challenge and struggle?

3. Third: Research Objective

The aim of the research is to identify the mental image of the Iraqi educated woman among the educated class in Iraqi society, and to achieve this goal it is necessary to:

Analysis of the features of the mental image of educated women in Iraq

Study the influence of social, cultural and political factors on this image

Explore the role of media and literature in shaping this image

4. Fourth: Research Importance

The importance of the research lies in the fact that it combines the importance of building a positive mental image of educated women and improving the perception of the mental image of educated women when the educated class, this is done by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the image formed about the educated Iraqi woman among the intellectual in general and the feminist society in particular, the research seeks to provide a general approach of clarifications and guidelines that should be worked out in order to improve the mental image of educated women.

Academically: Contributes to bridging the knowledge gap on the subject of educated Iraqi women.

Community: Contributes to enhancing awareness about the role of educated women and their importance in society.

Method

A. Research Methodology

The research comes within the descriptive research that aims to study a case related to a phenomenon, situation or event to obtain sufficient and accurate information about it, to change or improve it for the better, within this framework, the researcher used the descriptive analytical method, which is the organized scientific effort to obtain data and information for the status of the subject of research, within this approach, many of the propositions and attitudes of the public were used to identify the nature of the mental image formed about the educated woman, and then the historical method to trace the development of the mental image of the educated woman through the ages

B. Research Tool

The researcher used many of the proposals of the intellectual class about Iraqi women as a means of obtaining primary data and information through which we learn about their views on educated women in Iraq, in order to identify certain facts about educated women or their views towards them and their attitudes towards them, especially in the following axes (its role in elections, its job performance, its general culture, its concept of freedom), based on international, regional and production indicators through interviews with academic figures and intellectuals, in addition to analyzing Iraqi media and literary contents.

C. Research Community

The research targeted the products of the educated class in Iraq in the media, literary, artistic and political, the research community is that part that truly represents the community.

D. Research Areas or Limits

1. Temporal Limits: The research adopted documented writings and media-published opinions on the mental images of educated women.

2. Spatial Domain: Iraqi Educated Society in Baghdad.

3. The human field: represented by the educated class in different fields.

4. Objectivity: focus on educated women only without other aspects.

Results and Discussion

A. The Theoretical Background

1. The First Requirement: The Concept of Mental Image

a. Definition of the Concept of Mental Image

It is difficult to define an accurate unified concept of mental image, due to the difference and variation in science and knowledge in which this concept enters, the Latin word "image" has multiple uses in English and German.

Talking about the concept of mental image leads us to different definitions related to those mental images that individuals and groups form about a certain person, system or category, the mental image and its concept has been the interest of thinkers since ancient times, as the thinkers of the Greek era were interested in the concept of the mental image of peoples and it was believed that each people have its own image and distinctive features.

In the Islamic era, Ibn Khaldun was interested in addressing the characteristics and characteristics of different peoples in his introduction, he explained the dimensions of the mental image of some peoples by clarifying the features and characteristics that distinguish them from others, he explained the differences in the features of mental images in light of regional and geographical climatic differences. Contrary to what the Greeks interpreted differences in the light of metaphysical forces.

Scientific interest in the mental image increased at the beginning of the eighteenth century and this appeared through the writings of the researcher (Immanuel Kant), in which she stressed that the individual does not respond in his behaviors to the real reality as much as he responds to the reality stored in his mind. Kant thus laid her hands on the role of mental image in guiding an individual's behavior.

Then came the interest of psychologists in the nineteenth century in the nature of the mental image, its function and its relationship to the interpretation and thinking of individuals, and moved interest in the mental image to American researchers beginning of the twentieth century and is the proposals of Walter Lippmann in the history of the study of the mental image of the most important proposals in understanding the mental image, where he mentioned that individuals differ in their perception of real reality to the difference of individual experiences in them, and the tendency to interpret new experiences through old experiences.

Horowitz argues that no report of a mental image should be accepted without criticism, as people change their beliefs with motives, contradict themselves, and change experiences with difference or change in the human environment [1].

One of the important studies of the mental image in the middle of the twentieth century is the study supervised by UNESCO on how peoples see each other, a new systematic vision that has become controlling the studies and research of the mental image.

As for Arab intellectuals, their interest in the mental image and its concepts began during the seventies, they looked at the mental image as an industrial composition of reality and thus it enjoys a great deal of subjectivity and it is natural that the human being adheres to it strongly and believes in its validity and defends it and becomes part of his culture and mental and emotional composition later.

The mental image originated in the West in the arms of social psychology and the word (Image) goes back to the Latin language (imago) and is already connected (imitari), in the sense of simulates or represents, hence the meaning of an image on simulation and representation.

There are many definitions of the image, including, as stated in the intermediate dictionary, the figure and the stereoscopic statue, the image in the basic Arabic dictionary means everything that is depicted, such as the shape or the anthropomorphic statue, type and attribute, the image of the thing is his imagination in the mind or mind, the image in the dictionary of media terms corresponds in the Arabic language three words are a mental idea, an image, and an impression, it may be his pictures of something or a person or his idea that he formed about that person and his image that he drew for him in his mind, that his impression of him, the dictionary of social sciences defines the image as the mental impression of an idea, situation or scene, and the dictionary of sociology defines it as a mental representation of a particular subject or category of topics.

As for Walter Lippmann in 1922, the American journalist presented in his book Public Opinion some information about the way the individual understands reality and how to form a mental image, Lippmann stated that each person creates an environment of his own perceptions, and although humans live in one world, they feel and think as if they are in different worlds, so each individual forms mental images as a result of his interaction with the environment in which he lives, thus, mental images differ from person to person according to their experiences, and each individual explains and interprets his experience in the light of his past experiences that he has gained in his life, Lippmann argues that the ability to understand and perceive meanings are the two main factors in the formation of the mental image, and this image is the end result of deciphering and responding to the stimuli that we are exposed to.

Hallucination defines mental image as a set of one's past, present and future knowledge and beliefs that an individual maintains according to a certain system about himself and the world in which he lives, thus, it confirms that the mental image is not just a quantity of impressions and information, but it is arranged according to a specific system in which it retains the most important characteristics and the most prominent landmarks and what is consistent with the environment and adapts to it, according to the Bolding Synagogue, the most important features of this system are the preferred concepts and perceptions of truth, in the sense that the individual selects some characteristics and qualities without others from the information and impression he is exposed to.

As for Pager, he defined it as a set of signs and symbols, such as what we find when we look at a photograph or a movie scene or an advertisement and the image may be a representation or mental imagery, images can have emotional or emotional effects, and some of the images have historical significance [2].

While Akir believes that the mental image is an impression formed by the individual in addition to what he knows about the subjects of the mental image, and this impression is more than the facts and information that make it up [3].

Which made a number of researchers' opinions agree that the process of image formation is a subjective and subjective mental process and has a great deal of lack of neutrality in the image, as they see it, it is the supposed interpretation of truth and reality, but we find that it does not reflect the truth in full and much simpler than reality, and in a concise and simplified manner in a way that may distort or falsify the truth.

As for the Arab researchers, they saw that the mental image is a cognitive, psychological, relative, cultural process based on individuals' direct and indirect selective awareness of the characteristics and characteristics of a subject, and the formation of emotional attitudes towards him positive or negative, and

the resulting behavioral guidance apparent or internal within the framework of a particular society, these perceptions, trends and trends may take a fixed, inconsistent, precise or inaccurate form.

Hence, we see that the image goes through the stages of cognitive processes of perception, understanding and remembering and that the rules of this process differ from one subject to another.

b. Mental Image and Stereotype

Many researchers have differentiated in the use of the word mental image and stereotype, which began in the fields of social psychology, use the expression (Image) for the mental image (Stereotype) for the stereotype, the first means simulation, while the second word refers to the template on which the printing letters are poured [4].

The term stereotype was first introduced by James Maurer to describe the process of printing copies, where the original is saved so that there is no chance of change and distortion when reproducing [5].

The stereotype may emerge from social interactions, and when the stereotype arises, the individual begins to confine his social contacts within the appropriate stereotype and treats each group in a certain way [6].

Walter Lippmann, who is considered the first creator of the concept of stereotype in his book Public Opinion in 1922, believes that stereotype is the specific image fixed in our minds, which generally resists to change easily, that the stereotype is a wrong, simplified and reductive idea based on the individual's perception of the surrounding environment on a false basis, it negatively affects one's ability to properly understand the surrounding environment, controls an individual's interaction with others, and individuals are often careful not to change or resist changing it [7].

c. The Genesis of Stereotypes

1) Stereotypes Arise Through Two Important Sources

Personal experience with others and legacies of cumulative beliefs and cultures, and these experiences are transmitted to others by individuals from one person to another, the stereotypical characteristic that focuses on a group, it must have been observed in at least one member of that group and the subsequent communication process by which that observation is transmitted to others leads to the formation of stereotypes in people's minds.

Although it is difficult to distinguish between mental image and stereotype, mental image is an abstract mental representation of a subject based on previous perceptions without having significant repercussions, where sometimes exclude or forget certain aspects and reinterpret others when organizing and forming the mental image, while the stereotype is one of the beliefs that have accumulated and become accepted in advance, they are not valid indicators of reality, but rather judgments of what we see in the light of our prejudices, values and principles, also, the mental image is characterized by relative stability, that is, it can be changed, and it may be a positive or negative image, while the stereotype (imprinted) resists change and it is difficult to change it and is always negative.

2) Media Image

Media image refers to how the media transmit and republish events, personalities and groups in a repeated manner and deliberately show or conceal specific details, thus, these details are not important or important, as the media gives us ways to imagine certain events, personalities and groups, and these fantasies exist in a perceptible, physical way [8].

The media image presented by the media is the impressions and features through the perceptions of a group of intellectuals using the special forms of each medium, as the environment and the field of the image contribute to the production or formulation of meaning or coexistence with images and in different ways and imaginations that can be seen as a source of mental perception [9].

The media images provided by the media participate in the formulation of mental images stable in the consciousness of individuals and the group, where the importance of the media with regard to external issues and countries that lack sources of information, which reflects the importance of the content and images they publish, whether about people, events or countries, hence individuals rely on forming their mental image of these things through the information they obtain, where this media image of individuals is related to the quality of the information provided by the media, that is, the features of the media images presented through events and issues [10].

Hence, we can distinguish between the mental and media image, as the media image is concerned with monitoring its images of an issue, event, group or founder through what the media offers, as it reflects the perceptions of the media elite, as for the mental image, it is just mental impressions of the audience formed through many accumulations during the experience of direct and indirect communication, its interest is limited to monitoring the images of objects in the public, that is, the media image is the basis for building mental images in the recipients.

Accordingly, it can be said that the mental image achieves personal meanings and orientations according to circumstances and creates personal interpretive systems [11].

2. Second Requirement

a. Characteristics and components of the mental image

Among the characteristics of the mental image:

1) First: subjectivity because it is of a human nature characterized by antiquity and comprehensiveness, it is as old as human consciousness itself, it is also holistic in the sense that all human beings form mental images and images are formed towards them as well, this process is consensual and is not linked to specific persons or time but is a general human function, or part of the human character [12].

2) Second: Exceeding Temporal and Spatial Boundaries

Man does not abide by borders, but transcends them to form mental images of his country, his continent, and then the world in which he lives, but his mental images extend beyond the galaxy in which he inhabits [13].

Edwin Amiri and Philip Ault believe that writing has a profound impact on our lives because it is our guide to the past, thanks to her, man became in contact with everything that happened in the past, and therefore the past entered the scope of mental images, also, man can form a mental image of the future, and therefore it can be said that mental images have roots in the past and an extension of the future [14].

Man can form mental images of other places according to his imaginative and deductive abilities based on the information stored in him, thus, it is clear to us that man forms mental images of different times and places according to his culture, perceptions, observations and media readings, relying on his imaginative and deductive ability.

3) Third: Partial Non-Integrated

It means that the image expresses part of the truth and not the whole truth, when the individual seeks to form a mental image of an event, it usually shortens parts of the event, deletes other parts of it, and reorganizes and interprets third aspects, this characteristic carries several risks, namely the difficulty of the part expressing the whole objectively and honestly, the possibility of a biased image is formed because man usually jumps to conclusions when he does not have enough information, which may expose the image to distortion and error [12].

4) Fourth: Homogeneity and Accumulation

that every human being as he grows develops an orderly perception of the world, and what's important about this visualization is that each part works within the scope of the whole to create a construct that has meaning, we can determine our situations in terms of time, place and in our relationship with others, when you connect these different parts of perception to the original conception we have formed, in our perceptions of ourselves, about others, and about the world, they are connected.

5) Fifth: Bias because it is subjective

The difference of mental image from reality and reality because the process of image formation is a subjective process that is subjective, and has a great deal of non-neutrality, evidenced by the natural tendency to give good features to the image of the self and to give negative features to the image of the opponent, the image is the supposed interpretation of the truth and is reality

This means that the representation of the image is always an honest reality for its owner regardless of whether it is true or false, the individual who produces the image sometimes completes the process of building it under the pressure of his own ideological preferences and biases, regardless of the amount of information, evidence and facts related to the subject of the photo.

6) Sixth: Resistance to Change

One of the most important characteristics of the mental image is stability, rigidity, and resistance to change, there are many factors that determine and affect the amount and manner of the possible change in the mental image of these factors are:

a.   The more confidence in the validity of the existing image, the less change and modification

b. When the image is linked and consistent between its internal components, it becomes more stable, stable and established

c. When the mental image is continuous for a long time, it resists change more than the modern image

d. The more positive the evaluation of the owner of the image by giving him importance and placing him in appreciation and respect, the more difficult the change will be

e. The more abundant and abundant the media messages are different from the mental image, the more this helps to change the existing image [15].

7) Seventh: Affected by the Contents of Media Messages

It means that the media message is exposed through various media to the competition of many other media messages, the meanings included in the message are affected by the meanings carried by the different messages and thus the features of the image conveyed change to some extent, it adds to it some meanings that it did not carry and loses others that it contained.

b. Components of the Mental Image

1) The Mental Image Consists of Three Basic Components:

a) Cognitive Component

It is the information through which the individual perceives a subject, issue or person, based on the accuracy of this information and the validity obtained by the individual from others, the accuracy of the mental image and the correctness that he forms about topics, issues and people and vice versa.

b) Emotional Component

It means the positive or negative tendency towards a subject within the framework of a set of mental images formed by individuals, which are formed from the emotional side and the cognitive side, with the passage of time, the information and knowledge created by individuals fade away and remain the emotional aspects that represent individuals' attitudes towards people, the judiciary and various subjects.

The emotional dimension ranges between positive and negative and affects a set of factors, the most important of which is the availability of sources of knowledge, the fewer sources, the psychological dimension is characterized by negativity, and the more multiple sources, the greater the chances of positivity in the formation of trends, and the characteristics of peoples affect the construction of the emotional dimension in terms of color, gender and language, the difference in these characteristics is one of the things that contribute to building negative trends, and homogeneity in these characteristics contributes to building positive trends [7].

The construction of the emotional aspect of the mental image that is formed in individuals is related to their value system, which governs the behaviors and actions of individuals.

c) Behavioral Component

The behavioral component of the mental image consists of a set of responses to the subject that the person sees in light of the perceived traits in his mind [16].

Boulding asserts that how an individual behaves depends on the mental image and that any change in the image is necessarily followed by a change in behavior [13].

These three components are cohesive and form structural models of the mental image whose dimensions are difficult to realistically separate.

d) The Importance of Mental Image

 Boulding emphasizes that the behavior of the individual depends a lot on the mental image that he formed towards things and people and any change to these mental images changes his behavior towards them, therefore, the nature of these images and how they are formed and changed is one of the most important topics that must be paid attention to by the media, which is one of the most powerful factors affecting the formation of this image.

Because the mental image interprets the attitudes of the individual and his opinions and patterns of behavior in social life is the factor controlling the individual's thinking, feelings and behavior [17].

Mental images are what help an individual adapt to the complex modern life conditions around him, they represent the first building blocks of public opinion, which in turn influences individuals' attitudes, opinions and behavior.

2) One of the functions of the mental image

The mental image has more than one function and at more than one level, including:

a) At the Individual Level

The mental image helps the individual to understand and interpret events, things and everything new in the light of his old experiences and usual images, and helps to reduce the number of stimuli surrounding him, this function is consequential to the previous job because the individual usually merges the new categories into the old categories and gives the same meaning that these categories take Reducing the number of stimuli surrounding the individual leads to his easy perception of these stimuli and to increase his ability to understand and absorb them.

The mental images published by the media about personalities, nations and peoples in the recipients are not necessarily accurate and correct, as these images often cause obliteration and distortion of their facts, from a social point of view, the formation of the mental image contributes positively to the identification of the social identity of individuals and also contributes to determining the social role of them and providing the foundations for dealing with others, on the psychological level, the mental image achieves psychological balance in individuals by enabling them to deal with reality freely and satisfactorily, because it draws many perceptions of the facts that occur in the world in which we live, so the individual becomes aware of these events with certain ideas and convictions.

But this image may lead psychologically to bias and intolerance of the opinions and ideas constituent has and sometimes carry the image some individual projections and the consequent aggressive behavior towards others in many cases.

b) At the Community Level

The mental image at the collective level has several functions, the most important of which is to identify and maintain the identity of the group, on the cognitive side, the mental image helps to develop a system for the social environment and reduce the stimuli or dangers surrounding the group.

From a social point of view, the mental image preserves and defends the group's ideology and helps to develop a system of roles and relationships within the group.

c) At the Political Level

The mental image plays an influential role on political decision-making, through the mental image accumulated by political decision-makers about other countries and peoples, as well as drawing visions and scenarios for the future.

Therefore, countries are keen to promote their image in the media so that the peoples who oppose them do not present negative images of them in front of the international community.

Positive images are not easily achieved because it is difficult for a country's images of itself to match its image among others, even if they are its allies, which requires intensive media efforts supported by direct communication efforts.

3) Types of mental images and their formation factors:

Mental images are represented in more than one type, which are as follows:

a. The mirror image, which is the image through which the individual sees himself.

b. The current image, which is what a particular group or individual sees about another group or individual.

c. The desired image: It is the image that the group or individual wants to have itself in the minds of others.

d. The optimal image or (expected image) is the optimal image that can be achieved if we take into account the continuous efforts to influence the recipients.

e. The multiple images occurs when individuals are exposed to different representatives of a group that gives each of them a different impression of it, and it is natural that this multiplicity does not last long, either it turns into positive images or negative images [12]. These types were formed based on the manufacture of a mental image governed by information that is based on a set of positive traits that arouse feelings of love, sympathy and admiration.

There are other classifications of mental image, which are automatically formed by cumulative effects.

a. Including self-image, which consists of beliefs, ethics, standards, values and norms that are generally accepted.

b. Realistic image, which is formed through personal experience, direct contact and targeted media messages.

c. The communicative image, which is the image that he works to form through the communication messages that it addresses to the public using all means of communication.

d. There is the national image, which is a positive image, or the image of the state, and the stereotype (accepted), which is a negative image, the perceived image includes the external perceived image derived from the image formed by the general public and the internal perceived images, which are formed based on personal observations, direct information, rumors, newspapers and customers.

4) Mental Image Formation Factors

There are many factors that make up the mental image and can be summarized as follows:

a) Traditional and digital media

The images broadcast by the media influences the opinions and behaviors of individuals, which help them form a perception of the world in which they live.

The media is one of the factors of cognitive perception of the public and it contributes to the formation of the mental image by creating a new image and consolidating pre-existing perceptions and changing existing perceptions to new perceptions.

Through multiple media contents such as news, drama programs, articles, investigations, advertisements, interviews, films, and other journalistic and media arts.

b) Personal or direct contacts

Personal contact or direct contact plays a huge role in the construction and formation of mental images in individuals in different social situations, the depiction of the reality around us is full of events and news that can be observed directly, in light of this, reality is easily perceived and visualized as a result of direct personal communication experience.

c) Previous Experience

The previous experiences of individuals lead to the formation of mental images to the extent that the image serves as a mental screen that is displayed as a result of the interaction of all the knowledge, experiences, trends, values and ideas held by the human mind collected from various sources such as learning, studying, traveling, reading and others, these previous experiences can be one of the reasons for not matching the mental image of reality, as we allow our previous experiences and experiences to interfere in their formation and treat them as the truth itself.

d) Environmental and Cultural Influences

The culture and legacies prevailing in society provide the individual with a background to judge the content of the mental image formed by him and the extent of its compatibility with the cultural framework in the case of a positive image or its dissonance in the case of characteristics incompatible with his culture and thus become a negative image, the features of the natural environment play a pivotal role in the formation of mental images we have about the countries of the world, geographical and climatic characteristics inherently impose a certain lifestyle and a certain cultural pattern that they are known for without the need to travel and go to them, and this means that each environment has its own common mental images.

e) Psychotropic Substances

psychological factors in the formation of the mental image of individuals play a fundamental role, as one of the biggest barriers that prevent us from understanding others is our judgment of their actions according to our own perspective related to psychological influences and the classification process and its relationship to trait theory in addition to trends and their impact on the process of forming a mental image.

3. The Third Topic

a. Factors Affecting the Formation of the Mental Image

For Educated Iraqi Women

First Requirement

The educated class: its definition and role in society

The educated class, or what is sometimes known as the "intellectual elite", refers to a segment of society characterized by a high level of knowledge, awareness, and education, they often include academics, writers, artists, scientists, and thought leaders, this class is distinguished by its ability to analyze societal issues, provide critical insights, and contribute to the formulation of cultural and political solutions and trends.

b. Definition of the Educated Class

The educated class is defined as a group of individuals who possess deep and specialized knowledge in certain fields, they are seen as agents of cultural and social change. Their role is often related to their ability to think critically and influence public opinion.

The role of the educated class in society:

1) Cultural and cognitive advancement

a) The educated class works to spread knowledge and promote cultural values.

b) Contribute to the protection of cultural heritage and familiarize generations with values and traditions.

2) Influencing Public Policies

a) It plays a role in guiding decision-makers by providing knowledge-based insights and analytics.

b) Contribute to constructive criticism of public policies in order to improve them.

3) Enhancing Community Awareness

a) It works to educate the community about local and global issues.

b) It contributes to opening the debate on problems such as poverty, justice, education, and human rights.

4) Artistic and Literary Creativity

a) Through literature, art, and music, they contribute to shaping the identity of communities.

b) It works to document human experiences and promote understanding between different cultures.

5) Leading Social Mobility

a) They are often at the forefront of movements demanding change and reform.

b) It advocates social justice, equality, and freedom.

Challenges facing the educated class:

1) Political restrictions or censorship that may impede freedom of expression.

2) Separation from the rest of society due to the cultural gap.

3) Exploiting knowledge to serve narrow interests rather than the common good.

4) The educated class is the backbone of any social or cultural renaissance.

5) Its vital role is highlighted in its ability to link thought and action, between different generations, and between local and global issues, making it a necessary element for the overall progress of any society.

c. Factors for the Formation of the Educated Class

There are many factors that led to the formation and maturity of the educated class, and these factors are:

First: Historical factors refer to events and circumstances that occurred in the past and contributed to shaping the reality of current societies, whether politically, economically, socially, or culturally, these

factors play a pivotal role in understanding the evolution and characteristics of nations, and significantly influence their future trajectories.

d. Historical Factors and their Effects on the Educated Class

Some of them are:

1) Colonialism and Empires

Colonial periods and major empires contributed to the formation of the current political boundaries of many states.

Colonialism affected the economic and social structure of colonial states, leading to significant disparities in development. And the emergence of the educated class that revealed the disadvantages of colonialism on peoples

2) Wars and Conflicts

World wars, such as World Wars I and II, reshaped the global political system and changed the balance of power. To lead the educated class position

Internal conflicts, such as revolutions and coups, have affected the stability of states and reshaped political and social systems. And through it emerged the role of the educated class

3) Great Revolutions

Revolutions, such as the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution, brought about radical changes in the economic, political and social system.

The scientific and cognitive revolution influenced the formation of modern thought and contributed to technological development. And the ideas of the educated class

4) Transmission of Ideas and Cultures

Intellectual movements such as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment contributed to the development of philosophy, science, and the arts.

Which enriched the concepts of the educated class

Cultural interaction between nations through trade, conquests or migrations shaped the cultural identity of many peoples. And on top of them is the educated class

5) Religions and Religious Movements

Religions have been a major factor in guiding values and ethics, shaping laws and social relations.

Religious movements and reforms have influenced changes in systems of governance and relations within societies, the educated class had the largest share in the field of discussions and enriching ideas.

6) Geographical Explorations

The discovery of new lands, such as the Americas, reshaped the geographical and political maps of the world.

It led to the flow of resources and wealth and contributed to the development of the intellectual capitalist system alike

7) Economic Crises

Major economic crises, such as the Great Depression, have affected the global financial system and contributed to the emergence of new economic policies and philosophical ideas that defy reality to improve it, it pushed societies to adopt social policies to protect the most vulnerable, and the leader of these policies was mostly the educated class.

8) Colonial Divisions

The division of states and regions according to colonial interests led to border disputes and constant conflicts.

It has contributed to the formation of national and ethnic identities in some areas. Led by the educated classes.

The importance of historical factors:

a)   Understanding the present: help to interpret current events and phenomena.

b) Planning for the future: It gives lessons that can be used to avoid the mistakes of the past.

c) Identity formation: contributes to building the national and cultural identity of peoples.

Historical factors are not just past events, rather, they are roots that extend to influence the present and the future. Understanding these factors deeply helps build more stable and prosperous policies and societies.

Second Requirement

Factors that influenced the formation of the mental image of Iraqi women

Historical, social and cultural factors have played a pivotal role in shaping the mental image of educated women in Iraq, these factors have overlapped over time to affect the status of women and their role in society, and the following is an analysis of these factors:

1. Historical Factors

a. The historical role of women in building society

Since ancient times, Iraqi women have played prominent roles, especially in the Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations, where they were valued as symbols of fertility and wisdom.

In modern times, the role of women in national movements such as the Twentieth Revolution and their participation in supporting the struggle against colonialism has emerged.

b. Political Transitions

During monarchy and republic, educational policies encouraged women to enter schools and universities, strengthening their role as intellectuals.

In subsequent decades, wars and political conflicts (such as the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War) affected women's ability to exercise their cultural and social roles.

c. The Struggle for Rights

The development of the feminist movement in Iraq during the twentieth century played a role in building the image of educated women as activists and defenders of their rights.

Women contributed to writing, journalism and political activism, reinforcing this mental image.

2. Social Factors

a. The Family and its Role in Supporting Education

Social developments have encouraged women's education since the mid-twentieth century, which has contributed to the formation of a generation of educated women.

Some social groups continue to restrict the participation of educated women in public life, affecting their image as a symbol of resilience.

b. Parental System

Male dominance in some Iraqi societies has influenced the identification of women's intellectual roles, and they often face challenges in asserting themselves.

Women as agents of social change: Society's growing awareness of the importance of women's education and cultural role, especially in major cities such as Baghdad and Basra, it has cemented its image as an element of progress.

3. Cultural Factors

a. Cultural and Literary Heritage

1) Historical and Social Documentation

Iraqi literature has always been a mirror of social reality, documenting the traditional roles of women such as mothers, wives, and caregivers of the family, which contributed to the consolidation of this image in the minds of generations.

The crises that Iraq went through, such as wars and conflicts, were reflected in literature that portrayed women as symbols of steadfastness and sacrifice.

2) Women as Inspiration and Creative Subjects

Many Iraqi poets and writers were inspired by women as symbols of love, beauty, and homeland, as seen in the poems of Al-Jawahiri and Al-Sayab, where they linked women to fertility, land and homeland.

Women in Iraqi literature often emerged as symbols of strength and resilience, especially in periods of occupation or war.

3) Criticism of Traditions and Social Restrictions

Use literature as a tool to criticize social norms that restrict women, highlighting the injustice they face due to customs and traditions.

Novels and works of fiction from writers such as Nazik Al-Malaika and Latifa Al-Dulaimi dealt with women's issues directly, expressing their aspirations and suffering.

4) Educated Women and Their Role in Literature

Iraqi literature has contributed to presenting a positive image of educated women, highlighting their role as an active element in building society.

Women writers such as Alia Mamdouh and Laila Al-Othman have introduced new perceptions of the role of women outside the traditional framework.

5) The Avatar of Women as a Symbol of the Homeland

In periods of occupation and war, the image of Iraqi women was often associated with land and patriotism, becoming a symbol of stability and identity.

Literary works dealing with sieges and wars focused on the role of women in preserving the family and society despite the harsh conditions.

The most important issues addressed by Iraqi literature on women:

6) Equality and Justice

The literature presented women's demands for equality and justice, especially in periods of political and social change.

7) Struggle and Challenge

Novels and poetry have highlighted Iraqi women as fighters against injustice, both within the family and in society.

8) Women and War

Iraqi literature during wartime dealt with the role of women as mothers and wives struggling with the loss of loved ones, and sometimes as leaders with extraordinary responsibilities.

b. Cultural and Social Constraints

The novels dealt with the internal and external conflicts that women face due to customs and traditions.

Iraqi women writers and their role in shaping the mental image:

The Iraqi woman writer was a key partner in shaping her mental image, expressing her issues in an honest and direct language.

Nazik Al-Malaika's writings are predominantly emotional and critical, dealing with women's issues from a modernist perspective.

Zaha Hadid's work in the field of architectural and artistic literature has given a new dimension to educated and creative women globally.

Transformations in the image of women in Iraqi literature:

a) Premodernism: Classical literature focused on women as symbols of beauty and family.

b) Postmodernism: Literature has moved to address women as an independent entity with ambitions and hopes, sometimes suffering from oppression but seeking change.

Challenges in Iraqi literature and the mental image of Iraqi women:

Iraqi literature continues to suffer from the influence of stereotypes of women, sometimes portraying them only as victims.

Lack of female representation in the literary scene compared to men, which affects the diversity of mental image.

Iraqi literature has played an important role in shaping the mental image of Iraqi women, combining presenting them as a symbol of authenticity and steadfastness, and seeking to develop a more independent

and conscious image, thanks to social and political changes, this image has evolved into a more inclusive, reflecting the diversity and richness of Iraqi women's personality.

The image of Iraqi women in the Iraqi media and literature:

The Iraqi media presented two contradictory images of women: the first glorifying the educated woman as a symbol of consciousness, and the second showing her as a victim of tradition.

Cultural programs and women's magazines have contributed to highlighting the role of educated women, although there are sometimes negative influences.

First: The Role of the Media

1. Enhance Mental Image

Highlight Achievements:

In some periods, the Iraqi media focused on educated women as a positive role model, through interviews, cultural programs, and documentaries about successful women in the fields of literature, science, and art.

Introducing prominent female figures such as Nazik Al-Malaika, Lamia Abbas Emara, and Zaha Hadid as cultural icons.

Supporting education and community participation:

State and private media at certain periods supported women's education and encouraged them to participate in public life, which enhanced the image of educated women.

2. Distortion of Mental Image

Focus on stereotypes:

Some media outlets have established stereotypes that portray educated women either as victims of tradition or as transgressors of social values.

Politicization and bias:

In some periods, the media used educated women as a tool to promote certain policies, distorting their image or diminishing their role.

Negative coverage:

Focusing on individual cases or specific mistakes to present the educated woman as if they were detached from the reality of her society.

Second: The Role of Literature

1. Enhance Mental Image

Highlighting women as a symbol of struggle:

Iraqi literature, especially in poetry and novels, portrays educated women as a strong, militant, and pivotal figure in building society. Example: Nazik al-Malaika's poems that dealt with humanitarian and social issues.

Strengthening cultural identity:

Literature contributed to highlighting the interaction of educated women with their national and cultural identity, which enhanced their image as heritage keepers and keeping pace with development.

Production of feminist literature:

The emergence of writers and writers who were interested in shedding light on the experiences of educated women, which contributed to improving their image and highlighting their issues.

2. Distortion of Mental Image

Masculine attitudes:

Some literary works, especially by male writers, portrayed the educated woman as a contradictory figure or as part of the conflict between modernity and tradition.

Passive use of symbolism:

In some novels, educated women are portrayed negatively, associated with moral decay or a departure from societal values.

Ignoring the real issues:

Some literary works focused on superficial issues and did not address the real challenges facing educated women, resulting in an incomplete picture.

The interaction between media and literature:

The media often relied on literature to present the characters of educated women to the public, which means that the influence of literature on the media was significant.

Feminist literature sometimes inspired positive media content, while stereotypes in the media inspired critical literary works.

Religious influence on the image of Iraqi women:

Religion has played a dual role; it has supported women's status in education and work, but in some cultural contexts it has been used as a tool to restrict their freedom.

This is how historical, social, cultural and religious factors have shaped the mental image of educated Iraqi women as strong, resilient, and inspiring, however, this picture has been subject to contradictions due to political and social conditions that have affected the role of women in some periods, the result was a double image: an educated woman who is valued on the one hand, and faces constant challenges on the other.

Conclusion

The mental image of the educated Iraqi woman in the eyes of the educated class is often a mixture of respect and admiration, with an emphasis on her cultural, social, and intellectual role, the features of this picture can be determined by the following points:

1. Cultural and Cognitive Awareness:

Educated Iraqi women are considered a model of knowledge of science and diverse knowledge.

She is often portrayed as an avid reader, speaking tactfully, she has deep insight into societal and political issues.

2. Commitment to National Values:

She is seen as a believer in the issues of her community, working to spread awareness and contribute to its reform.

Emerges as a supporter of national values and Iraqi cultural identity.

3. Leading Role:

The educated class sees the educated woman as leaders in academic, cultural, and creative fields.

Emerge as a strong personality who seeks positive change through education and thought.

4. Challenges and Resilience:

It is known for its ability to face the social and political challenges that surround it.

Admires her for her role in overcoming obstacles that may stand in her way due to economic and political norms or circumstances.

5. Internal and External Beauty:

Educated Iraqi women are seen as a balance between the inner beauty represented by their morals and values, and the external beauty in their elegance and respect for their culture.

6. Creative and Artistic Sense:

She is highlighted as a writer, poet, artist, or even a cultural content creator.

Appreciated for her contributions to the promotion of Iraq's artistic and cultural heritage.

7. Feminist Symbol:

She is a role model for other women, especially in pursuit of educational and professional ambitions.

The findings of this study reveal that the mental image of the educated Iraqi woman among the educated class is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, media, and societal factors. She is

predominantly viewed as a symbol of intellectual vigor, resilience, and cultural consciousness, embodying both traditional values and modern aspirations. This image is reinforced by literature and media, albeit sometimes distorted by entrenched stereotypes and political instrumentalization. The implications of this research suggest a need to critically reassess media narratives and educational content to foster a more balanced and empowering portrayal of educated women. Furthermore, the evolving image of the Iraqi woman offers an important lens through which broader societal transitions can be understood, particularly in post-conflict and democratizing contexts. Future research should explore the role of younger generations and digital platforms in redefining this image, as well as comparative studies with women in similar sociopolitical environments to enrich the global discourse on gender, identity, and representation.

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