

Attitudes of Teachers in Iraqi Universities towards Ending the Work of Local Councils an Exploratory Study for Two Teachers at the Universities of Babylon, Thi- Qar and Kirkuk

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Abstract

The main problem of the research was to identify the attitudes of Iraqi university professors in three governorates (Babylon University, Dhi Qar University, Kirkuk University) regarding the termination of the work of the provincial councils, district councils and districts, during the study period that extended from 1/1/2022 to 1/4/ 2022, and for that, a set of questions was formulated that was contained in the survey questionnaire, by distributing the form to (120) individuals and in various disciplines and scientific titles, and the research reached results, we mention the most prominent of them. Of the system of governance in Iraq, with a percentage of (45.38), while the answer came with (strongly agree) in the first place to the question (Do you think that ending the local councils is a step in the right direction) and with a percentage of (50.93), and a percentage of (42.60) answered From the research sample with (yes) about the contribution of social media to the formation of community control over the performance of governors and heads of administrative units after the termination of the work of local councils.

Keywords: university professors - local public opinion - ending the work of local councils

the introduction

The popular protests that took place in Iraq on October 25, 2019 contributed to the formation of a pressure force on the ruling political class in this country in order to bring about radical reforms in the political, economic and constitutional fields. Local councils), one of the main demands made by the demonstrators, after which the Iraqi Council of Representatives issued a decision to terminate the work of the local councils, and then this termination was ratified by the Federal Supreme Court, and this research highlights the trends that formed among Iraqi university professors regarding the process of ending the work of the local councils. Work of local councils and get to know their views on this matter.

The two researchers believe in the ability of local public opinion in the digital communication environment in order to form a pressure force towards issues that are directly related to political,

legal and constitutional affairs, especially university professors as they represent the educated social elite of the public and are closely related to the Iraqi society, who frequently use social networking sites in reading, commenting and sharing. They are also periodically exposed to mass media such as satellite channels, newspapers, radio stations and websites on the Internet.

Research problem

The problem of the research is to answer a chief question (what is the nature of the attitudes of teachers in universities towards the termination of the work of local councils), and a set of sub-questions branched from this question included in the survey questions.

Research Methodology

The survey method was used, which is one of the methods through which information and data are collected about a particular phenomenon, and accordingly a (exploratory) questionnaire was designed and the questions were put in proportion to the research problem, and distributed to a deliberately selected sample amounting to (120) university professors. In their various specializations and scientific titles, the number of valid forms for research was (108) that were approved in the presentation and interpretation of the results.

Research areas

- 1- Temporal domain: the research was completed for the period from 1/1/2022 to 1/4/2022.
- 2- The spatial domain: Three universities representing three Iraqi governorates were identified, namely, Babylon, the largest governorate of the central Euphrates, and Dhi Qar governorate, which is one of the southern governorates, which has witnessed large demonstrations since 2019 to demand political, social and economic reform. Diversity of population in terms of nationality, religion and sect.
- 3- The human field: university professors were selected in the universities of Babylon, Dhi Qar and Kirkuk, with their various specializations and scientific titles.

local public opinion

Like the last decade of the last millennium, the emergence of public opinion as a pressing societal force, whether at the local or international levels, in light of the increasing power of digital media, or what has become known as the new media, and keeping pace with political, social, health and economic changes. Perhaps one of the most important results of technological progress is the emergence of new media, including what it includes. From satellite channels and the Internet, as they constituted the natural extension of media globalization on the political and economic levels.

In addition to the foregoing, the emergence of social networking sites has accompanied the development and facilitation of the system of social relations between individuals and groups without being bound by spatial or temporal barriers. The individual today is able to send, receive, interact, track, inquire and comment freely in light of a large space for expression and participation in public opinion (Said, 2018, pg. 81), and public opinion is of great importance to contemporary democratic societies, as it represents the criterion on which public satisfaction is measured. Government performance, and the content of that satisfaction of legitimizing decision-makers and the development and implementation of public policies (Al-Tohamy, 2005, p. Representing the opinion of an individual or his lack of regard to a particular demand or issue in a particular circumstance or time Then it develops and expands through interaction and communication to be a public opinion for a wide segment of society, and on this basis, public opinion is defined as “the prevailing opinion that stems from individuals and its goal is the group (the public), after question, interrogation and discussion, as an expression of the conscious will toward something at a certain time.” (Smaism, 1992, p. 240), and public opinion is a function of society, and this means that public opinion takes its shape from the society from which it emanates and the individual’s opinions stem from his trends, and is affected by the interactions that occur in it. Modern societies consist of different groups of people according to their functions.

These groups differ in their attitudes according to different situations, and their strength and position in society differ, and these groups express their opinions in various ways. Accordingly, public opinion is not just individual opinions, but rather an effect of the interactions that occur in the community environment (Al-Hiti, 2009, p. 44). The democratic system, by its nature, seeks through the media and at its various levels, traditional and digital, to motivate the public to form opinions on many issues, especially internal ones, which take on a local character, such as issues of services, education, health, social care, unemployment, etc.

The term “local” is derived from the Latin word “locus” and it refers to a small place separated from large-scale entities. It also refers to the part, not the whole, and includes elements from the neighborhood, the village, the city, the country, the province or the governorate (Tenbo, 2020, p. 27), Local public opinion is defined as “a quality of national public opinion, especially when it is broad and includes many groups, and local public opinion reflects the characteristics of national public opinion to a more qualitative degree. Local public opinion in a particular province, governorate, or group of governorates, or local government units” (Al-Halim, 2009, p. From communicating and monitoring government political activity, in a task that was previously monopolized by large media institutions, including newspapers, satellite channels, and national and local media, and it also constituted an end to the dominance of central governments and the powerful forces in society. The media should be allowed to control the flow of information and news that shapes public opinion in a manner that serves its orientations, and the stability of its dominance over the people, just as governments are no longer in the power to block the massive media flow, which made information available, and its sources are multiple. Satellite broadcasts

know no borders, and Internet waves are capable of penetrating walls of all kinds. Thus, from scarcity to unlimited flow, the media are in a frantic race over the mind of the recipient, who may receive a lot of information about his country from media outside the country. Perhaps he can make a comparison between multiple local media outlets, with the end of the media monopoly, based on his personal experience, or based on the impressions formed about this or that medium (Bronze, 2018, pg. 87).

In addition to the above, the researchers believe that the development of local public opinion is due to the following reasons:

A - The development and expansion of the Internet and the spread of social networking sites, which have become what is known as alternative media.

B - The expansion of popular protest movements at the national, Arab and international levels, especially after the events of the Arab Spring at the beginning of 2011, and the popular protests in Iraq at the end of 2019.

C- The emergence of what is known as virtual or electronic public opinion, which expresses the largest possible segment of the public in the digital communication space on the Internet and influences the largest segment that can be reached (Al-Din, 2014, p. 116)

D- The emergence of citizen journalism or what is known as popular journalism, which is known as public, participatory or democratic journalism, and refers to a group of the public who play an active role in the process of collecting, transmitting, analyzing and disseminating news and information on the Internet (Amer, 2020, p. 171).

Ending the work of local councils between the constitution and local public opinion

The local councils, in addition to the executive bodies, constitute one of the experiences of democratic governance in Iraq after 2003, as it was mentioned in the Law of State Administration for the Transitional Period and the Coalition Authority Order No. 71 of 2004 and within the framework of the Constitution of the Republic of Iraq for the year 2005 according to the experience of decentralization in the management of governance affairs between the federal government and local governments, and both of them exercise their powers in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and the law, and in accordance with Article (22) of the Iraqi constitution, which regulated their work in accordance with the Law of Governorates not associated with the Region No. 21 of 2008 amended (Hassan, 2015, p. 23), and decentralization and local governments represent the main pillar For the political practice of local communities as a result of the administrative, service and representative tasks that are accomplished through them in democratic systems, whenever the local governments - in their first two parts, the executive represented by the governor and his two deputies and heads of administrative units in the districts and sub-districts, while the second legislative and supervisory part is represented by the elected local councils, which are the councils of governorates, districts and sub-districts.

Effective and able to perform their role is an indicator of the nature and quality of the political system. Local governments are among the assets of the modern democratic state that expresses the principle of popular sovereignty (Al-Mayali, 2020), but the Iraqi parliament, as a result of the popular protests that erupted in most of the Iraqi governorates on October 25, 2019 to demand reform and political change, issued an amendment to the Provincial Councils Law Not associated with Region No. 21 of 2008, amended in November of the same year, and the most important thing in this report Adeel: (Al-Mayali, 2020)

A- Ending the work of the governorate councils that are not connected to a region, district councils, and the areas related to them.

B - Members of the House of Representatives, each as far as the matter is concerned with the governorate he represents, shall exercise supervision and control over the work of the governor and his two deputies in each governorate.

The experience of local governments in Iraq did not take the proper dimension in performance and construction and did not receive a positive local popular response in their presence and work. Rather, the negative view and rejection of their presence and performance prevailed, and despite the constitutional and legal framework that regulates the work of local councils in Iraq, they often faced wide criticism. From local public opinion and accusations against its members of corruption and working for narrow partisan interests, and that they are redundant councils and a gateway to wasting money. However, defenders of the councils' existence consider them to be very necessary if they exercise their functions and powers in the right way, and among those actions is the exercise of control over the executive government (the governor). It also contributes to strengthening the rule of administrative decentralization and avoiding the country from the obsession with the severe central rule that the capital, Baghdad, has enjoyed during the past decades (Al-Nashmi, 2021).

On June 3, 2021, the Federal Supreme Court of Iraq issued a decision in Case 155/Federal/2019, which included that the existence of provincial councils is a constitutional fact that cannot be bypassed, and therefore the legislative authority may not legislate a law that includes the abolition of these councils because it contradicts the provisions of the constitution and the principles of democracy and deliberation. However, the continuation of the work of the elected councils, whether they are national councils or local bodies after the end of their electoral cycle, represents a violation of the people's right to vote, elect, and nominate, and violates the will of the voter." (Rasheed, 2021), and the Federal Court ruling supported the parliament's vote to stop the work of the councils. As a result of the escalation of the wave of popular protests and widespread calls for its abolition, in addition to its continuation of work for about six years, it was supposed to end by 2017, when the last provincial elections were held in April 2013.

The local public opinion has contributed to all of the foregoing changes at the level of the federal government or at the level of local governments, and it is the opinion that contributed to

changing the Iraqi government and forming a new government, as well as ending the work of local councils.

The importance of local public opinion in the issue of ending the work of local councils is highlighted as follows:

- 1- Forming a pressure force on the House of Representatives, considering the dissolution of the councils as one of the popular demands for political reform in Iraq.
- 2- The local public opinion, after the termination of the work of the local councils, became the monitoring body over the work of governors, heads of administrative units and official departments in the governorates.
- 3- The formation of political awareness among the local public reflects positively on activating the role of public opinion in order to amend laws and legislation related to local government in Iraq or even amend paragraphs of the Iraqi constitution for the year 2005.
- 4- Local public opinion has imposed its priorities on the agenda of the media that dominate the media scene in Iraq, which is based in the capital, Baghdad.

Field side of research

First: the demographic variables of the respondents

1- Gender (gender)

The survey form was distributed to a selected sample of Iraqi university professors in the universities of (Babylon - Dhi Qar - Kirkuk) by (120) forms, and the number of correct forms from which correct answers were obtained is (108) forms, and the percentage of respondents according to gender (Sex) of the males (77), their percentage was (71.3%), they represented the largest part of the research sample, in contrast, the number of females was (31) with a percentage of (28.7) of the total sample of the research sample.

2- age

The age ratio of respondents in the category (40-49) years, with a percentage of (35.18%) in the first place, followed by the category of (31-39) years in the second place, with a percentage of (30.5%), and in the third place in the category (50-59)) years with a percentage of (23.145%), and the category (25-30) years ranked last with a percentage of (11.1 %).

3- Academic achievement

The percentage of those who obtained a doctorate degree from among the sample of respondents reached (71), with a percentage of (65.75%), while the number of those who obtained a master's degree was (37) with a percentage of (34.25%).

4- Scientific titles

The scientific titles of the professor of Iraqi universities whose opinions were surveyed on the subject of the research included the following:

- (Assistant teacher), their number is (37), with a percentage of (34.25%).
- (Teacher), their number is (31) with a percentage of (28.7%).
- (Assistant Professor), their number is (22) with a percentage of (20.39%).
- (Professor) their number (18), with a percentage of (16.66%).

Table No. (1) showing the demographic variables of the research sample

demographic variables Frequency %

Gender

(Gender) Male 77 71.3

Female 31 28.7

Age from 25-30 12 11.1

From 31- 39 33 30.6

40-49 38 35.10

50-59 25 23.2

Master's Academic Achievement 37 34.25

PhD 71 65.75

Academic title Assistant teacher 37 34.25

Teacher 31 28.7

Assistant Professor 22 20.39

Professor 18 16.66

Second: The results of the answers to the survey questions

1- From your point of view, what is the level of importance of local councils in the system of governance in Iraq?

The majority of the respondents' answers showed their lack of interest in determining the levels of importance of the councils in the system of governance in Iraq, as the answer (unimportant) came in the first place with a percentage of (45.38), and the answer (important to a small degree) came in the second place with a percentage of (24.079), while The answer (mediumly important) ranked third with a percentage of (18.51), and finally the answer (highly important) got the fourth and last rank with a percentage of (12.04), and these answers reveal the low levels of Iraqi university professors' interest in the issue of local councils being an essential part of the system of governance in Iraq, see the following table No. (2).

Table No. (2)

Significance level Frequency percentage

Highly Important 13 12.04

Moderately important 20 18.51

Slightly Important 26 24.07

Not important 49 45.38

Total 108 100%

2- How effective is the role of local councils in drawing up the internal policy in the governorate?

The answer (rarely) came in the first place with a percentage that represented more than half of the number of respondents (56.48), and the answer (sometimes) got the second place with a percentage of (35.18), and the answer (mostly) got the last rank with a percentage of (8.33), and it stands out These answers the significant role of the federal government and the Federal House of Representatives in drawing up the internal general policies of the governorates in terms of legislation and implementation, as shown in Table No. (3).

Table No. (3)

The effectiveness of the role of local councils Frequency percentage

Rarely 61 56.48

Sometimes 38 35.18

Often 9 8.34

Total 108 100%

3- Do you think that ending the work of local councils is a step in the right direction?

The phrase (strongly agree) ranked first with a percentage of (50.93), while the phrase (agree) came in second place with a percentage of (22.22), and in the third place came the phrase (unspecified - neutral) with a percentage of (15.74), and finally The phrase (I do not agree) came fourth with a percentage of (11.11), and these results reveal the great desire of the respondents to end the work of local councils in Iraq, which is part of the popular demands that resulted from the popular protests in 2019, according to Table No. (4).

Table No. (4)

Do you see ending the local councils as a step in the right direction? Frequencies Percentage

Strongly agree 55 50.93

I agree 24 22.22

Not specified (Neutral) 17 15.74

I do not agree 12 11.11

Total 108 100%

4- Do you think that the popular protests in Iraq at the end of 2019 contributed to ending the work of local councils?

Most of the respondents from Iraqi university professors (the research sample) expressed their support for this paragraph and answered them with the word (I agree), as it ranked first with a percentage of (41.67), followed by the answer (I agree very much) with a percentage of (31.49), and it came in third place The answer (I agree to some extent) with a percentage of (29, 21), and finally the answer came with (I do not agree) in fourth place with a percentage of (5.55), according to Table No. (5).

Table No. (5)

Do you think that the popular protests in Iraq at the end of 2019 contributed to ending the work of local councils?

Frequencies Percentage

I agree 45 41.67

I agree very much 34 31.49

I somewhat agree 23 21.29

I do not agree 6 5.55

Total 108 100%

5- Are you satisfied with the decision of the Iraqi Council of Representatives at the end of 2019 to end the work of local councils?

The answer came with (Very satisfied) with the majority of the respondents' answers, and in the first place, it achieved a high percentage of (60.19), and in the second place the answer came with (Somewhat satisfied) and with a percentage that reached (21.30), while the third and last place was the answer with (18.51).), as shown in Table No. (6).

Table No. (6)

Are you satisfied with the decision of the Iraqi Council of Representatives at the end of 2019 to end the work of local councils? Frequencies Percentage

Very satisfied 65 60.19

Fairly satisfied 23 21.30

dissatisfied 20 18.51

Total 108 100%

6- What, in your opinion, are the main reasons that contributed to the termination of the work of local councils?

The reason (political quotas) came in the first place with a percentage of (37.03), while the reason (the lack of integrity of most members of local councils) came in second with a percentage of (31.48), and in the third place came the reason (weak services provided to citizens) and got a percentage A percentage of (21.30), and finally the reason (weakness of administrative and scientific capabilities) ranked fourth with a percentage of (10.19). The answers of the respondents in these paragraphs reflect the reality of the political system in Iraq after 2003, which was founded on political, national and sectarian quotas and is also a reflection of political parties that constitute the federal government and the Federal House of Representatives, according to Table No. (7).

Table No. (7)

What do you think are the main reasons that contributed to the termination of the work of local councils? Frequencies Percentage

Political quotas 40 37.04

Most members of local councils do not enjoy complete integrity 34 31.48

Weakness of services provided to citizens 23 21.30

Weakness of administrative and scientific capabilities 11 10.18

Total 108 100%

7- Do you follow the work of local governments in your city through the media?

The answer with (yes) ranked first in the respondents' answers with a percentage of (51.86), and the answer with (I follow a little) came in the second place with a percentage of (29.62), and finally the answer came with (no) in the third place with a percentage of (18.51). These answers reflect the frequent exposure of Iraqi university professors to the media, as they are educated academic elites with sufficient awareness and follow-up, according to Table No. (8).

Table No. (8)

Do you follow the work of local governments in your governorate through the media?
Frequencies Percentage

Yes 56 51.86

I follow a little 32 29.62

No 20 18.52

Total 108 100%

8- If the answer is yes, what are the media outlets through which you follow local government news?

The statistics of this paragraph showed that (social media) ranked first through which the professor of Iraqi universities follows the research sample news related to local governments, including (local councils whose work has been terminated), as it ranked first and with a large percentage. The response rate was very high (75.93), while satellite channels came in second place with a percentage of (14.81), and finally, the answer by (other means) ranked fourth with a percentage of (9.29), and this answer was distributed between local radios, newspapers and direct meetings with friends, as shown in Table No. (9).

Table No. (9)

What are the media through which you follow local government news?

Frequencies Percentage

Social networking sites 82 75.93

Satellite TV 16 14.81

Other media 10 9.26

Total 108 100%

9- In your opinion, did social media contribute to the formation of societal control over the performance of governors and heads of administrative units after the termination of the work of local councils?

The answer (yes) ranked first with a percentage of (42.60), while the answer with (contributed to some extent) ranked second with a percentage of (35.18), and finally the answer came with (no) for the third place, with a percentage of (22.22). These answers highlight the power of social media in that it constitutes a societal control force on local governments after the termination of the work of local councils, according to Table No. (10).

Table No. (10)

Did social media contribute to forming societal control over the performance of governors and heads of administrative units after the termination of the work of local councils

Frequency	Percentage
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Yes	46 42.60
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Contributed to some extent	38 35.18
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No	24 22.22
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Total	108 100%
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The results of the research:

1- The results of the research showed that university professors did not care about the level of importance of local councils as part of the governance system in Iraq, with a percentage of (45.38).

2- The answer (I strongly agree) came in first place to the question (Do you think that the termination of the local councils is a step in the right direction) with a percentage of (50.93).

3- The answers of the respondents (the research sample) showed the answer with (yes) about the contribution of social media to the formation of societal control over the performance of governors and heads of administrative units after the termination of the work of local councils, with a percentage of (42.60).

Recommendations:

1- The researchers recommend conducting more exploratory studies on the role of social networking sites in shaping the image of local members to the public.

2- Seeking to study what the Iraqi media publishes from newspapers, radios and satellite TV channels about local councils and analyze them by (content analysis) to know their trends and contents.

3- Conducting exploratory studies for the members of local councils in Iraq whose work has been terminated to obtain opinions on political, social and media issues.

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