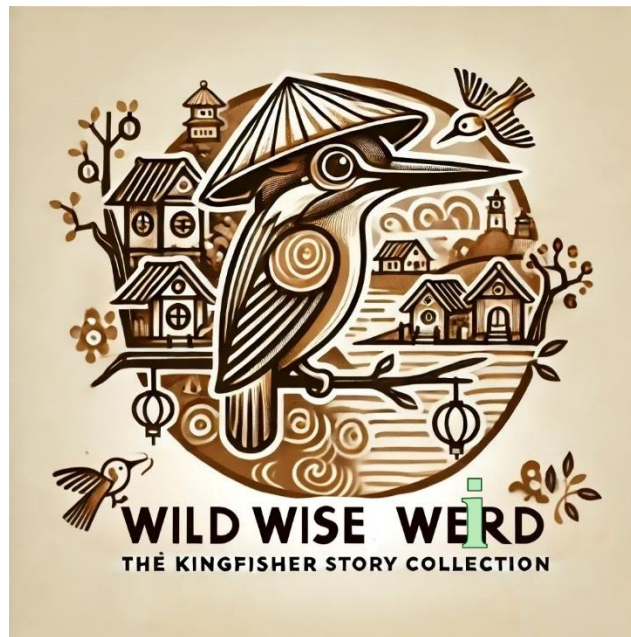


# From Within and Beyond: The Psychological Strength Behind Saudi Women's Political Rise

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“– Wisdom shines when the mind is steady. If the mind is disturbed, wisdom becomes clouded.”

In “Meditation Master”; *Wild Wise Weird* [1]



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In 2015, Saudi Arabia marked a significant milestone by allowing women to vote and run in municipal council elections for the first time. While this policy shift symbolized progress [2,3], it prompted a deeper inquiry: Were these women politically empowered because they were already psychologically empowered?

A recent study by Moubarak and Afthanorhan [4](2025) investigates this very question by examining the psychological empowerment of 18 Saudi women elected to municipal councils in 2015 and comparing them with 18 non-politically empowered women with similar socio-demographic characteristics. Using a validated scale, the study assessed four key dimensions of psychological empowerment: significance, impact, self-efficacy, and self-determination.

The results were illuminating. Politically empowered women exhibited high levels of psychological empowerment. They reported a strong sense of purpose (significance), the belief that they could positively influence their social environments (impact), confidence in achieving personal goals (self-efficacy), and the autonomy to take the initiative (self-determination). Surprisingly, these same psychological traits were also evident in women who were not politically active.

This finding suggests that psychological empowerment may precede and enable political participation rather than result from it. In both groups, the majority of women held university degrees and were professionally employed—highlighting education and social engagement as key factors in fostering inner empowerment.

Importantly, the study challenges the assumption that top-down reforms alone can generate meaningful empowerment. Creating opportunities for women’s political participation is crucial but insufficient without corresponding efforts to nurture psychological readiness [5]. Empowerment, the authors argue, is most effective when it begins from within and is supported across familial, cultural, and institutional systems [4].

Ultimately, this research sheds light on the intricate nature-human nexus: transformation in society requires not only changes in policy but also the internal development of individuals [6,7]. The emergence of Saudi women as political actors is not merely the result of structural openings—it is a testament to the enduring power of education, resilience, and self-belief cultivated in everyday life.

## References

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