

The Status of Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace, Security) among the Community, Non-governmental organizations, and Governmental Institutes of the Duhok Governorate: Current State of the Affairs

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Abstract

Women and girls in Iraq face many issues, especially in terms of gender equality. There have been attempts by human rights non-governmental organizations (i.e., Local and International) to work on these ongoing issues, one of which is through the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 of October 2000. The current study aims to find the status of the 1325 resolution community individuals, non-governmental organizations personnel, and government employees. This study consists of 375 participants, including people from the community and staff of non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions. A self-design questionnaire was used as a measurement tool, composed of 3 parts: the first was directed to the community, the second for non-governmental organization heads, and the third for heads of governmental entities. The results suggested a low level of awareness among the community, non-governmental organizations personnel, and government employees. In addition, none of the governmental institutions included in the study had information or knowledge about resolution 1325. Regarding people's attitudes toward the pillars of the resolution, the attitudes towards decision-making and problem-solving components were mostly positive, while attitudes toward the conflict-resolution were more negative. The results highlight the issue of policy implementations in the region.

Keywords: 1325 resolution, women's rights, awareness, Kurdistan region, equality

1. Introduction

Women and girls in Iraq live under challenging circumstances, especially in terms of gender roles and gender equality (Khodary, 2017). In cultures where customs and traditions are dominant, these problems can even be more evident; examples of such cultures include Iraq, where power and dominance are still ongoing gender issues (Jalil, 2022). There have been attempts by human rights Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)s and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO)s to work on these ongoing issues; one such attempt is through the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) of October 2000.

According to the United States Institution of Peace, Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, women must participate more and be more representative in different decision-making areas on a national and international level (Paula M. Rayman, Seth Izen, 2016). The resolution also highlights that women must have an active role in peacebuilding, peace-keeping, and post-conflict reconstruction. This is not only a step towards gender equality but also, at the same time, works on decreasing the rates of violence faced by women and girls each day by making their voices heard through their active participation in meaningful community decisions and actions (Vilardo & Bittar, 2018). The resolution comprises four principles: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery (George & Shepherd, 2016). Each of these is briefly described below:

Participation means that women have the right to take part in all decision-making processes, whether national or international.

Protection principle highlights the importance of protecting women and girls from different forms of gender-based violence under any circumstances.

Prevention implies that violence of any form against women and girls is prevented through promoting the law and accountability of people.

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Relief and Recovery this principle highlights that international crises must be viewed from a gendered lens, meaning that the needs of women and girls are addressed and considered in designing and planning any response for people affected by crises.

Iraq was the first country in the Middle East to make a National Action Plan in 2014-2018 for implementing the UNSCR 1325 (Kaya, n.d.). This action plan focused on implementing the resolution's principles (i.e., pillars) into real life. Despite some attempts from NGOs in both the central government and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) to implement the action plan, little progress has been made (Jalil, 2022). In addition, one research shows that there is a lack of awareness of the resolution, which has, in turn, negatively impacted peacebuilding in Iraq, especially regarding women's involvement (Hotel et al., 2012).

A minimal amount of research has investigated the implementation of the action plan in the KRI region, NGOs, and governmental institutes. Additionally, there is not much focus on the extent of people's awareness about the resolution. Moreover, the community's opinion and how open they are to such a resolution and needed adaptations according to the culture are not studied in detail. Hence, this research aims to find the resolution's status in the community, NGOs, and among governmental institutes, to point out the existing gaps and explore what could be done about them. This aim will be achieved with the following specific objectives:

1. To determine to what extent people in the community are aware of the resolution.
2. To take the community's opinion on women's needs in that particular population.
3. To know people's attitudes and acceptance towards resolution 1325.
4. To discover what role NGOs and governmental institutions played in advocating for resolution 1325.
5. To take different perspectives about the potential effects that may result from implementing the resolution.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 375 individuals; 361 from the community, including NGO employees (43) and governmental employees (32), eight heads of NGOs, and six heads of governmental institutions. They were all Kurdish, from different educational levels, and had different occupations. The participants were from the Duhok governorate and its surroundings.

2.2. Procedure and data collection

The project researcher designed the three questionnaires used for the purpose of this study. One questionnaire was for the community, composed of 9 questions (close and open-ended) that aimed at measuring the level of the community's knowledge and awareness about resolution 1325, including questions specified about the pillars. The NGOs questionnaire was composed of 9 questions focused on NGOs' role in advocating resolution 1325. The third questionnaire was composed of 7 questions to discover what has been done in governmental institutions concerning resolution 1325.

The participants of this study were non-randomly selected. A convenient sampling technique was used. An online survey was first made to be distributed among the study participants from the community. At the beginning of the online survey, the purpose of the study was clarified, and participants were ensured that their information remained confidential. The estimated time for filling out the survey was 10-15 minutes. The data was distributed between September 2022 and the end of October 2022. In addition, the data was also collected through offline forms by distributing them among participants manually. This was done with the help of research assistants through survey method. In addition, the project researcher collected data from NGOs and governmental institutions through structured interviews.

Regarding the NGO and governmental institutions' heads, the project researcher contacted each via email to schedule an appointment for the interviews, with clarifications of the purpose of the interview and the research as a whole. Only eight heads of NGOs and six heads of governmental institutions responded and agreed to take part in the research. Most of the interviews were done face to face and two were conducted via online platforms for those who weren't available for a face to face meeting. At the beginning of each meeting, permission was granted by the researcher to record the interviews in order to be able to transcript them later as they are. Each interview took between 15-20 minutes.

The survey questionnaires were initially developed in Kurdish, the language of the population of interest. After the development of the questionnaires, they were reviewed by two linguistic experts separately. Based on their revision, the scales were adapted according to the culture in a way the community understands.

2.3. Data Analysis

A deductive approach was used for the data analysis in which the researcher divided the participants' answers into different themes. The data was analyzed manually by the project researcher and was reviewed by an external reviewer. Trustworthiness of the data (Morrow, 2005) was accomplished both in the data collection and analysis phases. During the data collection phase, regular debriefing was done with the interviewers in order to ensure and encourage harmony in the method of administering the questions. During the data analysis, the researcher and two external evaluators performed multiple checks and readings for the data to ensure the process was going right and was standardized.

3. Results

This study's first objective was to determine to what extent people in the community had awareness about resolution 1325. Among the 375 participants of the study, only 49 (13%) had information and awareness about the resolution. Of those 49, 23 (6.1%) were NGO staff, 6 (1.5%) were government employees, and 20 (5.3%) were from the general population. In addition, out of the 49 people who had awareness and information about the resolution, 30 mentioned getting their knowledge through NGOs (either by trainings or through their awareness raising). In contrast, the other 19 reported having seen topics about the resolution on the internet. These results suggest a low degree of awareness among the community about resolution 1325. Nonetheless, they show that NGOs had the majority of the role of delivering the topic to those who were aware of the resolution. Furthermore, of the 49 people aware of the resolution, 35 had knowledge and awareness of the national action plan. At the same time, the remaining 14 knew the resolution without knowing the action plan.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	234	62.4
	Male	141	37.6
Occupation	Student	231	61.6
	Government employee	38	10.1
	NGO staff	51	13.6
	Freelance	15	4.0
	Unemployed	40	10.7

The second objective was to know people's opinions on what women need or lack in the particular study community. The participants were asked to select one or multiple options among seven options. In addition, three options were added by the study participants, so the total number of choices became 10. The percentages are as described below.

Table 2: Respondents' opinions on women's needs in the community

Component	Percentage
Being given priority when it comes to services	38%
Facilitation to access to services	39.9%
Specified services for females' needs	42.1%
Female staff in the facilities to be comfortable with	45.4%
Permission from families to access services	49%
Safety and security rights, especially when they want to get services	50.7%
Involvement in decision-making	53.2%
Freedom	0.6%
Political rights	0.3%
Trust from the society	0.3%

The third study objective was to know people's attitudes and acceptance towards resolution 1325 by exploring questions about the pillars. Among the females who had responded "no" to the question of women's role in social cohesion, 31.5% thought that women "just can't play a role in social cohesion," another 31.5% answered, "they are emotional, and it's not their job," another 31.5% mentioned that "they have no ideas on how to do that." In comparison, 5.3% thought "they should educate their children" rather than taking such roles. In addition, the male participants with a negative answer to this question had similar reasoning. Among the males with a negative response, 90.9% justified their answer with "women don't have the ability," while the other 8.1% said they were not sure if women could participate in social cohesion.

Questions	Answer	Female (%)	Male (%)
Do you think women could play a role in social cohesion?	Yes	91.7%	90.9%
	No	5.7%	8.3%
	Not sure	2.6%	0.8%
In your opinion, should women be part of decision-makers in the community?	Yes	95.6%	89.5%
	No	4%	9%
	Not sure	0.4%	1.5%
Do you think women should have an active role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding?	Yes	85%	65.4%
	No	14.6%	33.8%
	Not sure	0.4%	0.8%

On the contrary, there were many positive responses from the female and male participants about this question. Among the female respondents who answered yes regarding females' role in social cohesion, 7.9% agreed that women have their way of making peace and are by nature kind, 18.7% thought that they could have a great role if they also receive support from their families and if they are given the opportunity, 6.5% mentioned that they should be given roles in order to be able to show their abilities because they also have ideas but have not gotten the chance to work on them, 22% agreed that women are a main part of the society so they can also take responsibility, 40.3% said there was no difference between women and men in this aspect. In comparison, the remaining 4.6% mentioned that women could achieve social cohesion by educating their children.

In regards to the male participants whose responses were positive, 27.3% agreed that women also have the ability just like men, but they need to be given more chances, while another 21.6% mentioned that women are half of the society and their participation is crucial. In addition, 14% said it was their basic right, another 23.5% mentioned that women sometimes even have more ability as they are very caring and responsible, and 9.4% mentioned that women could have a role in social cohesion by being educators to the next generations.

The attitudes were again mixed in response to the question about women's decision-making. Among the females and males who had a negative attitude towards it, two common answers were given, "they just cannot" and "because they are emotional." The percentage was equal for both answers among the female respondents, while for the male respondents, 71.4% answered with "because they are emotional," and the remaining 28.6% mentioned that "they just cannot."

Regarding the positive attitudes from the respondents' side about women's decision-making, there were again similarities, as presented in the table below:

Categories	Female percentage	Male Percentage
Women are equal to, or even better in decision-making than men	28%	10.7%
It's a basic right for women also to be involved in decision-making	39%	35.3%
Women are also a part of the community, their opinions are important	24%	48.1%
Women can take responsibility well and have the skills for decision-making	9%	5.9%

Regarding women's roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the negative responses from the participants were also similar to the reasons for the previous two sections. Among the female respondents, 18.75% responded with "they just cannot," and 62.5% responded with "women are emotional and do not have problem-solving skills." Another 18.75% responded, "men have better ideas, and they are stronger." Similarly, the male respondents who had a negative answer had the following reasons: 31.3% said "they cannot, they are incapable of solving problems," 15.5% said "decision-making is men's job, women's job is to stay home," 6.6% agreed that "men are better problem-solvers." In comparison, 46.6% mentioned that "women are sensitive and emotional, that is why they cannot play a role in such things." On the other hand, the positive responses to this question had different opinions. Among the female participants, 74% agreed that women are peaceful and have their ways of solving problems, sometimes even better than men; 19% mentioned that women are also part of society and have to be involved in any related aspect, and 7% mentioned this to be a basic right to women to have such roles. Similarly, the male respondents had the following answers: 42.5% said, "women have different perspectives and ideas so that they can be even better problem solvers than men," 25.75% said that women are a main part of society, so they must also be involved, and 31.75% mentioned that this is a basic right to women.

The fourth study objective was to discover what role NGOs and governmental institutions played in advocating for resolution 1325. Among the 8 NGOs who work for women's rights, only two had provided trainings about resolution 1325, and only three had received trainings in regard. Moreover, only those 3 NGOs had specified projects for advocating for the resolution. In addition, none of the six governmental entities gave or took training about resolution 1325.

The fifth objective of the study was to take different perspectives about the potential effects that may result from implementing the resolution. The opinions of the participants (both male and female) are summarized below:

Positive Opinions	Percentage per item
Women will have more roles in society, and their rights will be more reserved	33.8%
Gender equality	7.5%
Society will be improved, and society's views on women will change	18.4%
Society's problems will decrease	2.7%
Women can also have roles like men	0.6%
Women will be more brave, confident and free	6.1%
Women will be more protected	4.5%
Social justice will happen	1.5%
Women's abilities will be discovered, and they will have more opportunities	8.1%
This will be a good change	8.7%

Negative opinions	Percentage per item
Awareness is more important than the resolution	0.9%
This will not be a good change	0.6%
Nothing will change	4.5%
Problems will increase	1.5%
Disruption of family	0.6%

4. Discussion

The first finding of this research suggests that a low percentage of people in the community, NGOs, and governmental entities are aware of resolution 1325. Among those, the majority had gotten their information and awareness from NGOs, which suggests a fair role played by the NGOs. However, because of the low percentage of awareness, much more work needs to be done. Awareness is the first step in any work, and if people lack awareness about something and have no information about it, they are likely to reject or stand against that thing. This is explained by Mueller (2012) that people mostly like consistency and try to stay away from uncertainty; when encountering new ideas, their first impression and/or reaction will be refusing that idea. Therefore, if NGOs want to start implementing the resolution, their first step is to do systematic and thorough awareness-raising activities, so society is more open.

The second result of this research shows that most participants agree that many important things are lacking from women in society. This finding can help give a much clearer idea of women's needs to make them a basis for action planning. One common point in the points of view was about comfort and safety. Most participants agreed that most women lack feelings of comfort and safety feelings; this further affects their performance (Sanner & Bunderson, 2015). Basic needs (such as safety and comfort in this example) must be met before moving to other steps, as humans can't operate to their full potential if they are not met (Diego, n.d.).

The third study finding points out that peoples' attitude and acceptance of the resolution's pillars is generally positive, with only a minority having negative attitudes towards them. The pillar with the most negative opinions was regarding women's involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution by both male and female respondents. This may have many reasons; one could be that women have had almost no chance to play a role in such positions, so it may be hard for people to imagine them in conflict resolution and peacebuilding situations. This can also be seen by comparing the attitudes towards this pillar with the other two pillars of decision-making and problem-solving since women have had some chance to prove their abilities. As a consequence, society somehow knows what to expect.

The fourth finding of this study gives an idea about the role that NGOs and governmental entities played in advocating for the resolution. As evident from the findings, little work was done. Many reasons were mentioned by the head of NGOs and government institutes, and the project researcher also observed some. One of the main reasons observed in NGOs was the lack of a special fund to support such a project; this can also be viewed from another perspective that NGOs also still lack awareness about the resolution and hence, do not give it a priority when planning for new projects. Moreover, even though the NGOs included in the study were all women-led NGOs, there was still a gap in their knowledge of the resolution, which suggests more work to be done on the NGOs' level. In addition, most NGOs focus on different areas to work on and still have not moved to the "development" stage, where sustainability is the focus. This may partially be due to the continuing crises in the area (Eklund, Abdi, Shahpurwala, & Dinc, 2021), which make it hard to step out of the "response" stage and start working on sustainable solutions.

Regarding the governmental institutions, there were also many problems reported and observed. First, their awareness and training depend largely on NGOs providing workshops, seminars, and trainings for their staff, so they have information about the resolution. Secondly, there still has not been an official letter from their heads to oblige them to apply the resolution, so it is still neglected. Thirdly, there is a lack of monitoring for such activities to know their status and ensure things are going on the right track. All these factors made it challenging for governmental institutions to move forward in terms of implementing the resolution.

According to the fifth and final finding, even though people in the community did not know exactly what the resolution was, they had many positive ideas on what may result if such a resolution is implemented. The most common answer was, "Women will have more roles in society, and their rights will be more reserved." This also aligns with the previous finding in this study about what women lack in the community, meaning that most people agree if such actions are taken, women will finally get what they lack and have their rights. On the other hand, there were still a number of negative expectations from the community, which suggest that more work needs to be done to find the roots of this problem and more awareness should be spread.

5. Limitations

1. The data collection was done in only one province of the KRI region, which limits the generalizability of the results over the whole region.
2. Only a number of NGOs participated in the research. If more NGOs had participated, it would have helped give a clearer idea of the current situation of NGOs regarding the implementation of the 1325 resolution.
3. There was a lack of response from the governmental entity employees, making their percentage low among the study participants.

It is suggested that the future researchers will include samples from all over the region. Also, more NGOs and governmental entities should be included to get a better idea of the situation. These points will help increase the generalizability of the results, as they will be more inclusive and help give a clearer idea of the overall situation and stance in regards to the resolution 1325.

6. Recommendation

Based on the finding and conclusions, the Lotus Flower researcher presents the following recommendations:

1. The KRI government could take further steps toward making the action plan practical by making it obligatory on the governmental institutions to implement.
2. Gender division or department within governmental institutions is essential to ensure the actual implementation of National Actions Plans.
3. Monitoring and Evaluation body that consists of government and NGOs members is critical to monitor and evaluate this process and present annual reports.
4. The NGOs, especially women led and women empowerment NGOs must be aware and trained by the government of 1325WPS NAPs. There has to be one specific plan for all government and non-government institutions that everyone abides by.
5. The work of NGOs on women empowerment should clearly adhere to one or more of the objectives of the country's NAP. There has to be a stronger coordination between NGOs and the government during the proposal design of various women empowerment projects in the country.
6. The NGOs and Government could prioritize programs that raise community's awareness on 1325 WPS while focusing on disseminating messages around NAPs.

7. Conclusion

This research was done to determine the status of the 1325 resolution in the community, NGOs, and among governmental institutes. The results suggested a low level of awareness among the community, NGO staff, and government employees. In addition, only 2 out of 8 NGOs included had received and given trainings and had projects about the resolution. In addition, none of the governmental institutions included in the study had information or knowledge about resolution 1325. Regarding people's attitudes toward the pillars of the resolution, the attitude towards decision-making and problem-solving components was primarily positive, while attitudes toward conflict resolution were more negative. Furthermore, the results show that people in the community agree that women lack many basic rights and that applying such a resolution could potentially help them gain some rights back.

8. Declarations

9.1. Conflict of Interest

The Author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

9.2. Statement of Ethics

This study was carried out following the recommendations of the Code of Ethics of the American Psychological Association. In accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, all the participants gave written informed consent for their participation in the study.

9.3. Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study will be made available upon reasonable request.

9.4. Funding

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