



Research article

THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKS IN PROMOTING THE POSITION OF AFGHAN WOMEN¹

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ABSTRACT

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This research endeavours to explore and identify the impact of media and social networks on advancing the position of Afghan women during the final year of Ashraf Ghani's presidency, prior to the Taliban's resurgence. Employing a qualitative approach, this study utilizes semi-structured interviews for data collection, and theme analysis is applied for data interpretation. The research focuses on educated women, social activists, and users of Afghan social networks as the target population. Sampling is conducted through targeted and snowball methods, resulting in 15 interviews until theoretical saturation is achieved. The findings of the study reveal divergent perspectives, categorized into two main patterns of thought: agreement and disagreement, regarding the role of media in promoting the status of Afghan women. Supporters of media's positive role highlight themes such as "leaving the traditional space," "reducing social isolation," and "modelling and identification." They advocate for the positive influence of media in enhancing the status of women. Conversely, opponent's present themes such as the "Pathology of Media Activities," "Intra-Media Challenges," and "Causes of Media Failure," expressing scepticism about the effectiveness of media in promoting women's social eminence. The research also uncovers a noteworthy conflict between traditional religious media and secular media in Afghanistan concerning women's issues. This conflict is indicative of a virtual battle between traditional and modern media outlets in the representation of women's positions. The findings illuminate the complex landscape in which Afghanistan's media landscape operates, revealing the struggles and challenges faced in shaping public perception and discourse on the status of women. In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the nuanced interplay between media, social networks, and the position of Afghan women. The contrasting viewpoints and conflicts within the media landscape underscore the complexity of the societal discourse surrounding women's roles and the challenges faced in leveraging media for positive societal change.

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INTRODUCTION

Although we are in the 21st century, women's rights in some countries still do not have a suitable place. International reports by various Human Rights Organizations point to the oppression of women and girls in different parts of the world. Afghanistan is one of the communities where Human Rights Organizations report a low status for women. Afghan culture continues to treat women as third and fourth-class citizens. They have fewer rights than their husbands, fathers and sons (Scanlon, 2015). In Afghanistan, women's social activities are limited in many cases (Rickard, 2020). In this culture, not even the lives and activities of heroic women are paid attention (Khan, 2014). The devastation of several years of war affect women and girls of this society more than anyone else, Women's and girls' rights have been destroyed and no action has been taken to reform the repressive and patriarchal culture (Scanlon, 2015). The prevalence of depression shows that half of Afghan women are

depressed (Shin et al., 2009). The pressure on women and the decline of their social status during the first period of the Taliban rule have been unprecedented. Then, contrary to the efforts made, little progress was made (Scanlon, 2015). In this regard, Afghan women are imprisoned in their historical traditions. In the last period and before the second period of the Taliban government, we have seen an increasing growth in media production and consumption in the last two decades, the world has become saturated with media production and consumption than any other historical period and new media in the form of virtual social networks, with the proliferation and diversity of media and content for their users, have provided freedom in media production and consumption.

Now the question arises as to what change has been made in the lives and social status of Afghan women despite media changes and the ubiquitous of social media? This study seeks to find an answer to this question that how effective Afghanistan's

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media and social networks have been in promoting the status of Afghan women. As women's participation in the development of Afghanistan faces numerous individual, social and cultural obstacles, such study can reveal the effects of the media on women's issues and women's view of the role of the media and indeed the success rate of the Afghan media.

THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan has been faced with different challenges including war and insecurity, ethnocentrism, linguistic differences, religious problems, illiteracy, interventions by foreign countries and civil war over the past 40 years. In the past years, this country has witnessed political developments in the international and regional spheres, social changes and the emergence of different intellectual approaches, nationalism, fundamentalism, communism, etc. It had a significant impact on the culture of geography and politics of this country" (Khowati, 2019). Afghanistan has not yet stabilized after decades of difficult war experience. It can be said that factors such as foreign interventions and some domestic cultural problems such as widespread illiteracy and the existence of fundamentalist approaches have faced many challenges for stability in this country. Socially, Afghanistan is a traditional country. Some sociologists have pointed to the transformation of society from traditional to modern, from "rural, group and agricultural" to urban, micro-oriented and contractual society. (Khowati, 2019)

Social relationships based on "traditional continuities" (society) in rural communities and contractual continuities based on logical relationships (society) in urban and modern societies (Hamid, 2008). Society represents the state of life before the modern era, which was manifested as a large, tribal family. Tribalism and fundamentalism are the main characteristics of Afghan society. Tribalism, as a traditional social system, has been effective in social and political instability and party and group conflicts and conflicts (Khowati, 2019). This has led to the formation of relations between the Afghan people on a natural basis based on kinship and traditions and in combination with fundamentalist beliefs and other cultural characteristics, a form of beliefs and behaviours against the values of modern society and the state-nation should be strengthened. The confrontation of this traditional social structure with the institutions of modern life as well as foreign political interventions has led the country to always struggle with war and bloodshed. The most important impact of war and permanent violence is the normalization of events Inhumane and immoral are like murder, suicide bombings, rape and corruption. In this country, killing people has become commonplace (Qaderi, 1992). Observing and experiencing all kinds of violence has made the Afghan people somewhat violent and morally harsh (Burhani, 2010).

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS; FROM MASS COMMUNICATIONS TO INFORMATION SOCIETY

In the field of cultural changes, we see two relatively contradictory approaches. First, an approach that agrees with changes in the path of development and reconstruction of society and second, the approach that protects the status quo and opposes changes (Reza, 2017).

In the last century, media (whether mass communication or social networks) have helped accelerate social changes. One of the most important functions of the media (traditional or modern) is the transfer of thoughts, values and lifestyles. Theoretically, this process can be the cause of change. It seems that such a process has brought the lives of people around the

world closer together. And now more than ever, we are closer to the formation of Marshall McLuhan's "World Village".

The "Paradigm of Modernization" is the name of the first wave of theories of communication and development after World War II, whose theories in the fields of economics (Schumpeter and Rostov), social (Parsons, Hozlitz, Smelser, etc.), and Daniel's psychology Lerner, 1958 and Avert Rogers, 1962).

Social renewal mostly includes social relations, roles and dualisms of traditional and modern societies, and psychological renewal emphasizes psychological or mental mobility, during which people acquire new psychological, value, motivational and belief characteristics. According to modernization theories, communication media can make desirable changes in the personality structure of individuals and be effective in modernizing society by creating confidence, motivation, modernity, awareness and acceptance of new phenomena (Hamid, 2008). In the new era, development communication theories refer to the formation of a new social structure under the influence of new information and communication technologies.

According to Castells, with the emergence of new and global information and communication networks and the impact of all aspects of life from the communication revolution, the world has entered a new society that communication researchers have called "information society (Castells, 1996)".

Turkel believes that cyberspace is leading us to a postmodern culture. Features such as anonymity allow users to easily play multiple roles at different times.

In his view, cyberspace is a liberating space, and the computer screen provides a new opportunity to fulfil the instinctual desires or needs of users (Turkle, 1996).

According to Mark Pasteur, virtual communities create or change the identity of individuals. Identities that are different from the past or transnational. New information and communication technologies affect people's understanding and shape speech and behaviour contrary to traditional frameworks (Pasteur, 1999).

Jessica Matthews argues that virtual societies can change people's perceptions of society and separate them from their historical societies by eliminating the problem of distances (Tomlinson, 1999). Different theoretical approaches to development communication reflect the role of communication in change. And the development of communities. However, in the most pessimistic case, it can be said that the media, although they may not be the main cause of the development of societies, undoubtedly have undeniable effects on the development developments of developing countries.

LIBERATING COMMUNICATION

One of the most important theoretical approaches to development communication is related to Paolo Freire. Freire's model is the most important model of modern education (Mackie, 1994). For decades, the name Paolo Freire has been synonymous with adult education and the education of the oppressed (Mackie, 1994). Paolo Freire's theory is a turning point in the formation of "critical education" and has provided a framework for using education to empower those who do not control their own destiny (Gutek, 2001) to enable learners to critically understand their living environment Critical education therefore offers suggestions for changing the conditions that lead to human repression (Monchinski, 2008). Freire emphasizes above all on educating the oppressed so that they can change their destiny (Espinoza, 2017). In his view, the goal is to educate societies free from oppression, and no one should use it as a mechanism to reproduce the dominant ideology (Espinoza, 2017). The person in question is Freireh, a person who criticizes

his surroundings and determines his position in it (Aghazadeh, 2003). According to him, humans are of two kinds:

I: Man as an object (workable) that is adaptable.

II: Man as an agent who is able to create and recreate the world (Fritze, 2004).

The ideal human being Freireh is an efficient, active, thinking and acting human being, they know the world and change it with their actions. According to Freire, education is not neutral either for domination or for human freedom (from oppression). Education for freedom is "education of the oppressed." He believes that educating the oppressed is education that is in a constant effort to restore their humanity (Freire, 1972).

According to Freire, the media is not neutral, and in most cases has an ideological orientation and serves to reproduce thoughts and ideas that are used to strengthen the interests of a minority group to dominate the majority or maintain the status quo. But free and critical media can help oppressed groups (Afghan women) become aware of oppressed conditions (traditional and patriarchal norms and customs). Media representatives can send powerful messages to reform cultural beliefs and liberate women (and the oppressed) To present problems. Therefore, the use of media is related to women's awareness of their social and family rights (Pourjebelli, 2000) or the level of their political awareness. In parallel with the formal education system, the media continuously educates its users and consumers in the form of various genres of entertainment, education, news, commercial advertising, etc.) Moreover, publishes thoughts and ideas that are aimed at and the elements of traditional educational institutions are different and opposed, and in this way, they make the oppressed aware and ready to change. The media can protect their rights and promote their status by reporting on issues that affect women (Dahal, 2013). Social media, more than mass media, serves to expand global intercultural communication and dynamism to move beyond traditional society (Zuboff, 2019). New social networks, by enabling dialogue, enable women (oppressed) to become aware of the conditions of discrimination and to discuss and synergize the issues that affect their lives. The debate over the use of information and communication technology also depends on the ease with which women can access the media (Crittenden et al., 2019).

Women need media and digital literacy to use the Internet effectively and improve their quality of life. While in some societies (such as Afghanistan), digital media literacy is very low due to inadequate education and lack of equal opportunities (Suwana & Ly, 2017). In the last century, the three dimensions of empowerment (civil liberties, civic and political participation) in more than 170 countries have been defined as one of the most comprehensive measures of women's empowerment (Sundstrom et al., 2017) and according to some findings, society's superficial perception of women's empowerment is gradually evolving under the influence of the media (Ruth et al., 2018) In this context, can it be said that the media has played a role in changing the traditional position of Afghan women?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research. Semi-structured interview method was used to collect data. The main question of the research is what role did the media play in promoting the status of women in Afghanistan? The time of this research is the last year of rule Ashraf Ghani" (2021). The study population consisted of educated women (civil society activists, university professors and media experts) who have appropriate knowledge and analytical power over the media and women's issues in Afghanistan. The number and sample size were determined based

on the theoretical saturation rule. Based on this, we finally reached saturation after 15 interviews and the interviews stopped. In accordance with the principles of qualitative research, after the end of each interview, the coding process was performed to analyse the previous interview on one hand to select a better sample for the next interview and on the other hand to use additional questions to collect more complete data. Each interview lasted between 60 and 80 minutes. All interviews were recorded during the interview, then transcribed.

Thematic analysis (TA) method was used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a broad method for analysing qualitative data and offers a useful and flexible method that explores themes or patterns in relation to different epistemological and ontological situations (2012, Brown, Virginia and Clarke). Meaningful units were discovered, extracted and coded for coding by thematic analysis method by repeated study of the text. In the coding process, each meaningful statement was assigned a label or concept. These concepts or codes were then categorized and the categories were grouped. Matrices are used to represent categories and the relationships between them. To maintain the reliability and validity of the research, the meaning and conceptualization of the propositions were done in groups and the meanings inferred from each interview were shared with the interviewees.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Media battle over women According to the research findings, Afghan media can be divided into two groups: modern (secular) and traditional (religious). Influenced by the presence of these two groups of media, the respondents' analysis of the role of the media in the social status of Afghan women is divided into two groups:

1. An optimistic view that the (modern) media has promoted the status of women.
2. A critical view that believes that the media has little effect on the advancement of Afghan woman due to structural barriers.

In this study, after coding the data, 11 main themes and 18 sub-themes on the role of the media in the position of Afghan women were obtained. The main theme (with 9 sub-themes) is the optimistic view that the media has done well in promoting the social status of Afghan women. The 7 main themes (with 9 sub-themes) relate to the critical view that the media did not play an effective role in the position of women.

OPTIMISTIC VIEW

According to the optimistic view, the Afghan media have promoted the position of women in society and play an effective role in the lives of women and their position in traditional Afghan society. In this view, four main themes and 9 sub-themes are mentioned, which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes an optimistic view of the role of the media in promoting the social status of women.

The Main Themes	Sub-Themes
Leaving the Traditional Space	Informing
	Undermining False Traditions
	Contribute to Gender Equality
Reducing Social Isolation	Information - Entertainment
	Disclosure of Social Pain
	Breaking the Circle of Isolation
Modelling and Identification	Modelling
	Identity

LEAVING THE TRADITIONAL SPACE

This theme reflects media actions that help's Afghan women move out of the traditional, patriarchal environment, and include sub-themes, awareness-raising, undermining false traditions, and promoting gender equality.

INFORMING

The media, through their education and information, on the one hand, have raised the awareness of women, and on the other hand, they have reflected the views of women, and women's voices are against oppression and rights. According to some interviewees, "after the fall of the government to Taliban" the media has been instrumental in recognizing and encouraging women to have self-confidence and independence" (Code K). Some respondents believe that "the media has been able to make women somewhat aware of their rights and their role in society" (Code G) "Women learn from the media how not to remain silent in the face of the patriarchal oppression of Afghan society" (Code A). "Media awareness has broken the long silence of women" (Code E), thereby boosting their self-confidence. Therefore, increasing women's awareness of their rights and capabilities will strengthen their self-confidence and increase their economic, social and cultural activism.

UNDERMINING FALSE TRADITIONS

In addition to traditional men, many women also believe in traditional patriarchal prejudices, and in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, we see "symbolic violence," a situation in which some women have come to believe in and accept themselves as instrumental and commodity. Traditions such as "mistreating" (valuing women instead of blood), "exchanging" (exchanging marriages) and barring girls from studying are institutionalized oppression of Afghan women. The Afghan media has undermined them by criticizing such false traditions and values. "The media has reduced a lot of bad norms, such as 'giving 'and' exchanging ', and has helped reduce the barrier to girls' education" (Code F), one interviewee said. These media actions have helped to undermine values and move women away from traditional frameworks.

CONTRIBUTE TO GENDER EQUALITY

The idea of male superiority over women exists in more or less all societies. However, it is obvious that there are major differences in the extent and nature of gender inequality in different societies. Gender inequality or gender stratification in sociological terms is the unequal distribution of wealth, power and benefits of society between women and men (Scott & Schwartz, 2000).

This situation is due to the difference between the participation of men and women in the public sphere and social life, which gives more social value to the social role of men (Ham and Gamble: 220:2004).

According to educated women in Afghanistan, social media has helped change public beliefs, especially men's, about women's gender equality. New media have been able to improve public opinion on women's social actions. According to some interviewees, "the media has changed the attitudes of Afghan men by raising awareness about the role and importance of women in the cultural, political, economic and social spheres" (Code F).

In addition, social networks have been able to promote the afghan patriarchal society's belief in women's status and empowerment. According to some interviewees, "In the past, women's use of mobile phones, Facebook and social networks was considered a problem, but now the media has moderated this culture" (Code 4). "Today, fewer young women may be without a

mobile phone. Virtual media has promised women's participation in cyberspace and society" (Code 0).

It seems that with the generalization of mobile application and the expansion of women's virtual presence in social networks, social acceptance of their participation in the real-life space has been somewhat facilitated.

REDUCING SOCIAL ISOLATION OF WOMEN

In underdeveloped societies is faced with a kind of deprivation of social facilities and privileges and accordingly they suffer from some form of isolation. The main characteristic of social isolation is the lack of a meaningful social relationship network as the most important social need of individuals (House, 273:2001). New technologies of communication with the creation of cyberspace and, consequently, the dualism of human life, have provided new opportunities for participation and social presence, especially for women of Islamic countries who face limitations in real life, and the statements of respondents in expressing the role of the media in reducing deprivation and social isolation can be divided into three sub-themes:

- I. Information-entertainment
- II. Exposing women's social pains
- III. Breaking the circle of isolation.

INFORMATION – ENTERTAINMENT

Is one of the problems of Afghan women, along with their little knowledge, how to spend leisure time. From an optimistic perspective, the media also promotes their social awareness by entertaining women by using entertainment information along with entertaining women. In addition to filling women's leisure time and entertaining, new media have simultaneously helped to raise women's awareness, self-knowledge, and enhance their life skills and help improve their living conditions. According to one interviewee, "The media is almost an inescapable companion of women's daily lives, leading them to align their social habits with media patterns. The media is valuable and diverse resources that help their users face social situations and individual problems" (Code F). Another interviewee said:

Virtual media is a fun and informative tool for women. New culinary women, home contraption, fashionista wear, important psychological issues, children, etc. have learned from the media. The media plays an important role in reducing isolation and increasing women's skills" (Code 0). Accordingly, new media have become friends and friends of women in the harsh conditions of the rule of traditions.

EXPOSING SOCIAL PAINS OF MEDIA

By exposing the oppression inflicted on women has made people aware of these conditions. In the opinion of interviewees, the media and social media have helped to grow the idea of gender equality in society and improve the status of women by displaying women's living conditions and news of violence against them. In the opinion of one social media interviewee, focusing on women's problems, such as economic deprivation, domestic violence, rape and forced marriage, they have been able to make Afghan society understand that women's problems are not hidden and exposed" (Code E). According to some people, "treatises support their rights by reflecting life issues such as marital relationships, families (family violence and criticism of inappropriate culture and traditions related to religion)" (Code 6).

BREAKING THE CIRCLE OF ISOLATION

Afghan women are less likely to leave home alone and spend more time at home and in the kitchen. Online media has helped women escape from prison virtually at home. Due to the

dual specialization of real and virtual life, virtual media and social networks have now provided conditions for women to be present in society in a virtual way and to break out of the social isolation prevailing in real space and to be freed from the limitations of real space. One of the women interviewed said, "The Afghan media, with its motivational, motivating, encouraging education, equal rights for women, increasing social interaction and working outside the home, has somewhat alleviated women's conflicts and psychological tensions." Have reduced » (code H). Social media has also helped promote women's self-confidence and social participation. According to one interviewee, "Afghan women now appear on social media with real identities and portraits of their main faces, which shows an increase in women's independence and self-confidence" (Code D).

IDENTITY AND PATTERNING:

PATTERNING

Pattern means model, species and norm (Biro, 1996). A model is a tangible example of a way of thinking and acting that may be presented in real or media space and imitated by others.

Patterns play a role in the development of people's personality. Modelling in life can be defined as a kind of imitation of ideal examples. People repeat the behaviour or situation of another person, they repeat it. The media is constantly modelling young women in various genres of news, entertainment, education, and portraying successful women. Media modelling of female characters enhances the credibility of women in society towards women's empowerment and creates role models for future generations. According to one interviewee, "Today, women (Afghanistan) are increasingly portrayed as successful activists, community leaders, or journalists in the national and international media" (Code A). Another interviewee stated that in series, movies and other TV shows, even on social networks, there are heroes and celebrities. Who are women and their success story motivates Afghan women" (Code C).

IDENTITY

Identity identification is based on a kind of distinction. Gender identity is based on gender differences and has requirements for people's opportunities and life experiences. Gender identity is the part of a person's behaviours and attitudes toward his gender that is formed under the influence of socio-cultural conditions (Hatami & Mahabi, 2019). Simone Dubois believes that no one is born a woman, but gradually becomes a woman, that is, gradually acquires a female identity.

The media can also lead to the creation of new types of social relationships and also affect the identity of individuals. Through media and social communication, people gain an understanding of their sexual identity. Accordingly, the use of the media and the presence of women on social media as social interactions help them to understand their identities.

Share their thoughts, achievements, problems and experiences with other women" (Code E).

Another interviewee stated that "women now work on an equal footing with men (in all areas) which is one of the main reasons for the media" (Code F).

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

A Critical Perspective on the Role of the Media in the Social Status of Afghan Women Some interviewees argued that Media and social networks have played a negative role in the position of women in society or are facing difficult challenges in promoting the social status of women. And they have not been able to play a positive role.

In this context, the opinions of the interviewees can be divided into three main themes, which are shown in Table 2.

Table two - Themes of critical views on the role of the media in promoting the social status of women.

Table 2 - Themes of critical views on the role of the media in promoting the social status of women

The Main Themes of Opposition's Point of view	Sub-Themes
Pathology of Media Actions	Objectivity of Women
	Woman as the Second Gender
	Promoting Symbolic Violence
	External Content and Internal Conflict
Paradoxes Within the Media	Gender Discrimination in Media Management
	Superficiality and disregard for basic issues
Barriers to Media Success	Cultural Barriers
	Policy Barriers

Pathology of Media Actions

Objectivity of Women

Objectification of women means evaluating them based on physical appearance, beauty and gender attractiveness, which is the main source of women, is suffering (Naemi, 2016). This approach is more noticeable in various media messages, especially in music and commercials. In commercial advertising, women are used as a tool to sell goods.

According to one interviewee, "Women are a propaganda tool and an object of obsession. The media pays more attention to the physical appearance of women. Although the presence of women in the media has increased slightly, the quality of women's presence in the media is low" (Code 1). Accordingly, women are used as a tool of the media. According to another interviewee, the media focuses on women's fashion and the type of make-up and clothing, instead of the quality of the program and the presentation of women's basic issues. "Women are used in most Afghan media to attract customers for commercial goods and have a showy and decorative presence" (Code 0). According to another interviewee, "the media seeks to make women celebrities in a negative way and contrary to the norms and cultural and social traditions of Afghanistan" (Code E). Of course, the use of women in commercial advertising is a global practice, but its conflict with Afghanistan's traditional culture can be criticized by women more than anywhere else.

Woman as Second Gender

The "patriarchal society" gives the "woman" an identity that includes being "inferior", "other" or "second gender" (Asadollahi & Salahi, 2014). In a traditional society, women live only to serve men, and a woman's role is in having children, doing housework or doing the things that a man entrusts to her.

The media, which operates with a religious and traditional approach, has a traditional attitude towards women and does not give them an independent identity. According to one interviewee, "traditional media treat women as the mother, sister, wife or daughter of a man and do not give them an independent role. In these media, women are portrayed as male-dependent and

"second sex" and are always represented by their dependence on men. This situation is the rule of a patriarchal ideology.

Religion is a structural challenge to society and the religious media that even the free media cannot overcome. According to another comment from May Another interviewee commented that the traditional media "have a religious definition of the role of women and ignore women's independence and consider them dominated by men" (Code)

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PROMOTING SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

According to Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic violence is a form of violence that is committed with the tacit complicity of those who are subjected to it and those who use it. Because both groups are not aware of it (Bourdieu, 2007). Although the media seem to play a role in reducing violence, this is not the case, and it can even be said that the media has promoted violence. Traditional and religious media are the cause of the spread of symbolic violence in the current society of Afghanistan. Influenced by extremist groups, they propagandize against the social presence of women and humiliate socially active women, helping to destabilize women and promote more symbolic violence. According to some interviewees, "ideological media promote violence because they portray women as highly dependent and weak" (Code L). "Propaganda against the presence of women in the media and the threat and humiliation of women media activists" (Code J) have caused women activists in the media to feel threatened and insecure. Accordingly, traditional media not only prevent women from appearing in the media, but also oppose women's media and social activities.

FOREIGN CONTEXT AND DOMESTIC CONFLICT

The media, by showing imported serials that are alien and different from the culture and beliefs of the Afghan people, cause family disputes and bring men and women, young and old, against each other, thereby leading to discord, violence and sometimes they encourage divorce. According to one of the interviewees "Some media outlets, by broadcasting some foreign series that are in conflict with Afghan culture and tradition, have destroyed the love, respect and intimacy of the family and pitted men and women against each other, sometimes leading to violence or divorce, especially in people who are illiterate" (Code G). The imported content of the domestic media, by creating new beliefs and practices in the patterns and thoughts of women and youth, lead their lifestyles in a way that is contrary to the norms of society, and this has caused conflict between families. Broadcasting serials and virtual social media content that promotes women's freedoms or raises women's awareness has prevented the new generation of women from following or adhering to traditional practices, and this has intensified the conflict between Women and traditional groups. Based on this, it seems that Afghan women in the historical transition from the traditional situation, have faced a violent challenge to overcome the current situation.

INTERNAL MEDIA CHALLENGES

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Gender discrimination is any prejudice based on the gender of individuals and means inequality and gender injustice. This concept can also be called suspicion of a gender (usually women). Gender discrimination in administrative organizations leads to "gender injustice." Greenberg first used organizational justice in the year 1970s.

Organizational justice refers to the fair and just treatment of individuals by their organizations," Fernandez and Wamele" were quoted as saying by Greenberg.

According to Thomas Aquinas, real justice is when the ruler gives privileges to everyone according to their merits (Akhavan, 2003). Whiteside and Barclay believe that organizational justice reinforces the belief in individuals that they can make important changes in their environment (Whiteside & Barclay, 2013).

Although the (secular) media in Afghanistan criticizes gender discrimination and claims equality between men and women in the content of their messages, in their organizational structure, managerial jobs are mostly dedicated to men. Thus, although they seem to seek to change traditional patriarchal beliefs, in practice they have adopted the same patriarchal practices in media management. In the opinion

Some interviewees, "The media is working to combat dual gender discrimination. On the one hand, the content of their programs is to criticize gender discrimination, but on the other hand, they give less managerial positions to female employees in the media" (Code D).

The management and activities of the Afghan media are mainly dominated by men, as the Afghan media can be called men's media. Another interviewee stated in this regard "Unfortunately, despite the 96 television channels, 190 radio stations and 1,500 print media outlets operating in the country (the last year of Ashraf Ghani's rule), women manage only ten media outlets" (Code F). Therefore, Afghanistan's media management is more masculine and women do not have a suitable position in media management. Another interviewee says about this, "The dominance of masculine and misogynistic views in society does not allow the media to promote women to managerial levels. Women who are aware of their rights are considered disobedient women. Men keep women in the information vacuum because the main managers and operators of the media are men, so unwittingly and unconsciously, they hinder the promotion of public awareness and knowledge of the social rights of Afghan women" (Code O). This situation can also be attributed to the repression of women in the general society because most women in the patriarchal country of Afghanistan do not have much opportunity for university education.

SUPERFICIALITY AND NEGLECT OF WOMEN'S ISSUES

The Afghan media is superficial in its efforts to restore the identity of women and reduce their harms and pays less attention to the specific issues of women in Afghanistan. Such a trend may be due to the fact that the media view of women is a masculine view that causes them to pay more attention to women's public issues. In the opinion of some of the interviewees, "The Afghan media has only covered the general issues of women's lives, such as security issues and the role of women in the family, but they do not pay much attention to the specific and everyday challenges women face at home and outdoors, street harassment, domestic violence, pregnancy-related problems, childbirth, and medical

disorders caused by motherhood" (Code J). The other interviewee said, "The Afghan media does not have the right mentality and they pay less attention to the dark dimensions of women's rights, deprivation, and family tyranny" (Code M).

BARRIERS TO MEDIA SUCCESS

CULTURAL BARRIERS

Cultural poverty and the dominance of traditional culture have placed restrictions on women using new media and social networks. According to one of the interviewees, "In some areas, most families restrict or prohibit their wives and daughters from watching television or using virtual networks, and some social media users hide their true images and profiles" (Code H). Accordingly, the traditional society considers the activities and programs of the new media in contradiction with the ancient culture of the country and resists its prevalence among women. This ban delays the impact of the media on culture-building in society. One of the interviewees stated "Our public space is very closed. Men want freedom only for the women and girls next door, not their families. Changing traditional beliefs is time consuming because Afghan men still feel ownership over women. The media may have tried, but most Afghan women are illiterate, and in some cases even women themselves do not want to be liberated" (Code L).

According to some interviewees, although free and secular media try to promote the status of women, they have not been successful in achieving their goals. One of the interviewees stated; "Only in a small number of cities do the media diminish traditional customs and culture in a limited way, and the influence of the media on changing the status of women is limited and insignificant" (Code O). In traditional society, traditions, especially in remote rural areas, stand as a strong barrier to media actions to change the social role of women.

POLICY BARRIERS

For various reasons, the Afghan media has not been successful in creating equality and promoting the status of women and bringing about fundamental change. Some of these reasons are the lack of macro-policies and valuable strategies to eliminate discriminatory views on women. This point by some of the interviewees has been highlighted. One of the interviewees stated that the programs that seek to increase the appetite of Afghan women are not targeted (Code C). Another interviewee "lack of comprehensive, logical, scientific plans and programs Sociologist has focused on the issue of women's rights and freedoms and its publication in the Afghan media (Code J). On this but it seems. Critics say the lack of comprehensive national programs in this area is one of the reasons for the media's failure.

DISCUSSION

Afghanistan has faced problems such as ethnic, religious, political and civil wars for many years. Various political and social tendencies, from tribalism to nationalism and Islamism and fundamentalism, have led to long-term war, terror, instability and social insecurity in the country. In this situation, women are the biggest victims of these patriarchal instabilities. In the Islamic and traditional culture of Afghanistan, women are defined as the second sex and have an independent and dependent position on men

The women of this society are imprisoned within a patriarchal socio-cultural structure. This situation is so institutionalized that even many women consider it normal. Now, with the expansion of mass media and online and access to social media, new conditions have been created. One of the most important consequences of these new conditions is the

globalization of culture and the integration of national cultures in world culture. According to Castells, with the advent of social networks, the world has entered a new era. But can it be said that Afghan women, with the help of the media, will enter a new era with more equal condition (Castells, 1996) ?

This research is conducted through interviews with educated women in Afghanistan (Civil society activists, university professors and media experts) on the role of the media in The social status of women in this country has been examined in the last year of Ashraf Ghani's government and before the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan. The research findings indicate the existence of two optimistic and critical views on the role of media and social networks in promoting the social status of Afghan women. Emphasizing the emphasis on free and secular media, the optimistic view believes that the media has helped to promote the social status of women, while the critical view believes that the secular media face structural obstacles to change the social status of women, and the media "Traditional" also reproduce the values of traditional women.

Based on this, it can be said that in the society of Afghanistan, we have faced the activities of two groups of media from:

- Free and Secular Media
- Religious and Traditional Media

From an optimistic point of view, free and secular media, have helped to weaken inequality and symbolic violence by raising awareness and weakening patriarchal traditions (Bourdieu, 2008). The media have also been able to help reduce the unequal distribution of power against women (Scott & Schwartz, 2000) and gender equality, and to create favourable conditions for women to move away from traditional status and change public opinion about women's social status and role.

The popularization of the use of mobile and social networks has led housewives to become active participants in social media in cyberspace and to raise their personal and social awareness. Optimistic Afghan intellectuals believe that the media, through the use of entertainment information and exposing women's social's pain and its critique in the media, have made public opinion sensitive to the situation of women, reducing women's social isolation and helping to free them from house arrest. Therefore, it can be said that the media has launched a kind of deconstructionist current in the struggle against the static traditions of Afghan society.

In accordance with the practice of René Descartes based on doubt about everything Descartes, (1992: 39), which was the basis of intellectual developments and the formation of the Western Renaissance, the secular media of Afghanistan have been able to cast doubt on the thinking of men and women (Urban Middle Class) in Afghanistan to adhere to the patriarchal traditions of that country. And this doubt will lay the groundwork for change in the position of Afghan women (Scott & Schwartz, 2000).

In this context, Afghan women with the help of Media Content Learning and Online Partnerships Gain a critical understanding of the world around them by training and enhancing the ability to trust and play a more serious role in society to change their lives (Freire, 1973). By presenting concrete examples of successful women in the roles of journalist, politician, lawyer, actress, celebrity, etc., they have been successful in modelling for women and thus have been effective in forming an independent female identity. According to (Jenkins, 2002). Gender identity is formed in interaction with society.

The media, as the most important tool of interaction, could have been able to create new identities and replace them with traditional female identities. By motivating women, the media have provided the right conditions for their gradual liberation from oppressive conditions within the framework of traditional

culture and its transition. Criticism of media actions, paradoxes within the media, and barriers to media success in promoting the status of women have been criticized. In the discussion of the pathology of media actions, intellectuals critical of the denial of women, women as the second sex, the promotion of symbolic violence and family conflicts

Due to the display of foreign content by the media, they pointed out that in the opinion of this group of interviewees, even in the secular media, we see female chemists. In their content, especially commercial advertisements, the media mainly pay attention to the representation of women based on their physical appearance, beauty and sexual attractiveness, and accordingly, by looking at women as tools, they are reduced to the status of women.

Objectification means evaluating women based on their physical appearance. It is the main source of women's suffering (Naemi, 2016). Secular media in their content show that the physical appearance of women is an important criterion in evaluating and judging others. Afghanistan's religious media also defend the traditional status of women and reinforce and reproduce traditional cultural values. In this approach, women have a lower identity than men and are mainly portrayed in the form of male-dependent roles.

Critics have criticized the display of foreign and imported content and analysed it as the cause of family conflicts and disturbances of family members. From the perspective of critics, paradoxes within the media (gender discrimination in media management and superficiality to Women's issues are another obstacle to the role of the media in promoting the social status of women.

According to them, now, despite the slight expansion of the media, the role of women in media management is still small and we are facing a kind of gender discrimination in media management. This gender injustice is a common feature of all media (both secular and religious). According to educated women critics. This managerial approach is far from organizational justice. According to Thomas Aquinas, real justice is when everyone achieves an organizational position according to their merits (Akhvan, 2003), while the Afghan media seems to be predominantly gender-oriented and less managerial positions are held by women.

Critics who believe that the media has failed to promote women. Discussing the reasons for the media's failure to achieve the goals of gender equality, they pointed to cultural barriers (static and traditional structures of Afghan society) and the lack of comprehensive national policies and programs. Conclusion in all societies, in the transition from tradition to modernity, an epistemological rupture occurs and words, phenomena and relationships find new meanings. The pressure of modernity to change and differentiate the centres to stabilize the status quo has been the cause of this conflict and battle throughout the history of human life.

CONCLUSION

Various researches and theories of the second half of the twentieth century to the present are available such as (Lerner, 1958) (Rogers, 1962) (Castells, 1996).

It has been shown that the media, including mass communication and new media, are important and influential variables in the modernization of societies and cultural and civilizational changes. Afghanistan has witnessed bloody military conflicts between the past decades. Traditional and religious groups have been extremist with agents of change and totalitarianism.

In addition to these military conflicts, in the cultural and social arenas, there is a cultural battle between the two groups of

free and secular media and traditional and religious media over social issues, including women and their role and position in society.

Survey of the views of educated women in Afghanistan on the role of the media in the social status of women showed. They believe that mass media and social media have been able to educate the people of Afghanistan about the position of women in society by educating, raising awareness, criticizing and exposing public opinion.

Online media and social networks have been able to provide a virtual presence of women in social networks and media in the absence of suitable conditions for women's participation in real life, and thus weaken the hard shell of the patriarchal traditions that govern this society. Be. This practice will also increase women's self-confidence and will gradually increase the presence of women in various areas of life.

Although cultural changes are always gradual, it should be noted that the age of information and communication, due to the increase in the speed of information transfer and the removal of spatial constraints (national borders) in transnational communication, is an era of accelerated historical change and can be expected to change. , Accept Mort faster than any other historical period. Obviously, reducing gender inequality in traditional societies such as Afghanistan will not be easy and costly and will face various obstacles, but the media as important factors have begun to change this trend.

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