

## Research Article

# Exploring Resources to Mobilize and Empower Women on Twitter: A Case of the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

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A considerable body of investigations has published with the focus on the impact of Social Media platforms especially Twitter (X) on the people mobilization and social movements around the world. However, the previous research with in-depth discussions shows the women's role in people mobilization and launching of social movements through twitter campaign is largely missing in the literature. This paper systematically explores the significance of Twitter in qualifying empowering women and mobilizing human resources to shape a social movement. This study examines how much the solidarity of the people on Twitter was instrumental in shaping the Enlightenment Movement and which sources were most involved in mobilizing them. This study using a qualitative approach investigates the possible relationships between the presence of educated women on Twitter and the formation of the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan. Intensive interviews of 25 participants showed that Twitter has a tremendously active role in empowering women. The findings of this study emphasize the effectiveness of the widespread presence of people on social media, especially Twitter, in recent years. Based on this study findings, scientific knowledge, awareness, social media and access to the new information technology, have a significant impact on women's empowerment.

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## Introduction

New media is of the most important catalysts for the change in society that has impacted people all over the world. These various forms of media, which created in the 21st century, play a vital role in all aspects of modern social life. The power of social media is heavily correlated to the content produced by its users. If social media users produce more substantial content and share their messages to everyone, there is no doubt that significant changes will take place in their social and political lives.

The information that is to be collected and provided to readers in this study is of particular importance. The reason is that for the first time, the Afghanistan people, especially the younger female generation that are part of the globalization process, are utilizing Twitter (X) in such a way as to unite the Afghanistan people, fight social injustices, and voice civil demands. This study will be used to help further mobilize citizens to form social justice movements, expand citizen awareness, increase political participation, and disclose future events. Moreover, this research will be the basis for the solution for whether or not we can use social media as a method to raise awareness and bring global attention to local issues on the formation of social and political movements.

Scientifically speaking, this research is consistent with all scientific methods and creations. Researcher has argued that Twitter is one of the most modern forms of social media, and it is

a necessity to use it as one of the requirements for launching a strong movement in Afghanistan. The importance of conducting this research is more than likely to be that, for the first time, by publishing tweets and utilizing the influence of social media, the younger female generation of Afghanistan launched a Twitter movement to unite the people under one goal: Their right to mobilize. Therefore, it is necessary to complete this research and to share its findings with the scientific community and the people of Afghanistan, so that everyone can know that the government, by no means, can stop the voices of thousands of people, because the younger generation have full access to modern communication technologies that will not allow their cries of injustice to go unheard.

### Purpose

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of Twitter in mobilizing people and women empowerment, especially young girls, that conducted with a qualitative approach in a case study of the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan. This study seeks to clarify how to mobilize Afghanistan women and which sources did play a key role in their solidarity. Women only participated in street protests, or their role in cyberspace campaigns, and Twitter storms were also active.

This study will highlight the Afghanistan women and the young generation's active participation in the civic protests and will focus on women empowerment in social and civic

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relationships, a generation that their role had never been prominent in civic protests before. This study also will make clear that how was the performance of the campaign of the Enlightenment Movement supporters and on what basis this movement was formed. So, the resistance of the young generation, especially women, to injustice, discrimination, and the unjust distribution of national wealth in Afghanistan villages will be an essential part of this study that will carefully be considered.

### Literature review

Twitter is a kind of social network online service that allows its users to send and read the posts up to 40 characters (Daudd Aqhaee, 2012). A social media website allows users to post short messages that are visible to other users (Candice L. Edrington, 2018). Social media is a powerful tool for change of public opinion and behavior (Aksir, 2017). Social networks provide fertility grounds for mobilization (Howard 2011). Social media activates online services, changing the notion that social movements are primarily about face-to-face communication (Meek, 2012).

Twitter is the most popular social network site (Seyyed Javad, 2013). Twitter users can link millions of other users around the world by sending tweets as quickly as possible and mobilize them (Daudd Aqhaee, 2012). Researchers propose political opportunities, organizational networking, and social activities for the emergence and development of social movements as three key factors (Goh, 2015). A social movement is a set of opinion in among population which represents for changing some elements of the social structure and distribution of a society (John D, Zald, 1977). The social movement is a collective action that aims to transform a part of society (Abdullahei, 2012).

Social movements are collective effort to advance common interests to provide the primary goal through social activities (Seyyed Javad, 2013). Baltimore defines the social movement as a collective effort to resist the transformation of a society (Battamore, 2014). Social movements are a conscious effort to create the desired social and cultural changes that are initiated by conscious people (Moshirzadeh, 2012). Social movements consider the use of online social networking as one of the critical tools to achieve their goal of mobilizing and increasing citizen participation (Mejias, 2011). The identification of individuals restricts the entry of intrusive and unreliable figures into social mobilization (Lim, 2008).

Mobilization is the process of bringing together a group of people using the resources needed to achieve a common goal and initiate a social action (J. Craig Jenkins, 1983). Mobilization, in a conventional manner, is a process that, through which a group of passive collections of people, actively participate in life (Sayed, 2017).

The hashtag is a tag which used to categorize and share posts and comments on a specific topic, globally and beyond the circle and friends list (AqbalDost, 2015). In social movements, Twitter hashtags is used to educate, organize, and people solidarity (Reed, 2005). New movements appear to be using hashtags to expand their activities because hashtags is the mainstream to continue the activities and to fuel the movement's demands (Malochi, 2011).

Researchers believe that social media role in helping protest movements is very prominent (Ali, 2011). However, some other scholars believe that social media has a tremendous impact on social movements and popular revolutions (Alterman, 2011). Twitter is changing the notion that social movements are associated with face-to-face links (Meek, 2012). Twitter allows strangers to follow one another based on similar interests and widely share their opinions with the world (Candice L. Edrington, 2018).

The most distinctive feature of Twitter is social mobilization, which makes the communication process change and embraces a comprehensive concept (Shaw, 2016). So, it seems Twitter users to be the leading critics of the government; they cannot ignore the discriminatory performance of the government or remain silent against the inability of political leaders (Aksir, 2017).

Recent research has shown that Twitter has many uses since its launch. In some countries, it has been used to organize social and civil protests, and in others to raise awareness and share information among citizens (Daudd Aqhaee, 2012). The Middle East, North Africa, India, Iran, and Bangladesh movements, using Twitter, displayed a new form of popular mobilization in the region, to the point where it launched realistic revolutions using Twitter messages (Seyyed Javad, 2013). Research shows that Twitter's impact on information and the rapid development of intellectual change in the countries of the region is indisputable (Roohollah, 2013).

With the complexity of the social fabric and the formation of new cultural foundations in the country, Twitter has become a powerful social-cultural tool (Zahra Ahmadi Pour, 2016). Twitter generates vocabularies, symbols, and phrases to move people to mobilization around a goal (Diani, 2000). The importance of the new media has led to the formation of a virtual state and an electronic government (Motahighi Gilani, 2012).

### Twitter (X) and Middle Eastern social movements

Twitter's strategic role in the formation of Middle Eastern movements was to the degree that some analysts called it a Twitter revolution (Daudd Aqhaee, 2012). At the same time as the social movements intensified in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, the U.S. Department of State wrote on his Twitter page that we want to talk to the protesters (Zahra Ahmadi Pour, 2016). Twitter played a valuable role in the formation of social movements in the Middle East (Shaw, 2016). Twitter played a strategic role in the formation and expansion of social movements in the North Africa, Middle East, Iran, India, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan (Daudd Aqhaee, 2012).

During the Middle East social movements in addition to Egypt, the most significant users of Twitter came from Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, who wrote daily on Twitter and re-tweeted the Twitter messages (Government, 2011). The Middle East revolutions in 2011 showed widespread speculation about Twitter's role in facilitating social movement activities (Mejias, 2011).

### Twitter (X) and social movements

The success of using Twitter in mobilizing people for a collective protest depends on how to deal with recent protests simultaneously (Goh, 2015). Research shows that the level of social media participation, especially Twitter, is still highlighted in popular uprisings and the formation of civil and social movements (Government, 2011). It should be noted that Twitter not only changes the forms of social movements and opposition but also introduces the culture of resistance. As noted above, Twitter's instant sharing feature helps people connect, understand future perspectives, and organize social gatherings (Fisher, 2005).

Twitter, like any other social media, allows its users to share and replay message within a few seconds all over the world, so it is essential to examine its impact on social and political developments (Shaw, 2016). However, one of the essential other uses of Twitter is informing people during states of emergency (Daudd Aqhaee, 2012).

### Social movements in Afghanistan

The Twitter role of as a mobilizing force for public opinion in Afghanistan like the Middle East is clear and undeniable

(Hossaini, 2018). When Afghanistan government-imposed security restrictions on citizens during civil marches, Twitter became one of the main communication bridges between the organizers of the Enlightenment Movement and citizens (Hossaini, 2018).

In Afghanistan, before 2013, Twitter became a more formal channel for political and military affiliates, but then the younger generation, in addition to Facebook, took the Twitter social platform into account and created a lot of accounts (Tahmina, 2018). However, some figure does not know how to use social media (Shayan, 2018). Afghanistan women currently have sophisticated communications with social media, including Twitter (Tahmina, 2018). In the Enlightenment Movement, it was a Twitter that mobilized people around the Common target and invites it on the roads.

#### **Theoretical framework: Resource mobilization theory**

The theoretical framework of this study was designed using the resource mobilization theory, one of the accepted theories in the field of social movement designed. The resource mobilization theory argues that social movements are formed when its organizers mobilize resources to address the demands of the part of the people (Seltzer, 2014). This theory emphasizes that when some people in their countries feel dissatisfied with government policies, they resort to various means or form social movements (McCarthy, 1977).

According to this theory, whenever citizens perceive discrimination in the distribution of national power and wealth or feel injustice in one of the social sectors, they use scientific knowledge, social media, public awareness, and political elites to mobilize and solidify people. In this way, they initiate civil protests and legitimize their civil disobedience. Resource mobilization theory is designed to challenge social inequalities and the relative deprivation of citizens that often arise in undemocratic societies (Curti, 2008). Resource mobilization theorists argue that dissatisfaction is necessary but not sufficient, because social conflicts are inherent in every society. Therefore, the formation of social movements and their ability to mobilize resources are major factors (Kelly, 2011).

Therefore, this study, with a qualitative approach and utilizing resource mobilization theory, correctly interprets what was predicted in the paper content. The findings of the study provide much empirical evidence in support of resource mobilization theory. Based on the evidence and this study finding, there is a close connection between research methodology and resource mobilization theory, which emphasizes the necessity of conducting this research and further research in this field.

#### **Research questions**

This study employs a qualitative methodology. To delineate its research objectives and gather pertinent study data, three primary inquiries have been formulated for examination and review. The study questions focus on Twitter's performance in women's mobilizing, human resources in building social cohesion, the presence of people on Twitter, and facilitating civil protests, discrimination and injustice, and the formation of the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan. The evidence suggests that issues raised in the study questions are supported by the resource mobilization theory so that there is a meaningful relationship between research questions and the components within the theoretical framework of research that makes research more important.

**RQ1.** How did Twitter (X) contribute to the mobilization of individuals in Afghanistan, particularly in empowering women?

**RQ2.** What were the motivations behind the launch of the Twitter Storm in Afghanistan?

**RQ3.** Which specific Twitter events or discussions had the most significant impact on shaping the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan?

#### **Methodology**

To exploring the proposed research questions, a qualitative study conducted. Qualitative methods are used to answer open-ended questions about the interviewee's experience, meaning, and perspective (K. Hammarberg, 2015). The qualitative study was able to collect primary data within three months. In the study, all interviewees participated voluntarily without any payment. The interview time for each respondent took about 30 to 45 minutes. In order to select the participants of this study, purposeful sampling was used. Purposeful sampling has been designed that the researcher selects the individuals and places of study so they can be useful in understanding the research problem and the central phenomenon of the study. (Asem, 2019).

In this study participated 25 individuals, including Enlightenment Movement organizers, movement members, university professors, civil activists, and one researcher as interviewees. Participants with age differences were from different regions of Afghanistan, taking into account variables such as age, gender, educational background, occupation, position, and civil-political activities (See Appendix 5). Interviewing is one of the most common techniques or tools for research data collection that has increasingly become the focus of qualitative approaches (Karimi, 2012).

To using the online in-depth interview method, interview participants were invited to participate in an in-depth interview. (See Appendix 6). The interviewees' words were transcribed, then summarized in three to five categories. The research findings in several sections or themes that are consistent with the research objectives will be documented in summary form, with the author's priority characterization (APA). Data were analyzed using (NVivo12pro) software. The content of the interview with the interviewer's first transcription then summarized into three categories. The main topics coded into three categories include (1) Descriptive codes; (2) Categorical codes; and (3) Analytical codes). Codes are extracted from the transcript and then added to the article in a table with the necessary academic explanations in findings (See Appendix 4).

This research has formulated over a specified period under the Supervisor-led research plan, and received no specific grant from any funding agency. This study focuses on scientific considerations and ethically accepted principles throughout the research process (from data collection to extraction of results), and responds to any ambiguity or question posed by the interviewee. Interviewees were also reminded that their information was used confidentially in the study and that their identities would be retained in the study.

Due to the research was conducted with qualitative method and information was extracted from in-depth interviews, a complete information package was sent to the interviewees that they know more about research and in-depth interviews (See Appendix 3). The researcher sent the consent form separately to the interviewees and asked them to study the consent form carefully and express their interest in participating in the interview. (See Appendix 1).

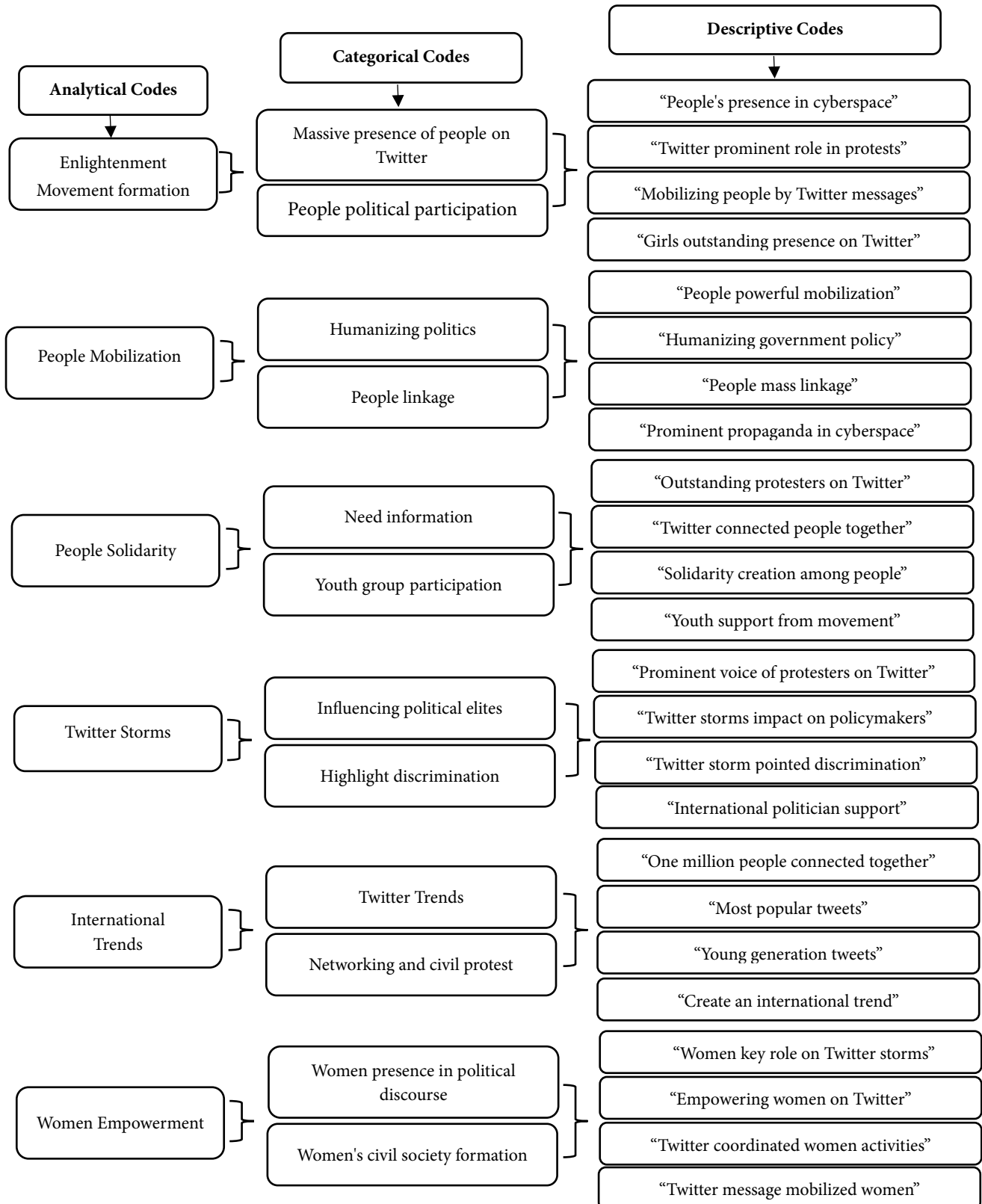
**Results**

The result of this study is derived from qualitative questions, and the research questions are out from the heart of the theory. The research data interpret scientific knowledge, people's solidarity, women's empowerment, the presence of the younger generation on social media, and human resources to mobilize people. Data analysis led to the extraction of the initial set of

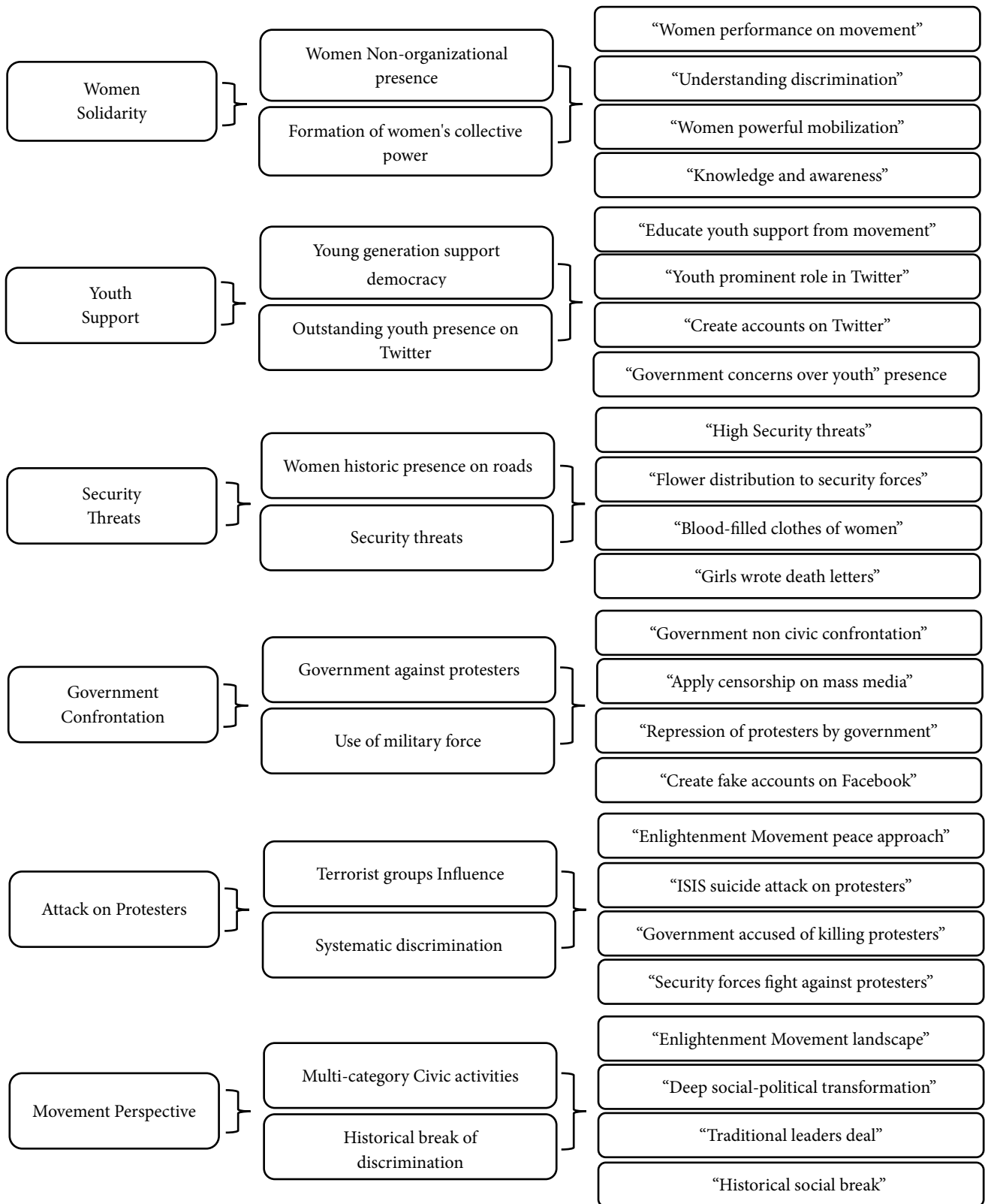
codes, and themes. In addition to the main themes, additional codes were generated from transcripts and the interviewer's notes.

The main analytical codes extracted from the initial data include (1) Enlightenment movement formation; (2) People mobilization; (3) People solidarity on X; (4) Twitter (X) storms and youth support; (5) International trends (6) Women empowerment; (7) Women solidarity; (8) Security threats; and (9) Attack on protesters.

**Data coding process**







**Table 1:** This table shows the qualitative research analytical codes, categorical codes and descriptive codes. For more information, see (appendix 4).

The research themes that have emerged from the mass initial of information are as follows:

**Enlightenment movement formation**

The first question that the researcher asked from the interviewees was about the formation of the Enlightenment Movement? Most of the participants in the interview reported that the Enlightenment Movement was a popular movement, which formed after the discriminatory decision of national unity government Cabinet for redirection of 500KV electricity power of Turkmenistan (TUTAP).

“The Enlightenment Movement formed with the widespread support of the people, protesters, wanted to persuade the government to pay attention to the Afghanistan central regions, but the government did not pay attention to the people's wishes.” (Participant 13, personal communication, June 12, 2019)

They are noted that the Enlightenment Movement formed in continued the presence of too many people, especially the younger generation on Twitter. On thier opinion joint pain, systematic discrimination, and historical injustice caused to people attend in cyberspace and formed the great movement.

“Civil society's freedom, social media growth, and mass participation had a vital role in protests.” (Participant 21, personal communication, July 3, 2019)

Many contributors stated that in the formation of the Enlightenment Movement, the traditional and young leaders of the Hazara, scholar's council, university professors, some Parliament members, women, and the general population were having a pivotal role. People protested that the national unity government leaders, by mutual agreement, put ahead of the redirect of the TUTAP electricity project in the secret cabinet agenda, and then with the support of several ministers in the Cabinet approved it.

### People mobilization

When I asked the interviewees about how people mobilized in the Enlightenment Movement, nearly 19 people reported. The main event that led to the people mobilization and the vast collection of people, including university professors, students, girls and even children to the streets, the historical oppression and exclusion of one nationality from national and social projects which were applied by the government.

Three founders of the Enlightenment Movement stated the people mobilization started from Kabul, then the sub-branches of the movement were formed in other province in Afghanistan, and some foreign countries. The Afghanistan educated citizens in foreign countries were mobilized in important international meetings and complained against the government's discriminatory decision. In important meetings that were established in Munich, London, and Washington DC, the supporters of the Enlightenment Movement complained from Afghanistan national unity government leaders, also they supported the movement demands and participated in the economic supports.

*“People voluntary were mobilized; there were no plans to mobilize people inside and outside of Afghanistan. The mobilization of the people was a good lesson for the traditional leaders to understand that they no longer have any place among the younger generation.”* (Participant 1, personal communication, May 19, 2019)

Most of the participants in the interview stated that the women's lack of access to their fundamental rights and long-time tolerance of systematic discrimination caused that they support the Enlightenment Movement demands.

“Women had a prominent role in the Enlightenment Movement, the movement was able to mobilize women, in the past, social movements were not able to mobilize women, we saw that this movement led to Afghanistan women's national

solidarity.” (Participant 14, personal communication, Aug 9, 2019)

### People solidarity on Twitter (X)

The third research question was about the solidarity of people in cyberspace when the researcher asked this question from interviewees. They reported that when the Enlightenment Movement lost the Afghanistan mass media news coverage, they tried to use the cyberspace and twitter platform to define their demands and talk about discrimination against specific ethnicity. Twenty interviewees described that visual media, auditory media, and print media did not support the Enlightenment Movement, in Afghanistan. From their view, during the protests, many media outlets were under censorship, even some media limited the news coverage of the Enlightenment Movement.

“I witnessed that the Enlightenment Movement news coverage was limited by the Afghanistan national unity government before.” (Participant 24, personal communication, Aug 13, 2019)

Two members of the media committee in the Enlightenment Movement pointed out the role of Twitter in people solidarity said: Twitter was the most important tool to link people inside and outside Afghanistan. Twitter campaign and cyberspace had a significant role in people's solidarity. Even the cyberspace played a vital role in facilitating the protests and the formation of meetings in Kabul. The Enlightenment Movement supporters by publishing messages, photos, and videos are connecting other people as well.

### Twitter (X) Storms and youth support

When I asked the interviewees about their presence and participation of the youth in the Enlightenment Movement, the majority of them described that the Enlightenment Movement had received widespread support from the young generation. Young generations had highlighted the voices of the movement by attending the protests. The participants of the interview pointed to the high level of threats in civil protests emphasized that young people were endured the most top victim with their support for the movement.

“The young people in the familiar voice supported the Enlightenment Movement demands. The role of youth in civil struggles, twitter storms, and mobilization of people was vital.” (Participant 11, personal communication, July 17, 2019)

In terms of Twitter storm, more than half of the interviewees reported, when the terrorist groups threatened the civic Enlightenment Movement protest in real space, then movement supporters chose cyberspace and twitter to realize their demands.

“Twitter was an excellent opportunity and a handy tool for the formation of the Enlightenment Movement. We used from Twitter effectively and noteworthy to formed communication and people mobilization.” (Participant 11, personal communication, July 17, 2019)

Twitter storms targeted the Afghanistan national unity government leaders at the Brussels and London international meeting and drawing global attention into the central movement content. After that, the Afghanistan immigrants' movement raised severe questions from government leaders by attending the most important international meetings.

Two members of the women committee the Enlightenment Movement emphasized that women and men had the same role in the launch of twitter storms. In their view, one of the particular consequences in lurching Twitter storms was the universal solidarity between Afghanistan migrant women and the women living inside this country. Women in cyberspace, especially at the launch of the twitter storms, were a step ahead of men and proved

that they had an active and influential role in the launching of civil and political protests.

“Twitter storm had a constructive role in mobilizing and women empowering. Twitter in the harmony and formation of women's civic flows, had a brilliant share.” (Participant 3, personal communication, June 25, 2019)

Afghanistan educated immigrants, who lived in America, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, France, and the UK had a prominent role in launching the Twitter storm. Afghanistan immigrants translated all messages, slogans, and hashtags with different languages, and then took the information in multiple languages through Twitter.

#### **International trend**

The interviewees noted that the Enlightenment Movement, with study the role of Twitter in the Middle East protests, used this medium to attract the attention of the politicians and international institutions, including the United Nations, to display discrimination in Afghanistan. The majority of the interviewees reported that the Enlightenment Movement tweets were at the top level of international tweets.

“Twitter storms were very effective, as far as some members of the Australian Parliament were sensitive to the Enlightenment Movement position and published similar tweets on their pages.” (Participant 12, personal communication, June 14, 2019)

The twitter storm and the hashtags (#) connected more than two million people inside and outside of Afghanistan. This power shows that Twitter was one of the critical elements for the globalization of the movement voice. Twitter with English content was able to attract the attention of Afghanistan's donor countries to the apparent signs of systematic discrimination in this country.

“Our first Twitter storm formed the global trend and was ranked the attention of international media, including the BBC.” (Participant 5, personal communication, July 13, 2019)

Many supporters of the Enlightenment Movement explained that many of his positions transferred through Twitter to the world leaders, including the United Nations secretary-general and other international political elite. Justice and Enlightenment hashtags (#) highlighted the movement demands at an international level.

#### **Women empowerment on Twitter (X)**

All interview participants reported that the Enlightenment Movement was the most prominent civic movement in Afghanistan in which women, especially young girls, had a significant role. Women's role in the Enlightenment Movement was self-centered. The educated women with their presence in cyberspace and real space supported the change demands and defended the justice process and the struggle against discrimination.

“No political hand was involved in the women's mobilization, women through their knowledge and with understanding discrimination came to the roads, the women present in the Enlightenment Movement proved.” (Participant 21, personal communication, July 3, 2019)

However, some would say that the Enlightenment Movement was the only movement that stabilized the political and civic position of Afghanistan women in the contemporary history of Afghanistan. The role of women in setting up the Enlightenment Movement was worthwhile because, for the first time, this deprived generation played a decisive role in the formation of civic action in the heart of Kabul.

“Afghanistan Women had the most influential and active role in the launching of the Enlightenment Movement, Twitter storms,

and civil protests.” (Participant 19, personal communication, June 7, 2019)

Women supported the Enlightenment Movement 's insensitive and lousy security conditions. Some of the women had written a letter of death before participating in the movement struggles. One of the girls during an interview with throats of grievance said that due to the high level of security threats, we could not invite our friends to participate in the movement, but it has been seen during the protests that they had a prominent role in the protests.

“I was the first girl who wrote her death letter for the high level of security threats because I did not know to get back home again or not, in that day no one knew what fate they would face.” (Participant 15, personal communication, July 1, 2019)

#### **Women's solidarity**

Ten of the interviewees reported that the Enlightenment Movement created a strong correlation between the Afghanistan women, which was unprecedented in the contemporary history of this country. Solidarity and high motivation of women in the Enlightenment Movement stem from discrimination and unfair distribution of national wealth that was managed by the government. Most of the interviewees noted, that one of the main reasons for women's solidarity in the Enlightenment Movement was the efficiency of Hazara women from the social and cultural relationships of them in Afghanistan. The open space of social activities among the Hazara society caused women to have a mighty hand in civil protests.

The presence of women in the Hazara Society was active and prominent. That is why the movement was able to use the civic and social freedoms of Hazara Women to set up protests. During the protests the girls distributed the flowers bouquets to the security forces, cleaning the roads of protesters attended, and even divided their food into them. These are signs that the women in movement played a key role.

“We were fighting for access to our rights; we waited for government action and response. The majority of girls wanted, such as Egypt citizens and Libya, to stay on the road to achieve their rights. However, the suicide attack made people escaped, and the voice of justice would stop.” (Participant 7, personal communication, May 25, 2019)

#### **Security threats**

When I asked from interviewees about security threats, the absolute majority of the interviewees have complained of low-work and significant Oblivious of security forces. Everyone with anger and frustration spoke of security force negligence during their civil struggles, they reported that government did not have plan for securing protesters due to the support of the people from the Enlightenment Movement, on the contrary, government were used from any tools to suppress the protesters.

The response of protesters showed that security devices, including the National Security Council and Ministry of Interior, they have no attention to the Enlightenment Movement organizer's demands. Kabul security institutions did not respond to many official correspondences of the Enlightenment Movement.

“The Kabul National Security Directorate knew that supporters of the movement were facing severe security threats but did not have any plan to secure the protesters.” (Participant 1, personal communication, May 19, 2019)

Ten of the protesters described those police fired over them. They pointed out that the security forces knew that were among protesters but targeted them, and they killed many of their friends in front of their eyes, the protesters claimed.

“We lost several protesters on the impact of shooting security forces.” (Participant 9, personal communication, May 22, 2019)

### Attack on protesters

According to the general findings of this section, the Enlightenment Movement with flower bouquets began its protests but returned home full of blood and with their failed wishes. Afghanistan government argued that the Enlightenment Movement sought to jeopardize government stability, with the agreement of outside countries, including Iran, in alignment with the terrorists. In fact, the Enlightenment Movement severely suppressed by the ISIS terrorist group in alignment with the government. Streams aligned with terrorist groups, including ISIS, tried to silence the Enlightenment Movement. The majority of interviewees reported that the ISIS was attacking the Enlightenment Movement in close alignment to the Afghanistan government.

“The suicide attack on the movement had been planned; the suicide attack happened with the presence of Afghanistan national security forces. Ten minutes before the attack, security forces fled the area and went to safe places.” (Participant 10, personal communication, June 11, 2019)

In the July 24, 2015 suicide attack, more than 80 members of the Enlightenment Movement killed, and nearly 500 others were injured. The blast killed young graduates up to the doctor's, master's and bachelor's degrees, and some university professors were among those killed.

Findings show that after more than 500 protesters were killed and injured in one day, global reactions formed about the happening, many international organizations and prominent politicians around the world supported the Enlightenment Movement demands and criticized the Afghanistan government.

*“We have had numerous calls from foreign countries and international organizations supporting the movement's demands; They always said that protest is your right, and we are determined to share Your requests with international institutions.”* (Participant 18, personal communication, July 3, 2019)

Some of the findings of the investigation show that security forces were aware of the suicide bomber's attack and did not prevent the killing, In the meantime, some protesters complained that security forces went to safe places before the blast.

### The Confrontation of the Government with the Protesters

The majority of the interviewees reported that the Afghanistan government did not pay attention to people's demands and appeared against the protesters with non-civil tools. The government thought that the continuation of the protests would pose a significant blow to the government, so it used every means to disrupt the people and prevent them from progressing toward presidential Places.

Several Enlightenment Movement organizers believed that hundreds of fake Facebook accounts were activated against the movement in the wake of Twitter storms to prevent the presence of people during the protest day. Tabasum movement that was launched before the Enlightenment Movement had created this fear in the government. If we did not hinder the progress of the people, continuing protests might put the government under intense pressure.

*“The government has repeatedly ignored public criticism and tried to silence the voice of the people, even at international meetings of the President's Special Guard did not allow a member of the Enlightenment Movement to share a Criticism with the President.”* (Participant 3, personal communication, June 25, 2019)

Many of the interviewees reported that one of the government's explicit discriminatory encounters about the

Enlightenment Movement was providing inaccurate information about the movement activities and linking the movement demands to the foreigner countries especially with Iran to the world. The government, with discrimination and deprivation against Hazaras, has also urged migrant nations to reconsider their acceptance of the Hazaras people one again.

### Discussion

This study aimed to investigate exploring the role of Twitter in mobilization and female empowerment with a case study of the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan. The overall results of the interviews and key findings of the research emphasize the role of Twitter in mobilizing people and empowering women. The results of this study show that various sources have been involved in mobilizing people and shaping the Enlightenment Movement. Twitter was one of the most powerful resources for people mobilization, other sources such as universities, schools, mosques, science and education centers, civil society, political parties, each one playing a role in people solidarity and Enlightenment Movement formation.

The results of this study report the positive consequences of women's presence and empowerment in the cyberspace and their civic engagement in shaping the social movements of the last decade in Afghanistan. The findings show that women have broadly supported the Enlightenment Movement and have played a significant role in Twitter storms with their presence in cyberspace. The Enlightenment Movement in the presence of women found meaning and was able to make its demands reliable. The presence of women on the roads, was a sign of progress of democracy, freedom of expression, and expansion of social media in Afghanistan. The Afghanistan elites and the majority of the young generation in order to share the information, taking part the social campaigns, mobilize people, and raise the citizen's awareness used Twitter.

Twitter has been used in various forms since its launch; in some countries, it has been used to organize social protests and in others to inform and raise citizens' awareness (Motahighi Gilani, 2012). Social movements in the North Africa, Middle East, India, Iran, and Bangladesh formed by launching a campaign on Twitter and using this media to start major revolutions (Seyyed Javad, 2013). According to the findings of the study, Twitter Storms linked more than a million people in cyberspace, and it made people's voices more prominent in the cyberspace. The findings of a recent study also interpret that Twitter has become a powerful and useful socio-cultural tool that plays a vital role in controlling social relations (Zahra Ahmadi Pour, 2016).

According to the findings of this study, it appears that there was an apparent ethnic and regional disparity in the TUTAP project redirection. If the government did not prevent 500 kV electricity crossing from central areas and allow the project to be implemented based on Afghanistan electricity Master Plan, this country could achieve economic self-sufficiency and become four ways of electricity generating. Nevertheless, in many countries, the continuation of the protests prompted the governments to heed the protests of citizens and support their demands (Shaw, 2016). However, on the contrary, the Afghanistan government was a stand against protesters and used non-civic tools for suppressing them.

However, the findings of similar research show that in the Middle East movements, the presence of people in cyberspace is not as prominent as real space, and no coordinated Twitter storms have been launched to highlight the demands of protesters (Shaw, 2016). People were irregularly tweeting and were unable to mobilize more people at a given hour (Mejias, 2011). According to past findings, people on the roads have been trying to highlight their demands while the Enlightenment Movement was facing



increasing security threats and could not be in the streets for hours, on the contrary, they had highlighted its presence on Twitter.

The difference between the results of this investigation and the previous one significant is that the Afghanistan government was using deferent tools trying to make silent protesters and prevent them from continuing their protests. Afghanistan is one of the countries that perform censorship on the Internet and social media platforms. Hundreds of fake pages have been launched on Facebook to prevent people from being mobilized, while findings from past investigations do not support such encounters by the government against protesters.

One of the salient differences of this research with similar research in the past is that past research shows that social movements had a tremendous impact on the functioning of governments and even overthrown political systems (Shaw, 2016). The overthrow of the political regime of countries such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and some other countries in the Middle East had closely linked to the presence of people and their civil protests on the road (Daudd Aqhaee 2012).

Twitter was an essential tool for setting up civic protests for women. Women were able to convey their messages to the rest of the women by using Twitter and other sources, and they wanted other women to participate in the protests. During the protests, more than half of the women protesters were using Twitter so that they could find more supporters.

The results of the interviews show that women during the protests with bunches of flowers and cleaning the roads stood at the forefront of security threats and shouted from injustice, while Egyptian women took part in protests without any security threats and even stayed on the streets at night. The findings also clearly show that the Enlightenment Movement has been facing severe threats from terrorist groups. Even the government did not allow government employees to participate in the protests or to become active on Twitter. However, this study tested with using of resource mobilization theory, which was one of the most accepted theories about civil protests and the formation of social movements and has produced meaningful and remarkable results and results of this study support the research literature.

Resources mobilization theory to promote the effectiveness of civil protests and the formation of social movements proposes (knowledge, media, social activities, solidarity, legitimacy, and support for social elites) and calls on social movements organizers and activists to use these resources for the setting up the social movements. In the meantime, the main findings of this study add new points, including (virtual networking, information need, trust-building, and suppression of protesters) that has not been discussed in the previous research literature, to aid scientific knowledge and develop the scope of the theory and call from other researchers to pay attention these new issues in their research.

Past research has discussed how to the formation of social movements. The findings of previous studies show that men have played a vital role in the formation of social movements, and mobilization of protesters and the women's presence always has been symbolic, while this research's primary focus is on women empowerment on Twitter and their role in the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan and people mobilization by women themselves. Finally, this study finding are consistent with the method, the researcher argues that the findings of this study provide the necessary results for support of scientific advances. Thus, the findings of this study are new, useful, and applicable to other researchers and can help advance scientific knowledge.

## Conclusion

After lengthy discussions, I concluded that Twitter, as an elite social media platform far from limitations time and place, enables its users to have a good connection. Indeed, under oppressive governments where face to face communications is restricted, Twitter creates a space to break people's silence and fear of government for the people to mobilize and protest. The Enlightenment Movement recognized as the most critical social and political event in Afghanistan's recent contemporary history in a decade. Socially, this movement happened between educated elites and the new generation, especially Hazara women. Hazara women's played an active role in the online campaign and twitter storms relative to other ethnicities women's in Afghanistan. Following the launching of Twitter campaign, many foreign countries have noticed political discrimination and inequality in Afghanistan.

The Enlightenment Movement was one of the most unmatched civil changes in Afghanistan, that women, especially educated young girls, had a crucial role in launching it. Women supported the Enlightenment Movement with awareness and understanding of discrimination, and no political plans were involved in mobilizing them. Women came to the streets to support their demands, and historically backed from the Enlightenment Movement demands. one of the significant achievements of the Enlightenment Movement was the decline of the political authority of the traditional Hazaras leaders. The Enlightenment Movement campaigns demonstrated the civic capacity of the Afghanistan people to countries in the region and convinced them that the Afghanistan young generation could mobilize, and to make their demands public.

One of the main demands of the protesters was the release of the Hazara people from natural prison and the end of their historical oppression. The members of the movement highlighted the past pressure of this nation by presenting a series of specific demands. The slogans and messages of the campaign showed that the Hazaras were oppressed and that the Afghanistan government did not want them to be released from natural prisons and their areas to be developed. According to the findings of this study, there was a clear ethnic and regional discrimination in the redirection of electricity because there was no rational reason for electricity redirection at all meetings. All parties involved had approved the transmission line based on the Afghanistan Electricity Master Plan, But the government did not allow this decision to be implemented.

The results show that the government did not pay any attention to the economic growth of the central regions and the role of the TUTAP electricity project into the extracting of Hajigak, Copper Aynak, and Yakolang iron mines; therefore, it prevented the project from being implemented. Government, in addition to discrimination, provided inaccurate information to foreign countries, including Belgium, Germany, and Australia, to refuse to accept Hazara emigration cases in those countries. Finally, the results of this study, all the efforts of the organizers of the Enlightenment Movement to achieve the demands of the people remained unsuccessful. Nevertheless, although the government was committed to providing independent electricity to Bamyān province, movement leaders argued and rejected the decision.

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## APPENDIX

### Consent Form: (Appendix 1)

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN INTERVIEW RESEARCH

**Instructions to each participant:** Before the interview can begin, please read this form carefully and ask the investigator any question you may have. If you agree with the terms of this consent form, please sign your name, print your name, and write today's date on each of the two forms. The investigator will also sign the two forms and will give you a copy for your records.

1. I agree to participate in this academic research project conducted by [Fardin Ayar], assistant professor at school of journalism at Al-Beroni. The purpose of this study is to gather information about [Afghan women empower]. I understand that I will be one of the people interviewed for this project.
2. As a participant in this study, I understand that I have definite rights. First, my participation is voluntary. Second, I am free to withdraw from the study and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Third, if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, I am free to refuse to answer any question.
3. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation.
4. The interview will last approximately 30 - 45 minutes. The investigator will take notes during the interview. The conversation will be audio recorded for accuracy. If I do not want to be recorded, I will not be able to participate in this study.
5. The interview and any subsequent work related to it are strictly confidential. The investigator and the research team will not identify me by name in any document released for academic work. No one but the investigator or the research team will have access to the information collected during the interview. These data will be kept securely in the investigator's possession.
6. I have read and understood the foregoing information provided to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this form, and any question that I have asked has been answered to my satisfaction. If I need more information or have more questions, I make contact to, fardin.ayar2020@gmail.com I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Investigator

### Research questions: (Appendix 2)

To establish linkage to the research problems and research theory, the research questions of this study are proposed, as follows:

1. What role did Twitter play in mobilization, and women empowerment in Afghanistan?
2. How did the Twitter Storm launch in Afghanistan, and what was its purpose?
3. What was the most important event on Twitter that shaped the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan?
4. How did young girls share Twitter messages and which resources intensely mobilized people during the Twitter campaign?
5. Which resources were more involved in launching the Enlightenment Movement protests?
6. What were the messages, motivations, and Twitter content, including hashtags (#), that invited Afghanistan young women to participate in movement?
7. What was the primary purpose of the launching of the Enlightenment Movement, did the movement achieve its goals?

### Awareness letter: (Appendix 3)

Dear friends (brothers and sisters),

With warm respect, I hope you have a happy life.

Research with a qualitative approach to the study of the role of Twitter in mobilizing people and empowering women with a case study of the Enlightenment Movement in Afghanistan is underway. This research discussed new dimensions of the Enlightenment Movement and focused on Twitter's role in mobilizing people and women solidarity.

The research proposal has already designed and approved by the proposal committee. Given the importance of the research, it now requires in-depth interviews with fifteen of the organizers and members of the Enlightenment Movement, five university professors, and five new media studies specialists (Journalists) who are members of the movement.

The research results will be presented at one of the most prestigious universities in China, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, which is one of the most internationally accredited universities and including international rankings. The end of the 2019 year will also publish the PDF version of this study.

Therefore, you are sincerely asked to join this scientific research if you are interested and add to its importance. The interviewers will be contacted online; the interviewers will answer seven key questions and three sub-questions in Farsi at no cost. Before the interview, the study consent form is sent to the researcher and signed. The minimum interview time is 30 minutes and a maximum of 45 minutes.

Thanks in advance

**Your sincerely**

Fardin Ayar

**Email:** [fardinayar@sjtu.edu.cn](mailto:fardinayar@sjtu.edu.cn)

**Interview participants list: (Appendix 5)**

Participants	Position	Location	Degree	Age	Gender
P1	Enlightenment Movement (E.M) Leader	Kabul	PhD	42	Male
P2	Civil Activist	Kabul	Master	35	Male
P3	Professor	Baglan	PhD	40	Male
P4	(E.M) Member	Ghazni	Master	24	Male
P5	(E.M) leader	Kabul	Bachelor	32	Male
P6	(E.M) Member	Ghazni	Bachelor	27	Male
P7	Assistant Professor	Herat	Master	34	Male
P8	(E.M) Member	Kabul	Bachelor	33	Female
P9	(E.M) leader	Kabul	Bachelor	32	Female
P10	Freelance Journalist	Dikondi	Master	29	Male
P11	Writer and Journalist	Ghazni	Bachelor	28	Male
P12	Writer	Kabul	Bachelor	30	Male
P13	(E.M) leader	Bamyan	Master	35	Male
P14	(E.M) Activist	Ghazni	Master	27	Female
P15	(E.M) Member	Dikondi	Bachelor	33	Female
P16	(E.M) Activist	Bamyan	Bachelor	28	Male
P17	New Reporter	Ghazni	Bachelor	27	Male
P18	(E.M) Activist	Bamyan	Master	26	Male
P19	(E.M) Protester	Kabul	Bachelor	32	Male
P20	(E.M) Member	Dikondi	Master	28	Male
P21	(E.M) leader	Ghazni	Master	44	Female
P22	(E.M) Member	Kabul	Bachelor	25	Female
P23	(E.M) leader	Bamyan	PhD	37	Male
P24	(E.M) leader	Dikondi	Master	36	Male
P25	(E.M) Researcher	Bamyan	Master	32	Male



**Table 3:** Shows the descriptive statistics for In-depth Interviewees samples.**Participant's demographics information: (Appendix 6)**

Demographic	Participants	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	19	76
	Female	6	24
Age	19 and below	0	0
	20 to 30	11	44
	31 to 40	12	48
	41 and above	2	8
Province	Kabul	8	32
	Ghazni	6	24
	Bamyan	5	20
	Dikondi	4	16
	Baghlan	1	4
	Heart	1	4
Education	Bachelor degree	11	44
	Master degree	11	44
	PhD degree	3	12
Ethnic	Hazera	23	92
	Tajik	2	8
Occupation	Professor	2	8
	Researcher	1	4
	Enlightenment Movement leader	7	28
	Enlightenment Movement member	6	24
	Enlightenment Movement activist	4	16
	Journalist	2	8
	Writher	1	4
	Protesters	2	8

**Table 4:** Shows interviewees participants demographics information samples.