



Ethics and Gender in Taliban Political Thought: Women's Rights and Freedom of Speech

Chorban Nahani Pour¹, Gholam Hossein Zareh^{2*}, Hamid Reza Haghighat²

1. Ph.D. Student, Department of Political Science, Shiraz branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.

2. Department of Political Science, Shiraz branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.

Corresponding Author: Gholam Hossein Zareh, Department of Political Science, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: zarehgholamhossein@gmail.com

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Abstract

Introduction: The Taliban used religion to justify their brutal totalitarian government, which lacked any moral and religious values. In the field of ethics and gender, the Taliban's perception of women's political-social rights meant depriving them of any political-social activities. Due to the importance of ethics and gender, this research was conducted with the aim of investigating the status of women's rights and freedom of speech in the political thought of the Taliban.

Material and Methods: This is an applied descriptive-analytical type in terms of its purpose, it was among quantitative researches. The statistical population of the research was Afghan women living in Shiraz. Participants include 350 Afghan women living in Shiraz, who were selected by available sampling method. Data was gathered by researcher-made questionnaire. Finally, data were analyzed using the t-test method and SPSS software.

Results: The findings show that the awareness of Afghan women about their rights in the field of education, violence against women, marriage, freedom of speech, clothing status, medical and therapeutic services, presence in society, political participation, urban services and human rights in Afghanistan is low and very low.

Conclusion: The results showed that according to the opinion of Afghan women who had lived under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, the situation of women's rights and freedom of expression in the political thought of the Taliban was estimated to be very bad. The Taliban's goal of dealing with women and preventing their political-social services, before it is caused by Islamic Sharia or ethnic and tribal customs, is a political method and a government strategy.

Keywords: *Ethics, Women's Rights, Freedom of Expression, Political Thought, Taliban.*

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INTRODUCTION

One of the inalienable and important rights that is emphasized in the international human rights system is the right to freedom of expression. In the theoretical definition, freedom of expression is freedom of thought and belief, in other words, freedom of expression is a tool to convey thoughts and beliefs to others (1). The right to freedom of expression is generally defined by eight key components: a) Everyone enjoys it

equally and without any difference; Therefore, race, skin color, gender, language, religion, politics or any other opinion, nationality or social origin, wealth, etc. have nothing to do with benefiting from this right. b) The geographical scope of this right is unlimited and beyond borders. c) The substantive scope of this right is not limited, but wide and includes any information and opinions. d) This right includes receiving and transmitting information, ideas

and opinions; In other words, it includes the right to be heard and the right to speak. e) This right imposes a positive obligation on the parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In this direction, to ensure the observance of this right, governments are required to take necessary measures such as the establishment of laws and effective compensations for acts that violate freedom of expression. f) The method of publishing the statement is unlimited. This right supports the communication of a person's ideas using any media of his choice. g) Any type of measure taken by the government to limit the freedom of expression, directly or indirectly, is considered an interference in this right. One of the common examples of indirect attempts to limit freedom of expression is the imposition of special taxes on the media to make their activities difficult; Imposing advertisements on the media to support the government or prohibiting criticism of the government is another example of efforts to limit freedom of expression. h) The right to freedom of expression places positive duties on the ruling government to ensure the free flow of information and opinions in the society (2). In Islam, freedom of speech is not accepted as absolute, and the Creator has set a series of restrictions for freedom of speech in the Holy Quran, the violation of which causes responsibility in the hereafter and worldly (3). Women's rights are a term that refers to the freedom and rights of women at all ages, and following the frequent neglect of women's rights in history, this word has been widely spread and popular in society (4). These rights may or may not be recognized by law or traditional or moral customs in a society. The reason for the special grouping of these rights under the title of women and separating them from more general rights such as human rights is that, according to the theory, these rights are recognized for all human beings from birth, but defenders of the rights of women and girls are excluded from the scope of

this law more than men (5). Based on what was stated in the research literature on women's rights, it can be said that the topic of women's rights usually includes - and is not limited to - these items: bodily integrity and autonomy, the right to vote, the right to work, the right to equal pay for equal work. The right to property, the right to education, the right to participate in the army, the right to participate in legal contracts, and finally the rights of guardianship, marriage and religion (6). The issue of women in Islam has long been examined from the perspective of one of the following two perspectives: the first perspective is limited by a strict Islamic conservative approach, and the other is limited by Western ethnocentrism and Islamophobia. Of course, these two perceptions are in conflict, but they both reach the same intellectual impasse. It is almost impossible to imagine a discussion separately or even refer to a topic, that is, an idea that can make these different views clear, so the supporters of both sides do not accept any other opposing views or opinions (7). The above two views not only enable the existing classification of the Muslim woman as a second-class citizen, but also express her as a repulsive image in relation to modernity, civilization and freedom.

In the years when the Taliban was the dominant power in Afghanistan, the most restrictions were imposed on women (8). After capturing Kandahar and then controlling other cities of Afghanistan, the Taliban asked women not to appear in public and to leave the house only when they are fully covered (9). Then, one of the rules that the Taliban established was that women were accompanied by a mahram man in public places, that is, women could not leave the house alone, and if a woman disobeyed these rules, she would be severely punished. Therefore, women who did not have a sharia mahram or were widows had to suffer a lot even to buy a piece of dry bread. Some of the widowed women who did not have a son or a male confidant would dress their daughters

under ten years old, who had not yet reached puberty, as boys, dress them in boy's clothes, and send them out to buy necessities (10). By directly imposing severe restrictions on women, who are among the sensitive sections of society and a symbol of men's honor, the Taliban regime sends the message that it intends to control the will and power of every individual. and to state that he is able to control all aspects of the social behavior of the society, both men and women (11). According to a survey conducted in May 1996 by the United Nations, Kabul had 158 public primary schools in which 148,233 boys and 1,032,256 girls were taught by 11,208 teachers, and 7,793 of these teachers were women; Due to the high percentage of female teachers, these restrictions deprived many boys from education. Even before the Taliban, one out of every twenty Afghan women was able to read and write. This statistic shows that the Afghan culture practically excluded 95% of women from school, and the Taliban destroyed the remaining 5% (12). In response to the criticism that was directed at them, the Taliban stated that they accept the need to provide education for men and women, but they emphasize that the conditions for the implementation of this education must be provided first. Despite this, some senior Taliban officials said that girls' schools in Kabul should be reopened by the spring of 1997, just like the few opportunities that have occurred in places like Paktia, Ghazni and Kandahar, where girls' schools are almost open. However, only boys' schools were allowed to open (13). Mullah Mohammad Omar, the leader of the Taliban group, in an angry reaction to the request of the United Nations to respect issues such as human rights and women's rights by the Taliban, considered it equal to blasphemy and promotion of prostitution (14). This can clearly define the political ideological position of this group. Now that the Taliban has taken over the government of Afghanistan again, and also since

there is limited knowledge of the political and social opinions of this group, it is very important to conduct research in this field. Although this article is focused on the Taliban's political thought about human rights and freedom of speech, it is necessary to carry out such researches so that its valuable results can be made available to organizations and political groups in the country for the development of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The issue of research becomes important due to the fact that due to the passage of time after this group came to power, the scientific knowledge obtained from the research about their political thought and the approach adopted by them is small and limited. In particular, there is no permission to publish documents in this field and there are few resources available in this regard. Therefore, the knowledge about this political group is mostly due to the knowledge obtained from the fighting and jihad records of this group based on political reports and audio and visual media and there is less knowledge about the philosophy of governance and political thought of this group that is the result of the lived experiences of the people who deserve this government. Therefore, in this research, the status of women's rights and freedom of expression in the Taliban's political thought has been investigated by taking advantage of the participation of Afghans who lived in Afghanistan during the Taliban's rule.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The method of the current research is of applied descriptive type and analytical type in terms of its purpose, and in terms of the type and method of data collection and analysis, it was among quantitative researches. Also, in terms of method, this research is one of the descriptive survey researches in which the questionnaire tool was used to collect the research data.

The statistical population of the research was Afghan women living in Shiraz. Since immigrants are often illegal, there is no accurate statistics of their number. Therefore, the sample size of the research was considered to be 350 Afghan women living in Shiraz, who were selected by available sampling method. The research data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire that included 11 questions that were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 for very little to 5 for very much). The research questionnaire is presented in the attached section of the article. In order to check the validity and reliability of the questions of the research questionnaire, the questions were given to 30 people from the samples. The validity of the questions was confirmed using the content validity method. The reliability of the questionnaire questions was also more than 0.70, which indicated the confirmation of the reliability of the questionnaire questions. In the hypothesis test, the one-sample T-test is used. In the one sample t-test, it examines the difference between having or not having the average of a sample with a fixed number. In this article, the average awareness of Afghan women in the mentioned areas (their rights in the fields of education, marriage, treatment, etc.) is compared with the expected average (which is 3

according to the 5-choice Likert scale). and then hypotheses are assessed. If the calculated absolute value of t is greater than the critical value of absolute value of 1.96, then with a probability of 99% there is a significant difference between the obtained average and the expected average (3) and vice versa. SPSS software was used for analysis.

RESULTS

First, data normality was examined in an analysis of the data derived from the first questionnaire of the study using SPSS software. For this purpose, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used. Because the significance level of all variables was greater than the error level of 0.05, it was found that research data had normal distribution, so parametric tests, such as t-test could be used for mean comparison. The research hypotheses were set as follows:

$$H0: \mu \leq X$$

$$H1: \mu > X$$

The questions of the research questionnaire are then analyzed based on the one-sample t-test to compare the mean value of the obtained score with its statistical mean (based on the Likert scale 3). The obtained results have been presented for each question herein.

Table 1: Statistical information obtained from the analysis

hypotheses /index	N	Mean	SD	Measured t	df	Sig.
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to education	350	2.73	0.51	2.47	349	0.08
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to violence against women	350	1.59	0.25	-5.8	349	0.001
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to marriage	350	2.08	0.77	-4.37	349	0.146
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to employment	350	.039	0.47	6.42	349	0.0005
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to freedom of speech	350	1.97	0.84	8.46	349	0.257
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to clothing	350	3.54	0.27	11.27	349	0.097
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to medical services	350	2.83	0.17	4.39	349	0.018
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to be present in society	350	3.21	0.55	0.42	349	0.007
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to political participation	350	1.42	0.33	9.27	349	0.068
Afghan women's awareness level of their rights to urban services	350	2.03	0.19	0.77	349	0.178
Afghan women's awareness level of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission	350	1.26	0.94	10.36	349	0.261

Hypothesis 1: Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of education.

Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (2.47) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.08, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, a significant difference between calculated and expected (3) mean values was confirmed based on the 99% probability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, that is, Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of education and the measured mean value was significantly lower than the expected mean value implying that Afghan women have low awareness of their rights to education.

Hypotheses 2: Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of violence against women

Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (5.8) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.001, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, no significant difference existed between calculated and expected (3) mean values based on the 99% probability, so the null hypothesis was accepted, implying that Afghan women are not aware of their rights to violence against women.

Hypothesis 3: Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding marriage.

Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (2.47) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.146, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, a significant difference between calculated and expected (3) mean values was confirmed based on the 99% probability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, that is, Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of marriage and the measured mean value was significantly lower than the expected mean value, implying that Afghan women have low and very low awareness of their marriage rights.

Hypothesis 4: Investigation of Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding employment.

Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (6.42) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.0005, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, no significant difference existed between calculated and expected (3) mean values based on the 99% probability, so the null hypothesis was accepted, implying that Afghan women are not aware of their employment rights.

Hypothesis 5: Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding freedom of expression.

Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (8.46) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.257, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, a significant difference between calculated and expected (3) mean values was confirmed based on the 99% probability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of freedom of expression and the measured mean value was significantly lower than the expected mean value, implying that Afghan women have a very low awareness of their rights to freedom of speech.

Hypothesis 6: Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding the status of clothing.

Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (11.27) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.097, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, a significant difference between calculated and expected (3) mean values was confirmed based on the 99% probability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, that is, Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of clothing status and the measured mean value was significantly lower than the expected mean value implying that Afghan women have moderate awareness of their rights to clothing.

Hypothesis 7: Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding medical and treatment services. Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (4.39) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.018, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, a significant difference between calculated and expected (3) mean values was confirmed based on the 99% probability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of medical and treatment services and the measured mean value was significantly lower than the expected mean value implying that Afghan women have low to moderate awareness of their rights to medical services.

Hypothesis 8: Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding their presence in society. Table 8 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (0.42) is smaller than the critical value of absolute value 1.96. Hence, no significant difference existed between calculated and expected (3) mean values based on the 99% probability, so the null hypothesis was accepted, implying that Afghan women are not aware of their rights to presence in society.

Hypothesis 9: Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding political participation. Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (9.27) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.068, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, a significant difference between calculated and expected (3) mean values was confirmed based on the 99% probability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, that is, Afghan women are aware of their rights in the field of political participation and the measured mean value was significantly lower than the expected mean value, implying that Afghan women have very low awareness of their rights to political participation.

Hypothesis 10: Afghan women are aware of their rights regarding municipal services.

Table 10 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (0.77) is smaller than the critical value of the absolute value of 1.96. Hence, no significant difference existed between calculated and expected (3) mean values based on the 99% probability, so the null hypothesis was accepted, implying that Afghan women are not aware of their rights to urban services.

Hypothesis 11: Afghan women are aware of the Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan.

Table 1 indicates that the absolute value of measured t (10.36) is greater than the critical value of absolute value 1.96, and its significance level equals 0.261, which is greater than 0.01 ($P > 0.01$). Hence, a significant difference between calculated and expected (3) mean values was confirmed based on the 99% probability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, that is, Afghan women are aware of their rights in the area of the Human Rights Commission and

The measured mean value was significantly lower than the expected mean value implying that Afghan women have very low awareness of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned, this study investigates the situation of women's rights and freedom of speech in the political thought of the Taliban. Under the opinion of Afghan women who lived under the Taliban Governance in Afghanistan, the results showed that the situation of women's rights and freedom of speech in the political thought of the Taliban was estimated at a very bad level. In line with the results of studies (15), it was concluded that the goal of the Taliban to struggle with women and deprive them from political-social services is not just rooted in Islam or ethnic and tribal rituals but is a political measure and governance strategy. The reason is that in any authoritarian governance that faces many oppositions and risks, the government can limit

or restrict half of the society members for many excuses such as sacred sensitivities of people. Under such suffocation and terror as well as imposed social, political, and cultural restrictions, many aspects of the lives of people can be controlled. As occurs during foreign wars and the fear or terror in the domestic atmosphere, the regime can suppress many internal opponents. In this way, the world of Islam did not condemn such extremist actions of the Taliban, so many Afghans, including women, became disappointed. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab governments of the Persian Gulf even did not publish a statement for the necessary rights of women to education and observing human rights in Afghanistan, while Iran had a serious position in defending women's rights in Islam.

Because no certain administrative and formal rules monitor the performance of Afghanistan's schools, children of any age can enter the schools in any semester of the year. However, children can enter the school when are 5 years old and can continue studying until the Mulla (teacher) can teach them, while girls are usually banned from going to school when get older than 11 or 12. Other studies has emphasized these findings (16). Another important result of this study that is consistent with findings of other authors (17) indicated that a high percentage of Afghan women are illiterate, and the oppression of women is highly rooted in this illiteracy. Hence, the most important measure for improving the political and social status of Afghan women is planning to promote their education level. Lack of public education and academic growth cause low cultural levels and non-scientific perceptions of the political-social status and rights of individuals. The current culture in the social relations of Afghan society is one of the significant factors causing the fall of women's human position in the society under the Taliban governance.

Ultimately, the research results showed that Afghan women need awareness and education to gradually change the mental images shaped in the frame of male-female duality that considers women naturally less capable with lower talent than men. The most responsibility is on the shoulders of women to change such schemas. Afghan women have shown that can change the conditions although many attempts are required to achieve equal social and political rights among Afghan men and women, so a long way is ahead.

CONCLUSION

After the 5-year fall of the Taliban (late 2001), many efforts were made to improve the social and political status of women. Although there have been many years of global concern about the social and political situation of Afghan women in terms of human rights and their violation by the Taliban. Currently, due to the severe conditions of the disaster, political violence and patriarchal government, the social political life situation of Afghan women has become the center of international attention. In this regard, for the first time outside the United Nations, women from the first level of the world's political assemblies to famous people, athletes, artists and media figures have called for the full recognition of women's rights in Afghanistan and their pressure in this field increased day by day. The evidence showed that after the establishment of the new Afghan government, positive steps were taken to establish democracy as well as implement social justice and achieve women's rights by solving their legal problems (18). The government and government institutions, with the help of the United Nations, mobilized for the participation of women in the political, socio-economic and cultural fields and took measures, but with the return of the Taliban to the head of the Afghan government, the above efforts were unsuccessful. The results of the research showed that according to the opinion of Afghan women who had lived

under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, the situation of women's rights and freedom of expression in the political thought of the Taliban was estimated to be very bad and the Taliban's goal of dealing with women and preventing them from political-social services, before it is derived from Islamic law or ethnic and tribal customs, is a political method and a government strategy.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to observe ethical principles and for the confidentiality of information, it was avoided to name the companies, and by introducing the references, the scientific, ethical and trusteeship principles were observed.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest observing all ethics issues in the research, including plagiarism, publication or submission of a paper more than once, repeating others' researchers, data fabrication and data falsification, reference creation or reference falsification, uninformed consent of subject, abuse, etc.

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