



Women's Presence in the Afghan Media (After 2001 Revolution - 2021)

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Abstract: Women have been present in the media in all positions and scenes, and this role and their presence are unprecedented in the history of women and the media. By using the freedoms and opportunities given in democracy, women were able to play a better role in the media, and this could be counted as a great and valuable change. This role and presence of women in the media have always been approved and praised by the international community. This was an achievement and a point of pride for the Afghan government, and it wanted to continue to support them. It is not only the presence of women that is at stake here but also the role and opportunities for women. The challenges and problems that prevented it from playing an effective role in the field of media and the shortcomings that were made by the responsible parties in this area are also important and debatable. In this study, we try to examine the issue of the 20-year presence of women in the decades after the 2001 transformation and the defeat of the Taliban until their resurgence in Afghanistan. To achieve this, research uses the content analysis method to clarify the main goal, which is to determine the presence and role of women in the last two decades.

Keywords: Afghan women, Presence, Revolution, Media, Taliban, Two decades.

I. INTRODUCTION

The people of Afghanistan were given some of their basic rights and freedoms after the 2001 revolution and the US invasion of Afghanistan to establish a government based on democracy and freedom. As part of Afghan society, women also enjoyed this right and freedom to some extent. Considering the presence and participation of women as a result of using the conditions and opportunities of democracy in all areas, they can be considered an active part of society. The presence, role, and activity of women in the twenty years of democracy is considered an important and valuable achievement that the government of Afghanistan and the international community have always reaffirmed. This presence, participation, and activity in the media are also undeniable. Women have gradually made progress in this area over the past twenty years. After the revolution of 2001 women's rights were once again championed, schools were formed, infrastructure was repaired, a hopeful political system was implemented, and women's rights were championed by using these rights and privileges women presented and activated in the media again and very colorful than past. The expanding number of female journalists in the media gives women more opportunities.

To affect the public conversation, opinion, and legislation. In late 2012, women made up one-quarter of all national media professionals in Afghanistan. The mainstream media plays a significant role in stoking discussion regarding women's and girls' roles in society. Conservative attitudes on delicate topics like domestic violence, child marriage, and the role of women outside the house are being slowly and not so softly shifted by radio and television shows. However, being a female journalist may be risky employment.

In this paper, we look at the topic of women's presence in Afghanistan during the past 20 years, from the 2001 change through the Taliban's defeat and revival. The content analysis approach is used in this study to define the major purpose, which is to determine the existence and role of women in the previous two decades.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The issue of women and the media has not been extensively explored in the research literature on Afghan women. In general, it is not possible to find comprehensive and general sources for this title in the research literature. But the details of this topic can be found in other variables, such as the type of media and other functions that have changed the role of women in the media and their presence. Here, as an example, we briefly introduce some of this important literature.

Women's Participation and Portrayal in Afghan Media; by Fatema Hussaini, in Women and Public Policy Journal in 2020. The nature of women's engagement in Afghan media is investigated in this article. This study draws on current literature as well as in-depth interviews with six individuals to achieve this goal (four women and two men). The article concluded with two topics: women's engagement and representation in the media of Afghanistan. Most of the rules and norms imposed on women during the Taliban regime, and talking as a woman, are still in effect in some of the provinces where the Taliban, conservative religious leaders, and other like-minded people live.

To Veil the Threat of Terror"; Afghan Women and the "Clash of Civilizations" in the Imagery of the U.S. War on Terrorism; by Dana L. Cloud published by Quarterly Journal of Speech in 2004. The impact of widely publicized photos of Afghan people in bolstering popular support for the United States' war in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2002 is examined in this article.

Development On-Air: Women's Radio Production in Afghanistan; by Sarah Kamal, Oxfam International, the MIT Wilson Awards, 2007. A study specifically looked into the October 2003 opening of a women's radio station in Herat, Afghanistan. The finding and results show that; pre-packaged programs prepared and disseminated by media development organizations were mixed in with in-house radio programming and the Kabul radio programming section was compelled to create for a divided audience since they had little influence over final airing decisions at radio stations.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research tries to use a qualitative method for finding out complete and perfect results and conclusions for analyzing this new article about Afghan women.

Library research; in review and overview on research background relevant topics and titles completed by library assessments. The introduction or brief information part on women and the peace process was completed and explained using the library technique. This information comes from English library resources, and it aids in the completion of many perspectives as well as operational and basic definitions.

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	9	75 %
	Male	3	25%
Age	18-24	4	33.3%
	25-30	5	41.7%
	31-35	2	16.7%
	36-40	1	8.3%
	41-50	0	0%
Educational	Diploma (high school)	1	8.3%
	Degree (Bachelor)	5	41.7%
	Certificate (Master)	5	41.7%
	PhD	1	8.3%
Province	Afghanistan (Balkh)	9	75%
	Abroad	3	25%
Working Experience in the Media	Yes	6	50%
	No	6	50%
	Yes	6	50%

Presence and Cooperation Experience in the Media	No	6	50%
Total		12	100%

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents (Interviewees)

Qualitative method (Interview); the written interview method for collecting the responses of general people including men and women from several provinces of Afghanistan and even out by considering their media background as a worker in media or partner with media as a guest or other presence experience. The interview, which includes seven main questions and covers the study's basic indicators, has been responded to and analyzed with the help of Quirkos qualitative data analysis software.

IV. AFGHAN WOMEN'S PRESENCE AND ROLE IN THE MEDIA (AFTER 2001 REVALUATION)

After the revolution of 2001 women's rights were once again championed, schools were formed, infrastructure was repaired, a hopeful political system was implemented, and women's rights were championed by using these rights and privileges women presented and activated in the media again and very colorful than past. President Karzai backed the expansion of the media as a foundation of the new democracy, and he even supported proposals to grant RTA independence at first. The development of a robust commercial media sector was advocated by the Americans. The Europeans favored a more diversified media as a means of bolstering civil society's power. The sets were found from their obscurity locations and repairs Businesses began to open the Bazaars for the benefit of the people to reconnect with the natural world. Afghanistan's media has progressed significantly. Within Afghanistan and among the country's well-wishers, there is a continued commitment to the establishment of a free and independent media capable of holding authorities accountable, facilitating national and civic discussion, and reporting on the country's progress. The governments had created a thriving and congested broadcasting sector, with the majority of outlets being privately held. There were dozens of TV networks and more than 170 FM radio stations before August 2021.

The media's potential is further hampered by Afghanistan's poor literacy rates, which vary from 29 percent for males to less than 12.6 percent for women. Drama series, poetry, geography, and special reporting on a variety of development issues, including women's health and agriculture.

The USA has spent more than \$500,000 training female journalists and filmmakers, some of whom have produced films such as "Afghanistan Unveiled," a documentary about Taliban abuses against women, and "If I Stand Up," a documentary about women's political participation through running for office and going to vote.

Women's leadership abilities should be encouraged across the board, especially in the areas mentioned above, as well as in non-governmental organizations and the media. Women's leadership is especially crucial in civil society groups and the media, including social media, beyond independent watchdog agencies like the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. The Afghan government has continued to make it easier for women to be represented in the media, both as newsreaders and in the transmission of female acts (artists, singers, and so on).

Although the opportunities provided for women were unprecedented and valuable in the last two decades of democracy, there were still great challenges and obstacles for women in terms of presence, work, and role in the media, which calls into question the impact and meaning of this opportunity. As abnormal security conditions, work, and other threats. According to IFJ International, there were over 10,000 journalists and TV presenters in Afghanistan in 2014, with about 1,500 of them being women. They are frequently targeted and assassinated by anti-government terrorists and their families. As shown by Center for the Protection of Afghan Women Journalists statistics in 2020, almost 1,741 women work in Afghan media outlets at the moment. However, as threats against women have increased in various sections of the nation, several female journalists have been forced to resign.

The expanding number of female journalists in the media gives women more opportunities to affect the public conversation, opinion, and legislation. In late 2012, women made up one-quarter of all national media professionals in Afghanistan. The mainstream media plays a significant role in stoking discussion regarding women's and girls' roles in society. Conservative attitudes on delicate topics like domestic violence, child marriage, and the role of women outside the house are being slowly and not so softly shifted by radio and television shows. However, being a female journalist may be risky employment; 10 female journalists have been slain in the last ten years. (Powell, June 2014)

V. AFGHAN WOMEN IN THE MEDIA CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LAST TWO DECADES

Following the revolution of 2001, women's rights were once again championed, schools were established, infrastructure was restored, an optimistic political system was introduced, and women's rights were championed by presenting and activating these rights and privileges in the media in a more colorful manner than before. Women used the fundamental rights of freedom and work for presence and playing role in the media.

The last two decades have seen democracy as a major achievement for the media, as well as for women in all areas. Although everything was unprecedented and valuable, there were still many shortcomings and obstacles that could not be ignored. Even though women have had unprecedented and valuable chances in the previous two decades of democracy, they still face significant hurdles and impediments in terms of visibility, work, and position in the media, which puts into question the impact and significance of this opportunity.

To show how the shadow of war is weighing on the Afghan media, it is enough to look at the sacrifices that the war has made to the media and journalists and the current state of the media community. In the last 20 years, 133 journalists and media workers have been killed and dozens injured in war and violence in Afghanistan. According to watchdog reports, the targeted killing of journalists by the Taliban now threatens media freedom. Security, violence and unprotecting, gender discrimination, economic and unstable

work conditions, the information providing problems with the government, and cultural and religious beliefs, are the main barriers to the challenges discussion for women in media.

According to a survey, more than 300 women journalists and media workers have left their jobs due to factors such as security threats, especially the recent targeted killings, financial problems of the media due to the outbreak of the Corona virus, and low salaries. Have lost. Figures for the first six months of 1399 showed that across the country, 1,678 women worked in various media outlets. But this figure has now reached 1377 tons, which shows a decrease of 18 %.

Out of 1377 women who are now active in the media, 321 are journalists and the rest are employed in various media sectors such as media production and administration. According to the findings, most female media workers are in Kabul, followed by Herat, and third in Balkh. Logar is the only province where only one woman is involved in media activities.

In 9 provinces, including Ghor, Nimroz, Sar-e-Pul, Laghman, Parwan, Kapisa, Uruzgan, Wardak, and Logar, there are no female journalists, and in these provinces, only female media workers are employed in various sectors. There are no women in the media in the five provinces of Afghanistan, including Nuristan, Kunar, Paktia, Paktika, and Zabul. According to the survey, in the last six months, two female journalists who previously worked in Zabul and Paktia provinces have now resigned for security reasons. (BakhtarAgency, 2021)

It should be noted that in the current solar year, four female journalists and media workers were targeted and killed in direct attacks, and this has harmed women's journalism across Afghanistan.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) released a report on Friday (September 17th) stating that since the Taliban took office in Kabul and the Afghan provinces, about 153 media outlets have been shut down and women journalists have been fired.

The closure of information systems and growing threats and violence against media workers have also been among the consequences of the Taliban coming to power in the country, according to the international body. Earlier, more than 153 media outlets in 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces had closed down, the Times reported.

The Federation of Journalists said in a statement; "The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan has affected the activities of more than 7,000 media workers," "Many of these people have refused to continue working, have gone into hiding, and are afraid for their lives and those of their families." Afghan journalists are also in danger of being attacked and retaliated against by more than a thousand criminals released from prison under the Taliban regime, prisoners whose news is generally covered by journalists. Many media outlets have also been shut down due to economic problems and lack of funding. (Salari, 2021)

VI. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF 20 YEARS OF WOMEN'S PRESENCE IN THE MEDIA (FINDING AND DISCUSSING)

Presence and evaluation of women in media; based on the results obtained from the information obtained from the interviewees, it can be seen that the role and presence of women in the media during the last two decades have significantly changed. Many respondents to this question emphasized that the role and presence of women were significant and valuable. On the other hand, another thing that can be obtained from the analysis of this information is that the less agreeing group also emphasizes the same thing, but in addition to the problems, shortcomings, and challenges that factors outside the subject and involved in the subject had They also point out the absence of women in major media positions and the lack of immunity for female journalists, as well as gender discrimination in media organizations and society. Thus, by analyzing the content, it is found that the two options can be here and those are; "very Bold (colorful and strongly positive)" with 70%, and "bold but with problems (somehow good) with 30%.

Convincement and Satisfaction with the Presence of the Women: Analyzing the information obtained from the interviewed audience gives us these two options, which show that about 37% of them are satisfied with this role and the presence of women in the media, and describe it convincingly and decisively.

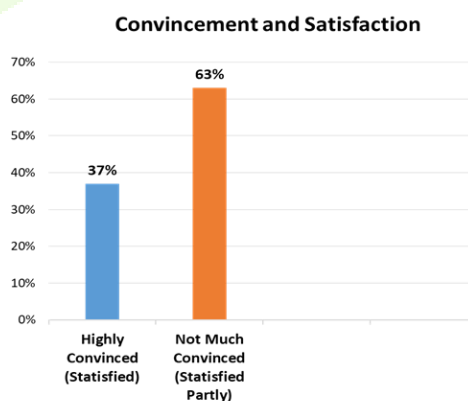


Figure 1: Convincement and Satisfaction

Many others do not agree with this view, and they consider this role satisfactory, although they did not describe it in strong words, and many shortcomings and problems, such as the symbolic reading of the presence of women, their passivity, and weakness, their absence in playing the ideal role that they should have taken the opportunity to express, giving more chance and value to men in the media than women, lack of confidence and trust on women capacities and abilities that cause to weak and unexpected presence. Thus approximately 63% of them come, in this case, they have gathered in a relatively agreeable manner.

Valuation of Given Opportunities to Afghan Women: From the analysis and content of the interviews, it is concluded that theories should be divided into three categories. One group strongly agrees and considers these opportunities valuable and sufficient, another group accurately describes these opportunities and discusses the existing challenges, and a third group emphasizes the challenges more restrictedly. And they see them as the cause of destroying and weakening opportunities, and they have a dissenting and critical view on this.



Figure 2: Opportunities Valuation

As a result, two similar options “great opportunities” and “good opportunities alongside challenges” both with 35% and 39%, on the other side the “not many opportunities” with 26% coded and counted.

Challenges of Working in the Media for Women: in this question, the interviewees were asked about the challenges and problems that existed for women in the media, and each of them mentioned different cases. The answers can be classified into seven different categories in terms of theorem and subject. The results show that there is not much difference between the options, and a percentage is divided between the numbers of options for each of these challenges.

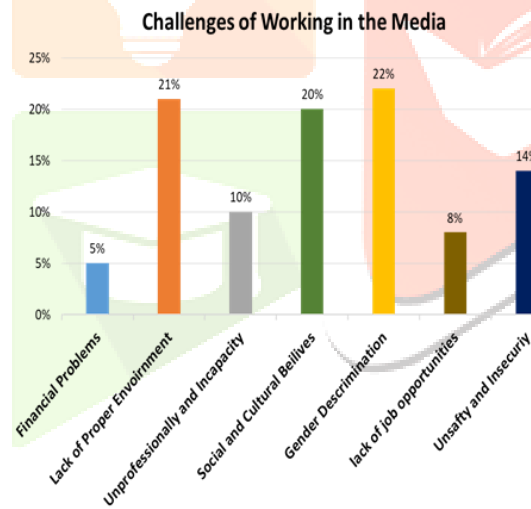


Figure 3: Challenges of Working in the Media

The “gender discrimination” (22%), “lack of proper environment” (21%), and “social and cultural beliefs” are the three top options that have similar percentages, regularly the “unsafety and insecurity” (14%), “unprofessionally and incapacity” (10%) and “financial problem” option are the rest mentioned and coded classes and topics which pointed by respondents.

Played Role of Afghan Government and International Community in Case of Women in the Media: The results of the analysis of the interviews show that many believe that the opportunities provided by the Afghan government and the international community to women over the past twenty years have not been convincing in the media. Although they have emphasized their supportive nature, they have not been satisfied with it, and the option in which this content can be collected has a higher percentage than another similar option, which agrees and can be counted and calculated, and another option that somehow denies it and believes that this role and responsibility of the government and the international community has not been enough.

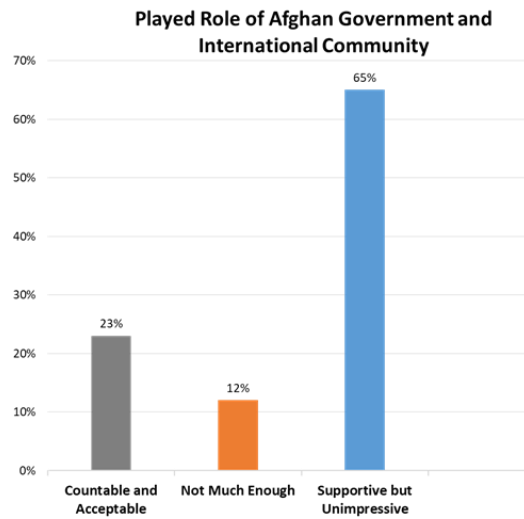


Figure 4: Played Role of Afghan Government and International Community

Most respondents agree that the role was “supportive but unimpressive” 65%, and 20% agreed with “countable and acceptable”, while 12% in the opposite party with “not much enough”.

Future Fate and Chance of Afghan Women in Case of Presence in the Media: This section asks about the beliefs and assumptions about the future of women in the media, taking into account the current situation, and the audience answered this question in an interview with three different beliefs and options. Material analysis of the answers reveals that a large number of people see this future as vague and uncertain and at the same time frustrating, while others see this future as challenging and difficult to predict while describing it as disturbing. Another group is optimistic and has found women committed to maintaining their gains.

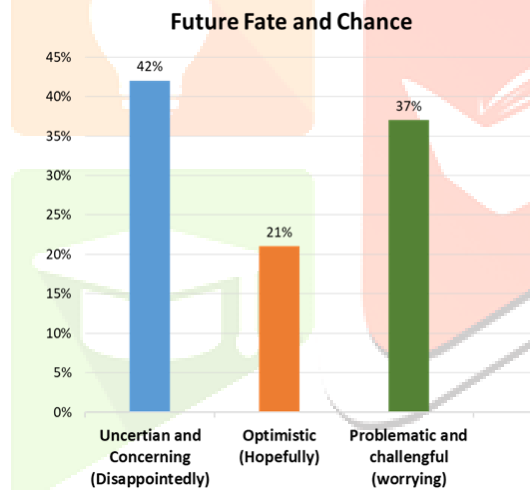


Figure 5: Future Fate and Chance

42% with “uncertain and concerning (disappointedly)”, 37% with “problematic and challenge full (worrying)”, and 21% with “optimistic (hopefully)”.

VII. CONCLUSION

The role and presence of women over the past twenty years, using the opportunity given to women after the 2001 transformation, is highlighted in the field of media. This role and presence in all fields have been unprecedented, but in the field of the media, it has been a special and valuable moment. Although this presence and role have been associated with many problems and challenges, women still used this opportunity to attend and play a good role, so this presence and role are considered one of the most important values and achievements of the last two decades.

Despite the active and significant presence of women in the media, their presence and role have not been very convincing. In addition to the general challenges in Afghan society, the challenges faced by female employees in the media have been greater and more serious. This issue has various dimensions, including the insecure physical and mental environment for all media employees, especially women, and it can be considered as a reason for being passive and less present in the media. In this way, the role was played as well as possible, but it was not very convincing.

Even though the valuable opportunities that have been created for women during these years of democracy, there have been more and more serious challenges and obstacles, and these challenges have made more opportunities less important and usable. Lack of a suitable environment in the community as well as within media organizations, low professional capacity, restrictive social and cultural beliefs, gender discrimination in society and media organizations, in addition to insecurity and immunity for women employees in the media, can be considered challenges.

The context, opportunities, and conditions revived by the international community and the Afghan government for women in terms of media presence have always been valid and accountable, yet this role of the international community and the Afghan government is merely supportive. And because of the major challenges in Afghanistan, this opportunity and the support from them were not as effective in the presence and role of women as expected.

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