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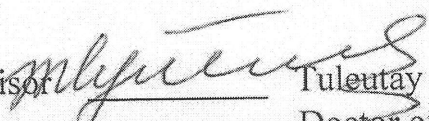
Fresha Hemmati

SITUATION OF WOMEN IN MODERN AFGHANISTAN

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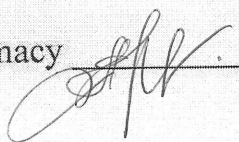
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NORMATIVE REFERENCES

- “The mass media law in Afghanistan”, adopted in 2006.
- “The constitution law of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan”, adopted in January 2004.
- “Labor law of Afghanistan, no 35”, adopted in 2007
- “Access to information law of Afghanistan”, adopted in 2017
- “Law of human rights”
- “The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)” adopted in 1987
- “Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted in 1948.

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1. **TV** - Television
2. **MoWA** - Ministry of Women's Affairs
3. **IRoA** - Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
4. **IEA** - Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan
5. **UN** - United Nations
6. **ISAF** - International Security Assistance Force
7. **USAID** - United States Agency for International Development
8. **WIE** - Women in Economy
9. **WIG** - Women in Government
10. **WLD** - Women's Leadership Development
11. **SIGAR** - Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
12. **CSO** - Center of Special Operations
13. **RSF** - Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters without Borders)
14. **FM** - Frequency Modulation
15. **CEO** - Chief Executive Officer
16. **DVD** - Digital Video Disc
17. **AIJA** - Afghanistan International Journalists Association
18. **GMPP** - Global Media Monitoring Project
19. **UDHR** - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of study

The emergence of the new democracy raised people's interest in media in Afghanistan where TV is the most popular platform to consume video content. The preponderance of evidence indicates that television is as relevant as ever—and it will likely remain so for the foreseeable future in Afghanistan. In a country where representing TV programs by a woman is taboo, women on TV screens played an important role in terms of democracy development in Afghanistan. They have faced many challenges due to the patriarchal norms and traditions leading to a far worse consequence where women and girls' basic rights are neglected in areas such as privacy, education, and self-sufficiency. This is far more severe in Afghanistan when investigated about the condition of the Afghan women who are suffering from the civil war in their society. Therefore, this study elucidates the role of female TV presenters/journalists in the development of democracy in Afghanistan and the main challenges to mapping out a modern Afghanistan. This includes the main challenges and impacts in terms of democracy development during the last two decades of democracy (2001-2021) in Afghanistan. Additionally covering the current situation of female TV presenters/journalists under the ongoing government of Is the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

Civil wars and revolutions are instruments that can be utilized by individuals seeking eagerly to bring a change to a country. However, when existing structures are radically converted from one form to another, such change comes at a high cost for society. Afghanistan as a third-world country (0.498 rates of Human rights index, 2022) is not an exception, where Afghan women paid the high cost for what went wrong with Afghanistan during this interminable war.

Women are the backbone of the society where they also play an equal role as men. They also account for about half of the population of the world and they should be given equal status and rights in society as men [1]. A woman can do it all, from keeping the home safe and tidy to building a professional career. Their abilities should not be discounted because of their gender, and they should be given an equal chance to demonstrate their abilities. Additionally, the involvement of women in all aspects of the communities is their basic human right, but researches show they are underrepresented in many aspects around the world [2].

One of the strong points of the last 20 years of democracy is known as the reform of Afghanistan's media. It is a critical component in the establishment of a more plural and

accountable society. One of the challenges is that Afghanistan is a country with strong local customs and a tenacious tribal culture with mostly rural and uneducated people [3]. Therefore, the developments occurred have raised tension and pressure in convincing the people that the presence of women in media is an inseparable part of modern society. [4].

Female TV presenters/journalists were portrayed positively in terms of roles, attitudes, behavior, and attractiveness according to the public theory. These dramas frequently have the most audience compared to male-presented dramas [5].

This study was conducted through the lens of Afghan female TV presenters/journalists to move forward from the dark side of Afghanistan to a bright future by breaking cultural norms and barriers.

Research Problem:

This study is essential mainly due to the absence of any qualitative research conducted to investigate the role of female TV presenters/journalists in terms of democracy development and the main challenges of mapping out a modern Afghanistan. Additionally covering the current situation of female TV presenters/journalists under the ongoing government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). This being said, this is the first study on the role of Afghan female TV presenters/journalists in developing democracy in Afghanistan and their challenges and attempts to pave the pathway for more research in the future. The finding of this thesis builds a contribution to filling the knowledge gap regarding the role of Afghan female TV presenters/journalists in the development of democracy in Afghanistan. In general, this study enhances public knowledge about the role of Afghan female TV presenters/journalists in mapping out a modern Afghanistan.

Aims and objectives

The object of the study: The role of women in the development of democracy and their challenges in Afghanistan.

The subject of the study: The role of Afghan female TV presenters/journalists in the development of democracy and the main challenges during their media activities from 2001 to 2021.

Aim of the study: To demonstrate the role of female TV presenters/journalists and their main challenges in terms of democracy development in Afghanistan.

Research Questions

Main Question: What was the role of female TV presenters/journalists and the challenges in terms of democracy development in Afghanistan?

Sub Questions

RQ1: What has changed in Afghanistan as a result of Afghan women's presence on television channels?

RQ2: What were the main problems that female TV presenters/journalists faced while working in Afghan local and international television channels?

RQ3: What are the rules that the new Talib government has imposed on female journalists and television hosts?

RQ4: Is it allowed for Afghan women to appear on television channels under the current Taliban government? (15th August 2021- now).

RQ5: What aspects of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) need to be improved in order to improve the situation of female television presenters and journalists?

The organization of the Thesis

The thesis will start with the introduction part, which includes, the relevance of the study, research problem, aims, and objectives of the study. The second part contains a thorough literature review. In this chapter, the researcher studied prior studies regarding the role of Television in deepening democracy in the world. Additionally, the impact of female TV presenters/journalists in the development of democracy worldwide. The theoretical framework is also discussed in this part. The third part of the thesis provides in-depth knowledge about the research method and data collection. The fourth part is consisting of two chapters, the first chapter provides the data analysis of ten in-depth interviews with Afghan female TV presenters/journalists and the discussion of the research, and the second chapter contains the conclusion and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Role of women in developing democracy worldwide

Women's full participation in national and local politics, in the economy, in academia, and in the media are fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace in all contexts during peace, through conflicts, post-conflicts, and during political transitions. If a political system neglects women's participation and if it evades accountability for women's rights, it fails half of its citizens. Indeed, true democracy is based on the realization of gender equality and human rights. If one of these fades, so do the others. Weak democracy remains a major barrier to the exercise of human rights. Likewise, the failure to respect human rights is an impediment to effective democracy [6].

“While women's political engagement strengthens democracy, the opposite is also true: democracy is an incubator for gender equality.” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarked during a discussion on gender equality and democracy hosted at UN Headquarters.

Women empowerment is critical to ensure that decisions are credible and legitimate. The benefits of women and men sharing decision-making and leadership power are felt across their communities.

Women continue to be underrepresented as voters, party leaders, and elected officials while accounting for half of the world's population. Women make up just over 20% of legislators worldwide. However, data suggests that as more women are elected, countries' living standards improve, priorities for families, women, and minorities are addressed, and citizens' trust in democracy grows. More female legislators led to anti-discrimination, domestic violence, inheritance, and child support laws in locations as different as Croatia, Morocco, Rwanda, South Africa, and Timor-Leste [7].

Media channels, particularly Television as a developing tool of democracy in the world and in Afghanistan

Research shows that 5.41 billion people are watching television as of February 2022 [8].

Given television's penetration into everyday life, the controversy surrounding it is not surprising. The controversy intensifies in the light of debates over its social and political functions. There are of course voracious readers, movie fanatics, web surfers, magazine

devotees, and those who never turn off the radio. But for many people television dominates the media diet. For almost everyone, television viewing begins before we develop the tastes and selective patterns of consumption that we apply to other media, usage patterns for other media are informed by the fact of being born into households where television is virtually a member of the family. Unlike print media, television does not require literacy. Unlike theatrical movies, television runs almost continuously and can be watched without leaving one's own home and without payment on a programmed basis. Unlike radio, television can show as well as tell. Unlike the Internet, television does not require computer skills. Most of all Gabner and Gross argued that television is different from other media in its centralized mass-production and ritualistic use of a coherent set of images and messages produced to appeal virtually to the entire population [9].

The global media's strength is a force that has an impact on all of our lives. The world's media broadcasts on radio and television in some form or another every minute of every day, 365 days a year. Naturally, not everything that the world's media broadcasts and prints are well accepted. Consider the number of injunctions, libel actions, and claims of invasion of privacy that have made the news. We'll look at how women shape the media, their impact, and the people who are in charge of creating both our perceptions of world events as well as amusing and teaching us in this chapter. We'll also explore how women are portrayed in the media and in fields such as the news, which used to be a no-go zone for women. [10].

Afghanistan is a country that has experienced more autocratic media systems and fewer opportunities for media growth in the country [11].

After the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, when the new democratic government was established in Afghanistan, new doors opened for media progress in the country [12].

According to Mosazai (2018), in the past one and a half-decade of freedom of speech and the emergence of independent and social media are significant achievements for the Afghan government.

In the meantime, Television has played a significant role in Afghanistan's fledgling democracy between 2001 and 2021. There has been a significant media openness, with Afghanistan joining the mainstream of South Asian media. Afghans have started accessing a growing network of FM radio stations as well as a multi-channel television world. As of 2nd September 2021, there were more than 200 local and international TV

channels in Afghanistan of which 96 were active in Kabul and 107 others in provinces [13].

Presence of women in TV shows worldwide

Women are undeniably 'present' as a significant middle-level cohort of producers, directors, journalists, and reporters in numerous countries around the world. Gallagher (1995a), the sole international comparative study available, found that women made up about a third of radio and television producers in Southern Africa and Latin America. In Europe, the comparable proportion was 37%. The increasing prevalence of women in the broadcast media as newscasters and program hosts is particularly significant. This occurrence is extremely common. According to the 2000 Global Media Monitoring Projects, which monitored the news in 70 nations, women provided 56 percent of news items on television and 41 percent of news items on the radio on 1 February 2000. At the same time, only 36% of television reporters, 28% of radio reporters, and 26% of print reporters were female. However, the greater presence of women on screen and in a few other high-profile professions almost certainly leads to a gap between perceptions and reality. In a 1997 poll in Lima, Peru, 51% of respondents said there were roughly equal numbers of women and men working in television, while 31% believed there were really more women than men. Women held only around a quarter of television employment, according to the same study (Alfaro, 1997). Women's presence in some media jobs masks their lack in others. Because, while more women than ever before are entering the media channels in practically every region of the world, they still have very little real decision-making authority [14].

Women have always been underrepresented in front of the camera and frequently left out of complicated and strong television roles. These trends are still present today, according to the 2016 *Boxed In* a study from San Diego State University's Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film. According to Jennifer Siebel Newsom: "The collective message we receive in a society where television is the most persuasive force defining cultural norms is that a woman's value and power lie in her youth, attractiveness, and sexuality, not in her ability to lead". While women have made significant progress in leadership in recent decades, the United States ranks 75th out of 193 countries in terms of female representation in national legislatures. Outside of the government, things aren't much better. Women account for only 7.4% of Fortune 500 CEOs and 21% of top 250 domestic grossing film directors, executive producers, writers, cinematographers, and editors [15].

Women's roles in modern society are changing, as is how women are portrayed on television. In order to accommodate their evolving role in society, the characters should be congruent with the image of women in real life.

To be more specific, the representation of women's body image has been unchanged for a long time. A young single lady tends to fit the stereotype of the "girl next door" – tall, slim, "conventionally beautiful," with a nice and upbeat disposition but little intelligence. A good figure is required for determining a woman's merit in the show. According to studies, overweight actresses are more likely to get harsh comments about their bodies from other male characters, and 80% of these statements are followed by programmed crowd laughter. [16].

Pakistan as a neighbor country of Afghanistan with hybrid democracy and also an Islamic country found out that the women's representation in Pakistani news has increased from 27 percent in 2010 to 36 percent in 2015, according to findings of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) released earlier this week. Despite the large increase in numbers, qualitative assessments of news items demonstrate that portrayal of women as "victims," trivialization, and sexual objectification persist in Pakistani media. While the GMMP research initiative, which is considered one of the world's largest into gender portrayal in news media, demonstrates that progress toward gender equality in news media has come to a halt around the world, the situation in Pakistan remains favorable in terms of presence in news. The global findings show that worldwide, women make up only 24 percent of the people heard, read, or shown in the newspapers, television channels, and radio, at the same level as in 2010. [17].

Religion is the key reference point for practically everything in Pakistani life, from identity to daily activities; it compels silence on some matters while outright rejecting others. Homosexuality is portrayed as a sin in Islam; hence it is either a disease or sexual deviance on television. Typically, such depictions are employed for amusement or to reinforce stigma. There is a concern about normalizing homosexuality, which would clearly contradict Shariah, as well as a worry of losing the traditional family structure. The social fabric of Pakistani society is largely defined by Shariah and family.

More orthodox Islamic clerics in Pakistan have chastised several female television presenters for wearing make-up and leaving their hair uncovered. Women should cover off their beauty and be modest, according to the clerics.

Farah Hussain, a prominent morning show host on one of Pakistani TV channels, wears make-up and has her hair out in the open, but she maintains she is still a real Muslim.

In this sense, religion becomes implicated in viewers' engagements with gendered content on Pakistani television, regardless of the fact that it does not appear to alter their engagement with the literature [14].

Presence of Afghan women in television programs as presenters

When the Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996, they immediately did two things: they barred women from any participation in public areas, and they banned media activities in the country. Control over these two elements – women and the media – lay at the heart of the Taliban regime. It's worth mentioning that the state of each is increasingly taken as a key index of the democratization and development of a society. It was forbidden to film any of Allah's creatures, even animals. According to a Talib official who was questioned by an (Unknown Danish journalist, 1996), Islam forbids the use of media such as television, radio, and even tape recorders. Nonetheless, before 1996, Afghanistan used to have cinemas, radio stations, and television channels, but once the Taliban took power, they outlawed cinemas and destroyed television sets. Those who were smuggling TVs and DVDs were imprisoned, and even sports were banned. According to Ahmad Shah Masoud, (Afghan former military commander during the resistance against the Soviet occupation between 1979 and 1989), the Taliban were totally unfamiliar with democracy and civilization [18].

In November 2001 when the Taliban's regime was on the verge of fall, the United Nations (UN) invited significant Afghan factions, Northern Alliance (NA)¹, and other involved tribal groups to a summit in Bonn, Germany. Due to Iran's support for the Northern Alliance, Hamid Karzai is appointed interim president of Afghanistan, and an international peacekeeping force is established to keep Kabul safe. On December 20, 2001, The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was founded by UN Security Council Resolution 1386. The Taliban regime came to an end on 9th Dec 2001, which is widely regarded as occurring when The Taliban fled Kandahar on this date, and Taliban leader Mullah Omar fled the city, putting it under Pashtun tribal rule. Regardless of the Taliban's nominal defeat, al-Qaeda leaders were hiding out in the mountains. Thousands have been slain and billions of dollars have been spent trying to assure a peaceful future for the country's residents since the Taliban were removed in 2001 [19].

¹ Northern Alliance was established in opposition to the communist government led by President Najibullah. The group consisted of General Abdul Rashid Dostum, former head of Najibullah's militia forces; Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, head of the Jamiat-e Islami Party; and Hezb-e Wahdat, a pro-Shi'a party.

The groups signed the Bonn Agreement on December 5, 2001. In its 22nd article, the draft stated that Afghan citizens, both women, and men, had equal rights and responsibilities under the law and that it aimed to protect Afghan women's rights, which had been repeatedly violated by the Taliban regime, and frequently denied them access to basic human rights.

Most of the Afghan women in large developed cities of the country remove their CHADARI², a large, predominantly blue veil and some still keep it as a traditional costume.

Although official figures are difficult to come by, female adult literacy has increased considerably from 11.14% in 1979 to 32.11% in 2011, and afterward, it has been increased up to 56.25% in 2018 between the age intervals of 15-24 [20].

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) declared in July 2013 that it would invest \$216 million over five years to boost gender equity in Afghanistan by implementing National Priority Programs (Promote). Promote, an American aid project, that was described as the world's largest program ever created just for female empowerment. According to USAID, the Promote project was built on prior investments in Afghan women's and girls' education. The purpose of the initiative is to better the lives of more than 75,000 young women from all walks of life.

Chemonics International Inc, Tetra Tech ARD, and Development Alternatives Inc were awarded three indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contracts by the USAID Mission for Afghanistan (USAID/Afghanistan) in 2014 to implement the Promote project. [21].

Following that, the agency issued task orders to the contractors for the four components of the program: Women's Leadership Development (WLD), Women in Government (WIG), Women in the Economy (WIE), and Musharikat, which concentrates on women in civil society. USAID had disbursed \$89.7 million for the Promote program as of April 2018 [22].

After the end of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan experienced the birth of private TV stations. The first one was *Aiina*, a North-based TV station that belonged to a local power but not to the government. According to Altai, a French organization working on consultancies and surveys, *Tolo TV* is the most-watched station in Afghanistan and as of 2020, there are 96 TV channels across the country, including governmental and private

² a large, predominantly blue veil that women are forced to wear in Afghanistan but comes from Pakistan tradition and will cover the whole face and body of women.

ones of which 7000 were employed in TVs. Media channels as the cornerstone of democracy and a pillar of freedom of expression and cultural diversity started to be developed and raise their productivity [23].

Some women have started to carve out a career path for themselves, but Afghan citizens needed a comprehensive argument and awareness to be able to digest the presence of women in visual media such as television and it was not as easy as you are reading right now. Afghan women were struggling for every single opportunity to move forward.

A young lady by the name of Shaima Rezai known as the first music program presenter in Afghanistan after the first collapse of the Taliban government started working with Tolo TV (the first private Tv channel in 2004), She left school and started working for Tolo. It did not take long for her to become a deity for many young Afghans who were fascinated by Shaima's television program called "Hop". In stark contrast to traditional Afghan society, where many women still wore the burqa, Shaima and her two male colleagues laughed innocently and jokingly in their television programs. And this angered those who could not accept a woman without a hijab (black burqa), and let her perform a music show with a young man in a TV studio. For that reason, Shaima was terminated from her job in March 2005. Shaima was murdered by an unknown assailant in front of her house on 5/18/2005, just two months after she was fired from her job. The cause of her murder is still unknown and his killer has not been caught. Shaima's mother says she killed herself, but doctors claim that she had been raped before her death. [24].

Even so, that could not stop Afghan women from working in media outlets. They became more committed to fighting against these extremist and wrong traditions of the society and started their media journey towards a modern Afghanistan.

Afghan women started to appear in political, social, and cultural shows and people could accept them gradually.

According to an RSF survey from March 2020, the number of Afghan female journalists has risen by 49 percent over the previous year.

In March 2021 the report released by Afghanistan Journalists' Safety Committee AJSC, showed that most female media workers were in Kabul, followed by Herat, and third in Balkh. Logar was the only province where only one lady was working in the media. In nine provinces of the country including Ghor, Nimroz, Sar-e-Pul, Laghman, Parwan, Kapisa, Uruzgan, Wardak, and Logar, there were no female reporters, and women work in different sectors of media but not on TV screens. In the five provinces of the country, which include Nuristan, Kunar, Paktia, Paktika, and Zabul, no women work in the media. [25].

543 media outlets tallied in Afghanistan in mid-2021. 10,790 people were working in the Afghan media which 2,490 (23,07 %) of them were female employees [26]. This was a considerable statistic in a country that was known as the second most dangerous country for women in a survey of global experts released in mid-2018 [27].

But, insecurity in Afghanistan changed the ascending graph of media and women's presence on television into a descending graph.

Since the Taliban takeover for the second time on 15th August 2021, 40% of Afghan media have closed. According to a survey done by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA), the Afghan media environment has changed radically, 231 media outlets have had to close out of 543, and almost 6,400 journalists have lost their employment. Four out of every five female journalists have lost their jobs as a result of the crisis [26].

Till now there are only 30 active TV channels all over the country and less than 30 women are working on the TV screens [23].

Very recently, the Taliban's Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue have ordered female Afghan TV presenters and other women to cover their faces while on air. A female Afghan journalist working for a local Kabul television station who did not want to be named, told BBC: "they are exerting indirect pressure on us to prevent us from presenting on television. With my mouth covered, how can I read the news? I'm not sure what to do now; I need to work because I am my family's breadwinner." [28].

There are no women in the Taliban's newly named interim cabinet, and the new rulers lost no time in abolishing the country's Ministry of Women's Affairs [29].

Additionally, Afghanistan was ranked 156th out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index. [30].

Searching to find out how Afghan women started to appear in TV shows, what have they changed with their presence on TV screens in terms of the development of democracy in Afghanistan? and was their presence satisfactory enough in Afghanistan starting from 2001 to 2021? And what was their shortcoming? I perceive that there is no significant scientific research about it and I want to fill this research gap by writing this thesis.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research design

The purpose of this thesis is to obtain in-depth knowledge about the Afghan female TV presenters/journalists' challenges and their role in the growth of democracy in Afghanistan.

The research employed the qualitative in-depth interview approach to achieve this goal. Qualitative interviews enable researchers to ask the kinds of in-depth questions from participants that will encourage them to provide detailed information and opinions. [31].

Data collection method

The researcher used the primary sources for the data collection.

The in-depth qualitative interview allowed the researcher to obtain new experiences regarding the phenomena and explain them well.

For this research, the interview approach was fruitful because the individual candidates felt relaxed and explained their motivations in their own words and sentences.

Ten candidates of the Afghan Female TV presenters/Journalist were selected through a purposive sampling approach for this study. In purposive sampling, researchers select participants based on certain specific characteristics to answer specific research questions. [31].

All the interviewees have been selected from four big provinces of Afghanistan (Kabul, Balkh, Herat & Kandahar) that researcher was not able to find any interviewees in Kandahar according to the time limitation and security issues in the named province. All the respondents have presented popular television programs during two decades of democracy (2001 to 2021) in Afghanistan. In their case studies, they talked about their personal experiences and the challenges beyond their media activities, and the majority of them were present in Afghanistan on the day the Taliban took control of the country (15 Aug 2021).

The participants, were between 26 to 32 years of age, five of them are living in Afghanistan and five of them fled the country since the Taliban retook the country. (See Table 1 List of the Interviewees in next page).

Table 1 – List of the Interviewees

No	Age	Type of Tv programs	Current location (outside/inside the Afghanistan)	Employment status
1	32	Islamic	Outside	Unemployed
2	30	Medical	Inside	Employed
3	27	Social	Outside	Unemployed
4	31	Political	Inside	Employed
5	28	Social	Inside	Employed
6	31	Social	Inside	Employed
7	26	Political	Outside	Unemployed
8	27	News	Outside	Unemployed
9	29	News	Outside	Unemployed
10	30	Social	Inside	Employed

Note – Compiled by the author based on purposive sampling

The data collection began after the proposal was approved by the proposal defense committee in the Institute of Diplomacy of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The researcher invited all potential participants for zoom meeting interviews through personal networks.

The interview guide provides a set of questions that are developed mostly based on the research questions and related literature.

These questions covered two essential parts, (1) What was the role of Afghan female TV presenters/journalists in terms of democracy development in Afghanistan? and (2) what were the main challenges that female TV presenters/journalists were facing with? To better understand such issues, the interviews began with general questions (e.g., " how and when did you start your journalistic journey through appearing in TV shows?") " How do you evaluate the presence of Afghan women on TV channels? Was it satisfactory enough for a proportional democratic state?" and " what has changed between the previous government of Afghanistan and the current regime of Taliban in terms of female TV presenters/journalists' presence in TV shows?". For consistency, all interviews were conducted by the researcher. Each interview approximately took 40-100 minutes and was recorded for further data analysis.

Data analysis method

For the interview data analysis, the researcher used thematic analysis. First, the audio and video recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

Secondly, the researcher heard all the transcripts and wrote the full text of the interviews.

Thirdly, the researcher coded all the transcripts line by line. Then according to the theoretical framework, the researcher found 113 descriptive codes, combined the similar codes, divided these 102 descriptive codes into 30 categorical codes, and finally, the researcher analyzed these 37 categorical codes. After cross-checking, the researcher found seven abstract analytical codes as research themes for analysis and result writing. Forth; the results were analyzed based on existing literature, research goals, and research questions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

Data analysis

This research gathered subjective data to answer the six main & sub-research questions about how the presence of women (TV presenters/Journalists) on television programs in Afghanistan play a significant role in mapping out a modern Afghanistan, and what were their main challenges while working in media? The interviewees gave perspectives based on their activities, experiences, and understandings. The platform zoom has been used for all interviews as a remote type of interviews. It is worth mentioning to say that some of the interviewees avoided putting their video on, during the recording due to having some personal and security challenges. All participants agreed that Afghan female TV presenters/journalists played a significant role in the development of democracy in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021 years and were satisfied with what they have put efforts into the stability of Afghanistan as a modern country.

And as one early commentator stated: "Television can become far more flexible, far more democratic, far more diversified in content, and far more responsive to the full range of pressing needs in today's cities, neighborhoods, towns, and communities" [9].

The coding results with the thematic method of analytical coding (see table 2,3, 4 & 5) describes that the development of democracy by female TV presenters/journalists was the main impact of women's presence on TV channels. Moreover, Gender discrimination and Insecurity were recognized as the obstacles for female TV presenters/journalists to building a modern Afghanistan during two decades of democracy in Afghanistan, and after the return of the Taliban in August 2021, three more barriers have been added to that list which such as human rights violations, obligatory hijab, immigration/asylum.

Women's rights movements to save their achievements during the current government of Taliban is the key role of female TV presenters/journalists after August 2021.

Table 2 –The role of female TV presenters/journalists during two decades of democracy in Afghanistan (2001 to 2021)

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
"When we are talking about democracy in Afghanistan, women on TV screens automatically come to our mind."	Contributions to development Building a positive mindset	Development of democracy

Continuation of table 2

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“For such a close-minded country like Afghanistan, women showed their courage to work in media channels and broke the taboo.”</p> <p>“Women on TV screens did their best to institutionalize democracy in Afghanistan”</p> <p>“Many projects were being implemented to build the capacity of women in TV channels.”</p> <p>“Women on TV screens could shape the mind of society and could have considerably convinced them to let their ladies go for education and work.”</p> <p>“Women in TVs added colors to a white and black Afghanistan.”</p> <p>“Female TV presenters/journalists could motivate rural women to work and build their capacities.”</p> <p>“Women in TVs paved the road for other women to work for their self-sufficiency and take part in the development of democracy in Afghanistan.”</p> <p>“I was the only one who appeared on the TV screen, removing my big black veil (long black hijab) in Herat province.”</p> <p>“No challenges could stop me from achieving my goals which were having a modern Afghanistan with gender equality.”</p> <p>“Afghan women on Television provided the basis for a democratic system.”</p> <p>“Women in media were giving hope to other women to stand and continue working for the development of the country.”</p>	<p>Social and cultural impacts</p> <p>Institutionalizing democracy</p> <p>Paving the way for a literate nation</p> <p>Women involvement in society</p> <p>women’s self-sufficiency</p>	

Continuation of table 2

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“One of the key elements that modern Afghanistan can be measured with is the percentage of women presence in TV shows.”</p> <p>“A proportional newly founded democracy in Afghanistan was being formed when media evolved and women being appeared on TV screens.”</p> <p>“A private media channel named Zan Tv which all its employees were women was producing dedicated special programs about women’s success stories, family dramas, short video spots and so many motivational video packages to convince the people in cities and villages to let their ladies go to school and universities in order to have an educated, open-minded generation and a society free of violation.”</p> <p>“Although female media workers appeared strongly in the media sphere in Afghanistan, their doings were not quite enough.”</p> <p>“2001 to 2021 were the brightest years of Afghanistan and women were visible in all sectors of society, especially the media.”</p>		
<p>Note – Compiled by the author based on interview</p>		

Table 3 – Barriers of female TV presenters/journalists during two decades of democracy in Afghanistan (2001 to 2021)

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“TV presenters/journalists are known as the prostitute according to my relative’s ideology”</p> <p>“It was a big shame for the parents who let their daughter appear on TV channels.”</p> <p>“My father told me that after this all my colleagues and relatives will mock me by</p>	<p>Paternal control and support</p> <p>Cultural superstitions</p> <p>Street harassment</p> <p>Sexual harassment</p> <p>Verbal abuse</p>	<p>Gender discrimination</p>

Continuation of table 3

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>saying: “The daughter of Fulani³ is working in TV. Did you see her outfit today? How was she looking today?”</p> <p>“Many ladies banned by their husbands not to work on TV channels.”</p> <p>“My parents had trust in me but not in TV channels as a good environment.”</p> <p>“The people of the society did not have a good view about female media workers. They were thinking that TV is the easiest option for ladies to work in, because they can put makeup and make themselves beautiful.”</p> <p>“My mom told me, if you want to work in media, you will not have any place in the home anymore.”</p> <p>“My family supported me to work on the TV screen.”</p> <p>“Those ladies who were working in media had a bad image in society.”</p> <p>“My mother stood aside with me and helped to work in Television. She told me: “I have lost many opportunities because of family restrictions when I was young and I don’t want you to be another failed woman.”</p> <p>“I was one of the luckiest ladies that my parents were supporting me to carry out my best in the field of journalism and presenting Tv programs.”</p> <p>“This first challenge that my female colleagues and I faced was traditional thoughts of people</p>	<p>Inequal income</p>	

³ A nickname useable in Afghanistan and some Persian language countries for someone you don’t know the name or you don’t want to say the name.

Continuation of table 3

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>in society about us, but my family was always supporting me to not to give up.”</p> <p>“My relative was always advising my mom not letting me work in media.”</p> <p>“Women were faced with verbal abuse in their work environment.”</p> <p>“They have been victims of sexual harassment.”</p> <p>“I was being mocked by people on the streets and by talking about my tv show sarcastically.”</p> <p>“Women were not allowed to work in high posts in Afghanistan.”</p> <p>“I have been shifted to the news sector in my workplace, but after some days my manager told me that you are good at social programs to just only laugh and greet nicely.”</p> <p>“Women were not given the chance to present the key programs of the TV channels”</p> <p>“I was not being mocked or abused by anyone unlike most of the ladies who were being abused verbally and physically.”</p> <p>“Women were getting busy by some social and easy programs for just attracting the audience.”</p> <p>“My male office colleagues were underestimating me and mocking me by saying: “she is a lady, why she is working in TV, she doesn’t know anything and always overacting.”</p> <p>“People on the street were abusing me verbally for working on the TV screen.”</p> <p>“My salary was not equal to my men colleague’s salary.”</p>		

Continuation of table 3

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“Women were given less opportunity to work in political programs.”</p> <p>“Women mostly were being used for advertising in TVs.”</p> <p>“Women’s salary has been cut for their makeup.”</p> <p>“Male journalists were not letting me set my camera in press conferences.”</p> <p>“My interviewees were underestimating me for being a lady.”</p> <p>“Women in media were called by people as prostitutes.”</p> <p>“Women are being low paid because of not being responsible for feeding their families according to Islam roles.”</p> <p>“Those females who were running comedy and musical shows were being criticized by people in social media and bombarded with bad words.”</p> <p>“People have a different perspective (mostly negative) about ladies working on TV screens.”</p> <p>“I have resigned from my job because the leadership of my workplace did not accept my request for producing a key program the TV, though I had 10 years of producing experience.”</p> <p>“My manager told me you cannot cover this challenging issue because you are a lady.”</p> <p>“My male colleagues were being paid increments but I wasn’t”</p>		

Continuation of table 3

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“The first challenge that my female colleagues and I faced was the traditional thoughts of people in society about us.”</p>		
<p>“Many women left Afghanistan for not being secure after their presence on TV screens.”</p> <p>“In most of south and eastern provinces of Afghanistan, no women were working in TV channels because of penetrance of terroristic groups.”</p> <p>“Afghan female TV presenters were threatened by insurgencies and their vehicles were being changed daily.”</p> <p>“I was being threatened by Taliban and was receiving WhatsApp messages from Saudi Arabia, because of working in TV during and holding capacity building projects for women”</p> <p>“Since spring 2021, no women were working in TV channels in Herat province of Afghanistan because of the high rate of threats”</p> <p>“Many threats were circulating among the people that clergies in Herat told that if ladies in all fields especially in media do not obey the Islam roles and do not wear fully Hijab, they will be killed or kidnapped by us.”</p> <p>“A divorced lady named Mina Mangal, working in RTA channel has been killed by the family of her X husband.”</p> <p>“Malala Maiwand, a female TV anchor for Enkaas TV and Radio was killed by unknown gunmen in a targeted attack in Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan.”</p> <p>“We can name insecurity as one of the obvious issues which always was attacking not only women but also men in our society.”</p>	<p>Terroristic attacks</p> <p>Threats</p> <p>Unsolved deaths</p> <p>Honor killings</p>	<p>Insecurity</p>
<p>Note – Compiled by the author based on interview</p>		

Table 4 – The role of female TV presenters/journalists during IEA (Taliban’s government in August 2021 till now)

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“We organized many protests against Taliban.”</p> <p>Many press conferences are conducted by female TV presenters/journalists to raise the voice of women in social media.</p> <p>Hoda Khamosh, an Afghan female poet, journalist, and human rights defender has participated in the Norway conference and gave a speech in front of the Taliban and advocate for Afghan women.</p> <p>“I will work in media till the time Talib shoots on my head.”</p> <p>“I was the first lady who appeared on the TV screen in Balkh province after the second fall of Afghanistan into the hand of the Taliban.”</p> <p>“On the fourth day of Afghanistan’s fall into the hand of the Taliban, I went to my office, entered the studio, and present the news bulletin.”</p> <p>“Taliban can impose every kind of restrictions on us, but we will never let them remove us from society.”</p> <p>“We were 20 women protesting against Taliban and Taliban besieged us in the parking of one private bank in Kabul.”</p>	<p>Women protest against the Taliban</p> <p>The commitment of women to working in the media</p> <p>Participation of female journalists in international conferences to advocate for women of Afghanistan</p>	<p>Women rights movements</p>
<p>Note – Compiled by the author based on interview</p>		

Table 5 – What changed for female TV presenters/journalists after the Taliban’s second return to Afghanistan (August 2021)

Note: After Taliban retook the power in Afghanistan, 3 more barriers are added to the previous challenges of female TV presenters/journalists (see table 3).

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“The Taliban is just as bad as it always was.”</p> <p>“The presence of a very numeric woman in TVs is permitted just to the time Taliban have been recognized by other states.”</p> <p>“Taliban eliminated MoWA from the government structure.”</p> <p>“Those women who are still working in media under the regime of Taliban are at the risk of being murdered by Taliban.”</p> <p>“We are scared of encountering Taliban with a gun.”</p> <p>“We received declarations from the Taliban that women should wear hijab and all the TV programs led jointly by males and the females should be separated.”</p> <p>“Taliban snatched my phone and deleted all the data and were chasing me kilometers far, not to make a report about them.”</p> <p>“Zan Tv received a warning to stop its activities and encountering with Talib serious threats.”</p> <p>“Taliban did not allow me to enter my office and told me to go back home.”</p> <p>“Only a few numbers of female journalists are working in two or three provinces of Afghanistan, the rest of them are afraid of the Taliban and their violations.”</p> <p>“We received a letter from the Ministry of virtue and vice of Taliban that female TV presenters are not allowed to be in the same show with their male colleagues.”</p> <p>“I have heard that Taliban are not allowing women to present TV shows jointly with their male colleagues.”</p>	<p>Rise of violations against women after August 2021 in Afghanistan</p> <p>Female journalists are banned from working in the media</p> <p>Rise of threats against women who worked for media during the past 20 years</p> <p>Female Tv presenters have been targeted by the Taliban</p> <p>Female Tv presenters lost their jobs after the fall of Afghanistan</p> <p>Unemployment</p>	<p>Human rights violations (right to work, freedom from torture, right to life and liberty, freedom of expression)</p>

Continuation of table 5

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“According to Reporters without borders 1970 out of 2398 Afghan female journalists lost their jobs after Taliban retook the power in Afghanistan.”</p> <p>“Taliban labels women as home servants and birth-giving machines.”</p> <p>“Section 27B of the Human Rights Act 2004 says that: Everyone has the right to work, including the right to choose their occupation or profession freely. And no one can ban them from this. So, if Taliban count them as human, they should be believed on human rights and let women work.”</p> <p>“According to the AJSO, after 2021 that IRoA collapsed, the number of female media workers has decreased from 1300 to 300. So, this fact can show us how badly Taliban effect on media and female media workers.”</p>		
<p>“Most of the female journalists have been evacuated after the collapse of IRoA and many of them resigned from their jobs.”</p> <p>It has been 5 months since I fled Afghanistan on Canada’s humanitarian visa.</p> <p>Working under the flag of IEA is not congenial for me and am seeking an opportunity to go out of this horror,”</p>	<p>The number of evacuees is increasing</p> <p>Skilled women migration</p> <p>The number of the asylum seeker is increasing</p>	<p>Immigration/Asylum</p>
<p>“Taliban imposes code dress on female TV presenters/journalists.”</p> <p>“Talib called the producer of my program to tell me to wear a thick sock and not to show my feet or ankles.”</p> <p>“I have been prevented from entering my office for not covering my face with a mask.”</p>	<p>Opposing obligatory hijab on women</p>	<p>Obligatory outfit/hijab</p>

Continuation of table 5

Descriptive codes	Categorical codes	Analytical codes
<p>“Medias received declaration from Ministry of culture and information of IEA that women cannot wear a colorful dress while on air.”</p> <p>“I can accept wearing compulsory hijab but not to be banned from appearing on TV screens.”</p> <p>“I will present TV programs even by compulsory hijab just to show the Taliban that we are not that weak to give up by their restrictions.”</p> <p>“I was strongly committed to stay in Afghanistan even if I was forced by Taliban to fully cover my face but continuing my work with media.”</p> <p>“I have no problem with hijab, I used to have hijab even before Taliban, but this is only a pretext from their side to remove women from society.”</p> <p>“Compulsory hijab is a violation of human rights and I will never accept that.”</p> <p>“Women accept wearing compulsory hijab being imposed by Taliban only to stay in the battle.”</p> <p>“Forcing someone to wear what he/she doesn’t want, is an act against humanity and I will never ever accept it.”</p> <p>“I was wearing hijab according to Islamic rules even before Taliban, and if they want me to be covered more, it is not a big deal for me. I will do it, but if they give us the right to work.”</p>		
<p>Note – Compiled by the author based on interview</p>		

Discussion

Based on the analysis of the coding results with the thematic method of analytical coding (see the tables 2, 3, 4 &5) development of democracy includes: contributions to development, building a positive mindset, positive social and cultural impacts, institutionalizing democracy, literate nation, self-sufficiency and involvement in society are the main impacts of women presence in TV channels. Moreover, gender discrimination and insecurity, and paternal control were recognized as the obstacle for female TV presenters/journalists to building a modern Afghanistan during two decades of democracy in Afghanistan and after the return of the Taliban in August 2021, two more barriers have been added to that list which are compulsory Hijab, immigration/asylum and human rights as an obstacle against female TV presenters/journalists in Afghanistan.

Role of female TV presenters/journalists in modern Afghanistan (2001 to 2021)

Development of Democracy

- *Contributions to the development*
- *Building a positive mindset*
- *Positive Social and cultural impacts*
- *Institutionalizing democracy*
- *Paving the way for a literate nation (mostly for women)*
- *Women's involvement in society*
- *women's self-sufficiency*

Contributions to development were the first positive impact that Afghan women could create in Afghanistan with their presence on TV screens.

Almost all the interviewees affirmed that contributions to development were one of the great achievements of female TV presenters/journalists in the past 20 years of democracy in Afghanistan. To assimilate the presence of women in visual media such as television, Afghan residents required a considerable understanding, which was not as simple as you are reading right now. Afghan women fought tooth and nail for every chance to progress.

Interviewee 7, 26- a year TV newscaster from Kabul province, noted: *“One of the key elements that modern Afghanistan can be measured with, is the percentage of women presence in TV shows. they changed the story of a too restricted country to a bright and modern future of Afghanistan.”*

Respondent 6, a 31-year-old social programs TV presenter from Balkh province, stated: *“Women in TVs added colors to a white and black Afghanistan and paved the road for*

other women to work for their self-sufficiency and take part in the development of democracy in Afghanistan.

Respondent 5, a 28-year-old- TV presenter from Balkh province, declared: *“I was the first lady who appeared on the TV screen in Balkh province after the second fall of Afghanistan into the hands of Taliban and I was trying to give hope to other women to stand and continue working for the development of the country and one of the Talib heads shared my program in his Twitter account and wrote considerable good captions about me.”*

Respondent 4, a 30- year-old TV journalist from Herat province stated that nothing could stop her not to fighting for a modern Afghanistan where men and women have access to their rights equally.

She asserted: *“I was the first female journalist who appeared on a TV screen removing my big black veil (long black hijab) in my province.”*

Interviewee 2, a 30-year-old social programs Tv presenter from Kabul province reported: *“Afghan women on Television provided the basis for a democratic system and a proportional newly founded democracy in Afghanistan. Democracy was being formed when media evolved and women being appeared on TV screens.”*

Respondent 7, a 25- year-old TV presenter from Kabul province stated: *“A private media channel named Zan Tv which all its employees were women was producing dedicated special programs about women’s success stories, family dramas, short video spots and so many motivational video packages to convince the people in cities and villages to let their ladies go to school and universities in order to have an educated, open-minded generation and a society free of violation.”*

Participant 10, a 30-year-old TV presenter from Balkh province reported that: *“Women on TV screens did their best to institutionalize democracy in Afghanistan”*

On the other hand, some of the interviewees did not consider the presence of women in media sufficiently. They believe that despite the international communities’ extensive funds for enhancing the capacity of women, especially female journalists, women did not appear in media as they should and would have shone.

Interviewee 9, a 29-year-old TV newscaster from Kabul, reported that: *“although female media workers appeared strongly in the media sphere in Afghanistan, their doings were not quite enough.*

She continued that, female journalists did not struggle enough to stand against the wrong tradition and customs and convince their families to let them continue their work with the

media. Many of them left the Tv after facing difficulties. On the other hand, they never succeeded to establish an exclusive female journalist's association in Afghanistan that can be our voice in national and international forums.”

Shogofa Danish: “We did not have a specific organization specifically for female journalists to work in national and international bases to advocate for women neither before Taliban and nor after them.”

Respondent 5, a 28-year-old social TV program presenter from Balkh province told: “*Number of female Tv hosts/presenters was very less compared to male ones.*”

Main challenges of female TV presenters/journalists during 2 decades of democracy in Afghanistan (2001 to 2021).

a) Gender discrimination

- *Street harassment*
- *Sexual harassment in the work environment*
- *Verbal abuse*
- *Inequal income*
- *Paternal control and support*

Gender discrimination and insecurity were being highlighted as the major obstacles for female TV presenters/journalists to keep improving gradually. Historically, women have been underrepresented behind the camera, and often left out of television roles that are complex and powerful. All the participants defined that they were facing diverse gender discrimination issues while working in media.

Besides, all the participants asserted that Afghanistan is a traditional and close society which Taliban had a deep religious impact on people from 1995 to 2001, this huge effect of Talibanist ideology on society's minds was keeping women away from being appeared on TV screens. Participants considered that Afghanistan as a third world has the experience of a four-decade civil war and instability, where Afghan women paid the high cost for what went wrong with Afghanistan during this interminable war which is still ongoing.

All ten interviewees claimed that Gender discrimination obviously existed inside the family environment, in media channels, and in society.

Respondent 1, a 32-year-old religious TV program presenter from Kabul province stated: “*I have resigned from my job because the leadership of my workplace did not accept my*

request for producing the key program of the TV, though I had 10 years of producing experience.”

She continued: *“Women were not given the chance to present the key programs of the TV channels and they were getting busy with some easy concept programs to just attracting the audience.”*

Interviewee 3, 27 years-old TV presenter from Herat province told that: *“I have been shifted to the news sector in my workplace, but after some days my manager told me that you are good at social programs to just laugh and greet nicely.”*

Respondent 6, a 31-year-old social programs TV host from Balkh province, stated: *“Women mostly were being used for advertising in TVs.”*

Respondent 4, a 29- year-old Tv journalist from Herat province stated that: *“Other male journalists were not letting me set up my camera in press conferences and my interviewees were usually underestimating me for being a lady.”*

She continued that, in most cases, when women were requesting for main programs to lead, their requests were being refused.

3 of the interviewees declared that their families were not satisfied with their presence on the TV screen, but their insistence paid off and they could satisfy their families.

Respondent 1, a 32-year-old religious TV program presenter from Kabul province stated that her mom told her: *“If you want to work in media, you will not have any place in the home anymore because your brothers don’t want you to work in TV and it will also be a big shame for me to let my young daughters be shown on TV screens.”*

Interviewee 9, a 29- year-old newscaster in Kabul told that *“My parents told me you never can work in Television because female TV employees are being labeled badly and most of them are called prostitutes in the community.”*

Interviewee 2, a 30-year-old social programs Tv presenter from Kabul province reported: *My father told me that after this all my colleagues and relatives will mock me by saying: “The daughter of Mr. Fulani (a nickname useable in Afghanistan and some Persian language countries for someone you don’t know the name or you don’t want to say the name.) is working in TV. Did you see her outfit today? How was she looking today?”*

Four of the interviewees declared that their salary amount was considerably less than their male colleagues while working in media.

Participant 10, a 30-year-old TV presenter from Balkh province reported that: *“Women were being low paid because of not being responsible for feeding their families according to Islam roles. My male colleagues were always receiving increments, but I wasn’t.”*

Interviewee 3, 27 years-old TV presenter from Herat province told that: *“My salary was being cut for my makeup expenses, however, it was our certain right to being makeup for free”*

b) Insecurity

- *Terroristic attacks*
- *Threats*
- *Unsolved deaths*
- *Honor killings*

Five years ago, Sadaf Siddiqi, a pseudonym for a young Afghan journalist, began her profession with high ambitions. She worked as a freelancer for local and national media sources in Kunduz, Afghanistan's northeastern province, where she quickly rose to prominence after becoming a presenter at a local television station. However, mounting insecurity and personal threats caused Siddiqi to stop appearing on television. She went on to anchor shows on social concerns and broadcast news programs on local and national radio networks. She stopped presenting as the Taliban pushed across Kunduz, the neighboring province with the same name as the capital, and now makes a fortune composing radio plays.

All of the 10 respondents for this research have stated “Insecurity” as a barrier to women’s presence in TV shows in Afghanistan during two decades of democracy.

Respondent 1, a 32-year-old religious TV program presenter from Kabul province stated: *“I was being threatened by Taliban and was receiving WhatsApp messages from Saudi Arabia, because of working in TV during and holding capacity building projects for women”*

Interviewee 3, 27 years-old TV presenter from Herat province told: *“There were many threats circulating among the people that clergies in Herat told that if ladies in all fields especially in media do not obey the Islam roles and do not wear Hijab they will be killed or kidnapped by us.”*

Interview 6, 31 years-old social media TV presenter in Balkh province has stated: *“Many women left Afghanistan for not being secure after appearing on the TV screen.”*

She added that women were a more vulnerable generation in media channels in Afghanistan who were always under threat of terroristic groups such as The Taliban, and ISIS, and in most cases, they were being threatened by their relatives who are against their presence of them on TV programs.

Malala Maiwand, Mina Mangal, Mahram Darani, Shahnaz Raufi, Sadia Sadat, Mina Khairi, Mursal Wahidi, Farida Mustakhdim, Zainab Mirzayee, Zakia Zaki and Shokiba Sanga Amaj, Mariam Rezayee, Mehri Azizi and Shaima Rezayee, [Anja Niedringhaus](#), 14 female Tv hosts/presenters who have been killed by Taliban, ISIS, unknown terroristic group and relatives.

Participant 10, a 30-year-old Tv presenter from Balkh province reported that: *“In most of south and eastern provinces of Afghanistan, no women were working in Tv channels because of penetrance of terroristic groups.”*

She added: *“Malala Maiwand, a female TV anchor for Enkaas TV and Radio was killed by unknown gunmen in a targeted attack in Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan.”*

Participant 9, 29 years-old TV newscaster from Kabul province said: *“Afghan female TV presenters were threatened by insurgencies and their transportation vehicles were being changed daily.”*

She continued: *“A divorced lady named Mina Mangal, working in the RTA channel has been killed by the family of her X husband.”*

Role of female TV presenters/journalists during IEA (Taliban’s government in August 2021 till now).

Women rights movements

Women protest against the Taliban

The commitment of women to working in media

Participating in international conferences to advocate for women

Giving hope to people

Female TV presenters/journalists are still struggling with the Taliban in Afghanistan. They stood strong and advocated for women by presenting TV programs. Though many restrictions were imposed on them, they did not lose their resistance.

Respondent 5, a 28-year-old social TV program presenter from Balkh province told: *“I was the first lady who appeared on TV in Balkh province after the second fall of Afghanistan into the hands of Taliban.”*

Participant 9, 29 years-old TV newscaster from Kabul province said: *“On the fourth day of Afghanistan’s fall into the hands of Taliban, I went to my office, entered the studio, and present the news bulletin.”*

Respondent 4, a 29- year-old TV journalist from Herat province stated that:" *“Taliban can impose every kind of restrictions on us but we will never let them remove us from society.”*

Respondent 1, a 32-year-old religious TV program presenter from Kabul province stated: “We were 20 women were protesting against Taliban and Taliban besieged us in the parking of one private bank in Kabul.”

What changed for female TV presenters/journalists after the Taliban’s second return to Afghanistan (August 2021).

a) Human Rights Violation

- *Rise of violations against women after August 2021 in Afghanistan*
- *Female journalist banned from working in media*
- *Rise of threats against women who worked for media during the past 20 years*
- *Female TV presenters have been targeted by the Taliban*
- *Female TV presenters lost their jobs after the fall of Afghanistan*
- *Unemployment*

After the fall of Afghanistan into the hands of the Taliban, human rights violation has incredibly increased. Violence against women particularly against female journalists is one of the main negative impacts of the Taliban’s return (15th August 2022) to Afghanistan. The elimination of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and dedicating its building for the ministry of propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice” is one of the obvious actions against human rights which has been condemned by many official states and human rights defenders.

Barring female journalists from their jobs brought women to a very challenging situation, many of them fled the country, and some others were forced to resign from their jobs. According to a survey done by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA), the Afghan media environment has changed radically since the Taliban took power. Since August 15th, 231 media outlets have had to close out of 543, and almost 6,400 journalists have lost their jobs. Four out of every five female journalists have lost their jobs as a result of the crisis and a total of 231 media outlets have been forced to close [26].

All 10 interviewees authenticated the anticlimactic rise in the unemployment rate of female TV journalists after the Taliban overran Afghanistan.

If we compare IRoA with IEA, we can say that we women were flying but the Taliban cut our wings. Said Faieza Ibrahim, former female Tv host in Herat province.

Respondent Interview 8, 28 years-old social media TV presenter in Kabul has stated: *“Taliban did not allow me to enter my office and told me to go back home and stay because the one who is responsible to feed me is my husband or any male member of my family and ladies are only to do home activities.”*

She continued: *“The Taliban is just as bad as it always was, and they are not going to change. The presence of a very numeric woman in TVs is only a fraud to just bring Taliban to the stage of recognition by other states.”*

Fariha Farahmand: “Afghan women cannot see themselves in the future mirror of Taliban.”

Respondent 4, a 29- year-old TV journalist from Herat province has declared that since August 2021, there are no female presenters working on Herat TV channels and for that, she moved to Kabul to work and feed her family.

“A private Tv channel named ZAN TV has been stopped `by Taliban and many of its employees who were women, left the country.” Said Khalida Rashid, former Tv presenter of Zan Tv in Afghanistan.

She believes that those women who are still working in media under the regime of the Taliban are at the risk of being murdered by the Taliban.

Respondent 6, a 31-year-old social programs TV presenter from Balkh province, stated: *“Those women who are still working in media under the regime of Taliban are at the risk of being murdered by Taliban.”*

She continued: *“We received a letter from the Ministry of virtue and vice of Taliban that female tv presenters are not allowed to be in the same TV shows with their male colleagues.”*

Respondent 1, a 32-year-old religious TV program presenter from Kabul province stated: *“I have heard that Taliban are not allowing women to present TV shows jointly with their male colleagues.”*

Respondent 1, a 32-year-old religious TV program presenter from Kabul province has stated: *“There were 2398 female journalists in Afghanistan, and more than 1970 of them lost their jobs after Taliban retook the power in Afghanistan.”*

Respondent 5, a 28-year-old social TV program presenter from Balkh province told: *“Section 27B of the Human Rights Act 2004 says that: Everyone has the right to work, including the right to choose their occupation or profession freely. And no one can ban them from this. So, if Taliban count them as human, they should be believed in human rights and let women work.”*

b) Immigration/Asylum

- *Number of evacuees is increasing*
- *Skilled women migration*
- *Number of the asylum seeker is increasing*

Respondent 7, a 25- year-old Tv presenter from Kabul province stated: *“It has been 5 months that I fled Afghanistan on Canada’s humanitarian visa.*

Interviewee 3, 27 years-old Tv presenter from Herat province told: *“Most the female journalists have been evacuated after collapsing of IRoA and many of them resigned from their jobs.”*

Participant 9, 29 years-old TV newscaster has indicated that after the collapse of IRoA, she has been evacuated by US military forces and now is living in Canada.

Participant 10, a 30-year-old Tv presenter from Balkh province reported: *“Working under the flag of IEA of Taliban is not congenial for me and am seeking for any opportunity to go out of this horror,”*

c) Compulsory Hijab

- *Opposing obligatory hijab on women*

The right to adequate clothing, or the right to clothing, is recognized as a human right in various international human rights instruments.

Since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan for the second period of time, many restrictions including compulsory Hijab were imposed on women. Female TV journalists received many declarations about their appearance in TV shows from the ministry of information and culture of IEA. Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice issued a statement saying women should not go to work unless they were properly covered, and they could be fired if they did not follow guidelines. Additionally, very recently, the Taliban's Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue have

ordered female Afghan TV presenters and other women on screen to cover their faces while on air. A female Afghan journalist working for a local Kabul television station who did not want to be named, told BBC: "they are exerting indirect pressure on us to prevent us from presenting on television. With my mouth covered, how can I read the news? I'm not sure what to do now; I need to work because I am my family's breadwinner." [28].

All the interviewees of this research received specifically from the Ministry of culture and information from IEA that women cannot wear a colorful dress while presenting Tv programs.

Respondent 6, a 31-year-old social programs TV presenter from Balkh province, stated: *"Medias received declaration from Ministry of culture and information of IEA that women cannot wear colorful dress presenting in Tv programs."*

"I have been prevented from entering my office for not covering my face with a mask," said Binazeer Baktash, a female TV journalist in Kabul.

Eight participants of this research have declared that they tend to continue their work as TV presenter even if they are forced by the compulsory hijab, and two of them refused.

Respondent 5, a 28-year-old social TV program presenter from Balkh province told: *"I will present tv programs even by compulsory hijab just to show the Taliban that we are not that weak to give up by their restrictions."*

Participant 9, 29 years-old TV newscaster from Kabul province said: *"I was wearing hijab according to Islamic rules even before Taliban, and if they want me to be covered more, it is not a big deal for me. I will do it if they give us the right to work."*

Interviewee 3, 27 years-old Tv presenter from Herat province told: *"I can accept wearing compulsory hijab but not to be banned from appearing on the TV screen."*

Respondent 1, a 32-year-old religious TV program presenter from Kabul province has stated: *"I was strongly committed to staying in Afghanistan even if I was forced by Taliban to fully cover my face but continue working with media."*

Respondent Interview 8, 28 years-old social media TV presenter in Kabul has stated: *"forcing someone to wear what he/she doesn't want, is an act against humanity and I will never ever accept it."* According to the Afghan community, the Taliban's burqa recommendation is not what Islam asks of women. "If they [the Taliban] are talking about Sharia, Islam doesn't specify an outfit for women, this poses the question: do the Taliban even understand Shariah?" [5].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

According to the respondents/interviewees of this thesis and some Afghan media experts, the below recommendations are prepared to be considered by IEA for improving the situation of female TV presenters/journalists and addressing their challenges.

- Pakistan as an Islamic neighbor of Afghanistan can be a proper role model for the Taliban to realize the women's rights that are being observed. Pakistan, since its independence, has formulated Laws to protect women and to give them security. The Constitution of Pakistan thus says: "There will be no discrimination on the basis of gender. Steps must be taken to ensure that women have full involvement in all aspects of society. The state must defend marriage, family, motherhood, and children, right of education, right of self-sufficiency and taking part in politics" [16].

Benazir Bhutto, the first Executive head of Pakistan as an Islamic country can be a great example for the Taliban to allow women actively participate in society.

- Respect women as a half population of the society and give them their Islamic and human rights. Not only depriving women of a nation is not the solution to having a pure Islamic and peaceful society, but also it will cause many aggressive conflicts in a society that Afghanistan right now is facing with this disaster. To avoid these conflicts, the Taliban should make a better and safe environment for women to take part in society.
- Creating a congenial and safe workplace for women is critical; women should be given equal opportunities and facilities in the workplace so that they can easily work, perform, and advance in their fields regardless of their gender. Hiring media expert program producers to produce influential and profound TV programs to shape the mind of citizens in a peaceful and developed manner.
- Due to underlying factors such as family restrictions, male dominance, unfavorable work environments, discriminatory salary packages, lack of appreciation, lack of security services, and transportation facilities, many women avoid this profession and seek more comfortable and rewarding work environments. The current government of IEA should gather a comprehensive and implementable media role to avoid mentioned challenges.
- There is a strong need for more women in the media, particularly in television. The goal should be to increase women's awareness of their issues and participation in

this field. and avoid using them as an advertisement tool in media anymore to avoid immigration.

- Women in decision-making roles should be encouraged to have more representation. Women in newsrooms, particularly at the decision-making level, are critical. such as editors to make up for the shortcoming of the previous regime of Taliban in regard to revoking women from decision making.
- The code of ethics should be formulated in media channels based on gender equality and international human rights law.
- Investigative reports and analyses of deeply established cultural and institutional constraints should be given more space and time in the media. that prevent Afghan women from playing an important role in the advancement of their society Many of the profoundly entrenched faults will be discovered and debated in this manner.
- Wearing clothes – or, more precisely, deciding which clothes to wear – is an important part of the expression for many people, as confirmed by Article 19 of the UDHR. So, if the Taliban are willing to be recognized by the global community, they should be committed to obeying the rules of Human rights and avoid imposing obligatory hijab on women.
- If IEA is a real Islamic country so they should consider the rules and laws of the Holy Quran about the Hijab of women. There are only 7 Ayat of the Holy Quran that contains words about women’s clothing, and none of them point to covering the hair of women. So, the Taliban should act based on Islamic roles and not impose their baseless traditions under name of Islam on women. They should observe the freedom of clothing of women and let them choose their own appearance.
- Taliban should respect freedom of expression and let the media channels say the truth. Restrictions on freedom of speech will bring society to a wave of hidden anger that may cause mass revolutions to overthrow the government.

Conclusion

Television’s advantage as a tool of democracy over other forms of entertainment was the sheer number of people it reached. In a society like Afghanistan, where Television is actively being watched by 64% of the people, it is the most likely persuasive force shaping cultural norms. and women as TV presenters can have a huge impact on shaping public opinion [11].

The 10 in-depth interviews for this research have proved that though, in the media workforce, women are vastly outnumbered by men, they could play a considerable role in

the development of democracy through their presence on TV channels in Afghanistan between the years 2001 to 2021.

Gender discrimination which contains an exclusion of women from top positions in TV channels, gender division of news beats is biased, favoring male reporters, absence of training and capacity building for women, sexual harassment, discriminatory salary packages, family restrictions, verbal abuse, insecurity, recently imposing compulsory hijab on them and long and unpredictable hours carry a social stigma for women are known as barriers that keep women away from presenting in media channels in Afghanistan [32].

Taliban who was known as a terroristic group is claiming that they are implementing Sharia law in Afghanistan but referring to Islam, women have been known as half of the society, and should be offered all opportunities which could enable them to develop their inherent abilities so that they will be able to actively contribute in the development of society It further stated that women should be allowed to develop to the highest levels of material, intellectual, and spiritual progress [5].

Islam has given women broad social, political, and economic rights, as well as rights to education and training and employment opportunities, in this framework. Islam established strong legal provisions to protect women's rights against male abuse. As a result, a Muslim woman has the following rights in theory.

Right of Education: In Islam, knowledge, its acquisition, and application are fundamental requirements for all Muslims to enable them to believe, think, and act according to the principles of the religion. Women have the equal right as men have in getting educated.

The Right to Self-Acquisition: This includes the ability to manage her own finances and property. She can buy, sell, mortgage, lease, borrow, and lend anything she wants, as well as sign contracts and legal documents. Right to marriage by choice, right to inheritance, right of election and nomination to political posts, right of respect, and right to work is the most obvious rights of women which have been declared by the Holy Quran in Islam religion [33].

Considering that, we can find out that the Taliban's ideology was built on extremists likewise pre-Islamic period in Saudi Arabia.

Unfortunately, female TV presenters in Afghanistan are now facing a disaster by the name of Talib, which is blocking their progress.

“I think Taliban are like uninvited guests that should leave our homeland soon.” Said Faiza Ibrahimi, a former TV presenter in Herat province of Afghanistan.

To overcome this impasse, there are many possible ways that have been stated in the recommendation part, and the Taliban can use the points as a pathway to reach the stability and harmony in terms of women’s rights in Afghanistan

Though strong Afghan female TV presenters/journalists were and are facing lots of challenges and barriers against their activities, they remained committed and played and are still playing a significant role in terms of democracy development in Afghanistan.

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Interview Questions

- 1- Please describe yourself briefly, when have you started your journalistic journey with media particularly with Television channels?
- 2- How do you evaluate the presence of Afghan female TV hosts/presenter in media? Was it satisfactory enough for a democratic state?
- 3- What was the role of female TV presenters/journalists in development of democracy in Afghanistan and what they have changed with their presence in TV shows?
- 4- What were the main challenges you were facing with, during your work in Afghan local and international TV channels?
- 5- What are the main changes between IRoA and IE/Taliban? Particularly on women journalists and their presence on Tv screens.
- 6- Did you receive any declaration from IEA about revoking women working in TV shows? Or have you been banned from entering your work office by the current regime?
- 7- Does compulsory hijab impose on you by IEA/Taliban yet? Will you work under the regime of the Taliban if compulsory code dress is imposed on you?
- 8- Do you have any recommendations for the current regime of IEA/Taliban to make the situation goes better for female media workers?

APPENDIX 2

The author of the project:
Freshta Hemmati

Supervisor: Mr. Toleutai
Suleimenov, PhD in social
politics

Project idea	Situation of Afghan Women in Modern Afghanistan
Problem situation (case)	<p>This study is essential for a main reason which is, there is no research used qualitative approaches to find out the role of Afghan TV presenters/journalists in terms of democracy development in Afghanistan. It is also essential to mention that what were the main challenges of women led television programming were and still are facing with them, and as a result, what have changed for them after fall of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRoA) in to hands of Taliban.</p> <p>This being said, this first study on role of Afghan female TV presenters/journalists in developing democracy in Afghanistan and their challenges attempts to pave the pathway for more research in the future. The finding of this thesis builds a contribution to filling the knowledge gap regarding the role of Afghan female TV hosts/presenters in developing democracy in Afghanistan.</p> <p>In general, this study enhances public knowledge about the role of Afghan female TV hosts/presenters in shaping a modern Afghanistan.</p>
Available solutions to this problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pakistan as an Islamic neighbor of Afghanistan can be a considerable role model for the Taliban to realize the women’s rights that are being observed. Pakistan, since its independence, has formulated Laws to protect women and to give them security. The Constitution of Pakistan thus says: “There will be no discrimination on the basis of gender. Steps must be taken to ensure that women have full involvement in all aspects of society. The state must defend marriage, family, motherhood, and children. Right of education, right of self-sufficiency and taking part in politics” [16].

	<p>Benazir Bhutto the first Executive head of Pakistan as an Islamic country can be a great example for Taliban to allow women actively participate in society.</p>
<p>Suggested Solution to This Problem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect women as a half population of the society and give them their Islamic and human rights. Not only depriving women of a nation is not the solution to have a pure Islamic and peaceful society, but also it will cause to many aggressive conflicts in a society that Afghanistan right now is facing with this disaster. To avoid these conflicts, Taliban should make a better and safe environment for women to take part in society. • Creating a congenial and safe workplace for women is critical; women should be given equal opportunities and facilities in the workplace so that they can easily work, perform, and advance in their fields regardless of their gender. Hiring media expert program producers to produce influential and profound Tv programs to shape the mind of citizens in a peaceful and developed manner. • Due to underlying factors such as family restrictions, male dominance, unfavorable work environments, discriminatory salary packages, lack of appreciation, lack of security services, and transportation facilities, many women avoid this profession and seek more comfortable and rewarding work environments. The current government of IEA should gather a comprehensive and implementable media role to avoid mentioned challenges. • There is a strong need for more women in the media, particularly in television. The goal should be to increase women's awareness of their issues and participation in this field. and avoid using them as an advertisement tool in media anymore to avoid immigration. • Women in decision-making roles should be encouraged to have more representation. Women in newsrooms, particularly at the decision-making level, are critical. such as editors to make up the shortcoming of the previous regime of Taliban in regard to revoking women from decision making. • The code of ethics should be formulated in media channels based on gender equality and international human rights law.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigative reports and analyses of deeply established cultural and institutional constraints should be given more space and time in the media. that prevent Afghan women form playing an important role in the advancement of their society Many of the profoundly entrenched faults will be discovered and debated in this manner. • Wearing clothes – or, more precisely, deciding which clothes to wear – is an important part of expression for many people, as confirmed by Article 19 of the UDHR. So, if Taliban are willing to be recognized by global community, they should be committed to obey the rules of Human rights and avoid imposing obligatory hijab on women. • If IEA is a real Islamic country so they should consider the rules and law of Holy Quran about the Hijab of women. There are only 7 Ayat of the Holy Quran that contains words about women’s clothing, and none of them point to covering the hair of women. So, the Taliban should act based on Islamic roles and not impose their baseless traditions under name of Islam on women. They should observe the freedom of clothing of women and let them choose their own appearance. • Taliban should respect freedom of expression and let the media channels say the truth. Restrictions on freedom of speech will bring society to a wave of hidden anger that may cause mass revolutions to overthrow the government.
Expected Result	Taliban by considering the above rules can show their commitment to respecting women’s rights and particularly their right to work. As a result, a better work environment, outputs, and a less challenging environment will be provided for Afghan TV presenters/journalists.
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