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Promoting Women's Rights: Discourse Analysis of "Zan_Zendegi_Azadi"
Movement in Iran

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Rahil Golgiri

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Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Andrea Lehner-Hartmann

Abstract

This research focuses on the discourse around the Zan Zendegi Azadi (Woman, Life, Freedom) movement in Iran with particular emphasis on digital activism and women's rights advocacy on Instagram. Within the perimeters of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), This work looks into how Iranian people such as public figures, and activists manage intersections of gender constellations and aid the advocacy for women's rights in the context of Iran's socio-political environment. The discourse of 15 Instagram posts as a corpus from actors, footballers and activist's turns into the application of nationalism CDA sociology frameworks. On the micro-level, posts summon sentiment, storytelling, and imagery to express support and urgency, frequently using emotive hashtags, like #ZanZendegiAzadi, to unify the multifaceted movement. At the meso-level, focus is directed to digital participation that has high measuring units of engagement (likes, comments, shares) in which speakers are celebrities, illustrating the responsiveness to the movement and highlighting the celebrities' effectiveness to transmit the message of the movement. It situates within Iran's macro socio-political context for analysis, that demonstrates the movement's ability to counteract patriarchal and state domination while mobilizing international support. The results of this study demonstrate that digital activism has the ability to shift power paradigms of gender and woman's rights in Iran and shed light on the impact of discourse, power, and social change in Iran.

Abstrakt

Diese Forschung befasst sich mit dem Diskurs rund um die Bewegung „Zan, Zendegi, Azadi“ (Frau, Leben, Freiheit) im Iran, mit besonderem Fokus auf digitalen Aktivismus und die Frauenrechtsadvokatur auf Instagram. Im Rahmen der Kritischen Diskursanalyse (CDA) wird untersucht, wie iranische Personen, darunter öffentliche Persönlichkeiten und Aktivistinnen, Geschlechterkonstellationen verhandeln und zur Förderung der Frauenrechte im sozio-politischen Kontext Irans beitragen.

Der Diskurs von 15 Instagram-Beiträgen, verfasst von Schauspielerinnen, Fußballspielerinnen und Aktivistinnen, wird durch nationalistische, CDA und soziologische Rahmenwerke analysiert. Auf der Mikroebene nutzen die Beiträge Emotionen, narrative Elemente und Bildsprache, um Unterstützung und Dringlichkeit auszudrücken, oft unter Verwendung emotional aufgeladener Hashtags wie #ZanZendegiAzadi, die die vielschichtige Bewegung vereinen. Auf der Mesoebene wird die digitale Partizipation untersucht, wobei besonders Beiträge mit hohen Engagement-Raten (Likes, Kommentare, Shares) analysiert werden, in denen prominente Persönlichkeiten als Sprecherinnen fungieren. Dies verdeutlicht sowohl die Resonanz auf die Bewegung als auch die Wirksamkeit von Prominenten bei der Vermittlung ihrer Botschaft.

Die Studie kontextualisiert ihre Analyse innerhalb des makrosoziopolitischen Rahmens Irans und zeigt, dass die Bewegung patriarchale und staatliche Dominanz herausfordert und gleichzeitig internationale Unterstützung mobilisiert. Die Ergebnisse dieser Untersuchung verdeutlichen, dass digitaler Aktivismus das Machtgefüge in Bezug auf Geschlecht und Frauenrechte im Iran verschieben kann und unterstreichen die Bedeutung von Diskurs, Macht und sozialem Wandel in diesem Kontext.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I	12
1.1. Introduction	12
1.2. Statement of the problem	13
1.3. Research questions and hypotheses.....	16
1.3.1. Question:	16
1.3.2. Hypothesis.....	16
1.4. Purpose of the study	16
1.5. Significance of the study	17
1.6. Theoretical framework	18
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	20
2.1 Women and the Islamic Revolution of Iran	20
2.2 Religion, Gender and Education.....	21
2.3 Hijab and It's role.....	24
2.4 Hijab as a fashion statement	27
2.5 Zan Zendegi Azadi	31
2.6 Mahsa Amini's Death and Zan Zendegi Azadi	32
2.7 Sexual revolution or modern sexual inequality	34
2.8 The role of Social Media on Social movements.....	37
2.9 Internet and social media in the Islamic Republic of Iran.....	40
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL BASIS AND METHODOLOGY	43
3.1. Introduction	43
3.2. Methodology for data selection, collection, and analysis.....	43
3.3. Multi-level analysis as a cornerstone in CDA.....	43
3.4. Data selection and collection.....	45
3.5. Criteria for data selection and collection.....	45
3.6. Pilot study leading to main study	46
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS	47

4.1.	Introduction	47
4.2.	Social Media Instagram Engagement of Iranian Celebrities by Profession	47
4.2.1.	Katayoun Riahi:	48
4.2.1.1.	Social Media Impact:	49
4.2.1.1.1.	Large Follower Base:.....	49
4.2.1.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	49
4.2.1.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	50
4.2.1.1.4.	Hashtags (3):.....	50
4.2.1.2.	Conclusion:	50
4.2.2.	Taraneh Alidoosti:.....	51
4.2.2.1.	Media Impact:	52
4.2.2.1.1.	Large Follower Base:.....	52
4.2.2.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	52
4.2.2.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	53
4.2.2.1.4.	Hashtags (2):.....	53
4.2.2.2.	Conclusion:	53
4.2.3.	Golshifteh Farahani:.....	54
4.2.3.1.	Social Media Impact:	55
4.2.3.1.1.	Large Follower Base:.....	55
4.2.3.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	56
4.2.3.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	56
4.2.3.1.4.	Hashtags:	56
4.2.3.2.	Conclusion:	56
4.2.4.	Mahnaz Afshar:.....	57
4.2.4.1.	Social Media Impact:	58
4.2.4.1.1.	Large Follower Base:.....	58
4.2.4.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	58
4.2.4.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	59

4.2.4.1.4.	Hashtags:	59
4.2.4.2.	Conclusion:	59
4.2.5.	Hamid Farokh Nezhad:	60
4.2.5.1.	Social Media Impact:	62
4.2.5.1.1.	Follower Count:	62
4.2.5.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	62
4.2.5.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	62
4.2.5.1.4.	Hashtags (0):.....	62
4.2.5.2.	Conclusion:	63
4.2.6.	Ali Karimi:	63
4.2.6.1.	Social Media Impact:	64
4.2.6.1.1.	Follower Count:	64
4.2.6.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	65
4.2.6.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	65
4.2.6.1.4.	Hashtags (0):.....	65
4.2.6.2.	Conclusion:	66
4.2.7.	Fatemeh Motamed Aria:	66
4.2.7.1.	Social Media Impact:	67
4.2.7.1.1.	Follower Count:	67
4.2.7.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	68
4.2.7.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	68
4.2.7.1.4.	Hashtags (2):.....	68
4.2.7.2.	Conclusion:	69
4.2.8.	Narges Mohammadi:.....	69
4.2.8.1.	Social Media Impact:	71
4.2.8.1.1.	Follower Count:	71
4.2.8.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	71
4.2.8.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	71

4.2.8.1.4.	Hashtags (2):.....	71
4.2.8.2.	Conclusion:	72
4.2.9.	Ali Daei:.....	72
4.2.9.1.	Social Media Impact:	74
4.2.9.1.1.	Follower Count:	74
4.2.9.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	74
4.2.9.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	74
4.2.9.1.4.	Hashtags (0):.....	74
4.2.9.2.	Conclusion:	74
4.2.10.	Tomaj Salehi:	75
4.2.10.1.	Social Media Impact:	76
4.2.10.1.1.	Follower Count:	76
4.2.10.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	77
4.2.10.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	77
4.2.10.1.4.	Hashtags (0):.....	77
4.2.10.2.	Conclusion:	77
4.2.11.	Nazanin Boniadi:.....	78
4.2.11.1.	Social Media Impact:	79
4.2.11.1.1.	Follower Count:	79
4.2.11.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	79
4.2.11.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	80
4.2.11.1.4.	Hashtags (0):.....	80
4.2.11.2.	Conclusion:	80
4.2.12.	Ehsan Karami:.....	80
4.2.12.1.	Social Media Impact:	82
4.2.12.1.1.	Follower Count:	82
4.2.12.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	82
4.2.12.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	82

4.2.12.1.4.	Hashtags (0):.....	82
4.2.12.2.	Conclusion:.....	83
4.2.13.	Shaghayegh Dehghan:.....	83
4.2.13.1.	Social Media Impact:.....	84
4.2.13.1.1.	Follower Count:.....	84
4.2.13.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	85
4.2.13.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	85
4.2.13.1.4.	Hashtags (0):.....	85
4.2.13.2.	Conclusion:.....	85
4.2.14.	Maryam Bobani:	86
4.2.14.1.	Social Media Impact:.....	87
4.2.14.1.1.	Follower Count:.....	87
4.2.14.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	88
4.2.14.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	88
4.2.14.1.4.	Hashtags (2):.....	88
4.2.14.2.	Conclusion:.....	88
4.2.15.	Karim Bagheri:.....	89
4.2.15.1.	Social Media Impact:.....	91
4.2.15.1.1.	Follower Count:.....	91
4.2.15.1.2.	Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):	91
4.2.15.1.3.	Shares and Views:.....	91
4.2.15.1.4.	Hashtags (1):.....	91
4.2.15.2.	Conclusion:.....	91
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		93
5.1.	Introduction	93
5.2.	Framework for Analysis of Findings.....	93
5.3.	5-3. Data analyzing.....	94
5.3.1.	Micro-Level Analysis: Textual Features of Instagram Posts (Textual Strategies)	94

5.3.2.	Meso-Level Analysis: Discursive Practices (Digital Engagement)	94
5.3.3.	Macro-Level Analysis: Societal and Political Contexts (Socio-Political Dynamics) 95	
5.4.	Question Analysis.....	96
5.5.	Hypothesis Validation	96
5.6.	Contributions to Women's Rights Advocacy	97
5.7.	Conclusion.....	98
5.8.	Theoretical Implications.....	98
5.9.	Practical Recommendations	98
5.10.	Limitations and Future Research.....	99
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	100
	Appandics.....	110
	Acknowledgement of AI Assistance	110
	Academic Confirmation Statement	111

Table of Figure

Figure 1: Katayoun Riahi's post.....	49
Figure 2: Taraneh Alidoosti's post	52
Figure 3: Golshifteh Farahani's post	55
Figure 4: Mahnaz Afshar's post	58
Figure 5: Hamid Farokh Nezhad's post.....	61
Figure 6: Ali Karimi's post.....	64
Figure 7: Fatemeh Motamed Aria's post.....	67
Figure 8: Narges Mohammadi's post	70
Figure 9: Ali Daei's post	73
Figure 10: Tomaj Salehi's post	76
Figure 11: Nazanin Boniadi's post.....	79
Figure 12: Ehsan Karami's post.....	81
Figure 13: Shaghayegh Dehghan's post	84
Figure 14: Maryam Bobani's post.....	87
Figure 15: Karim Bagheri's post.....	90

Table of Figure

Table. 1 The table provides key insights into Katayoun Riahi's social media influence:	47
Table. 2 The table provides key insights into Katayoun Riahi's social media influence:	49
Table. 3 The table below provides key insights into Taraneh Alidoosti's social media activity:	52
Table. 4 The following table provides an analysis of Golshifteh Farahani's social media activity	55
Table. 5 The following table provides insights into Mahnaz Afshar's social media activity..	58
Table. 6 The following table offers an insight into Hamid Farokh Nezhad's social media engagement.....	61
Table. 7 The following table provides insight into Ali Karimi's social media presence and engagement.....	64
Table. 8 The following table provides insight into Fatemeh Motamed Aria's social media engagement and impact	67
Table. 9 The table below highlights key data related to Narges Mohammadi's Instagram engagement.....	70
Table. 10 The table below provides insight into Ali Daei's Instagram metrics	73
Table. 11 The table provides an overview of Tomaj Salehi's presence on Instagram, with the following metrics.....	76
Table. 12 The table provides an overview of Nazanin Boniadi's Instagram activity and engagement metrics	79
Table. 13 The table presents key details of Ehsan Karami's Instagram activity, demonstrating his social media influence and engagement	81
Table. 14 The table below outlines key details of Shaghayegh Dehghan's Instagram activity, providing insight into her reach and engagement levels	84
Table. 15 The table below outlines the details of Maryam Bobani's Instagram activity, providing insights into her reach and engagement levels.....	87
Table. 16 The table below presents an overview of Karim Bagheri's Instagram activity, illustrating his reach and engagement levels	90

CHAPTER I

1.1. Introduction

We live in a world in which gender can be understood from different perspectives, such as biological sex, which is related to physical anatomy; grammatical gender, which is related to language and linguistics; and finally, social gender, which is related to social norms and roles. It is clear that gender plays a critical role in representing an individual's identity (Farhadytooli, 2022).

Nowadays, the gender turns into the most fundamental subject among the philosophical, social, socio-political, etc. groups. In the past, gender and sexuality was easily neglected and eliminated from social activities. It was identified as a tool of fertility and was limited to reproductive activity. If it cannot be categorized in the generation dimension, it couldn't exist, it shouldn't habitat, and it won't be accepted. "Nor did it merit a hearing. It would be driven out, denied, and reduced to silence. Not only did it not exist, but it had also no right to exist" (Foucault, 1978: 3). In modernity, on the contrary, it seems that gender could be the possibility of changes in social phenomena through the performances and acts. According to Butler (1993) gender is not natural, but rather performative, meaning that it is produced through repetition of certain practices and acts. She believes that gender is performed and that gender identity is constituted by performativity. She believes that performativity is not just the act of doing something; rather, it is a combination of several norms and roles. It conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition... so, performance is a discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler, 1993, p. 12-13). On the other hand, in the perspective of Butler (1993), gender is a choice or a role that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning. There is a one who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides which gender it will be today. Therefore, there is a subject which is prior the gender, a subject which is constructed by the society (Butler, 1993).

The rich tapestry of Iran's society is woven from strands of deep history, intricate culture, profound religious beliefs, and a dynamic sense of modernity. This complex fusion not only shapes a conservative societal framework but also embodies the post-modern facets of Iranian life. The Middle East's historical chronicles have been punctuated by numerous social upheavals, and in this context, Iran's strategic

geographical placement and its cultural and political influence within the region amplify its significance as a critical subject for the examination of contemporary movements and uprisings in the Middle East. Within this landscape, Iran stands as a compelling case study for exploring diverse social currents. Gender movements, such as the iconic White Wednesdays, the trailblazing My Stealthy Freedom movement of 2014, the inspiring Girls of Enghelab Street movement of 2017, and the more recent Zan-Zendegi-Azadi movement of 2022, resonate powerfully. These movements spearhead efforts to advance women's rights, acting as vibrant agents of change in Iranian society.

This amalgamation of traditional values and contemporary momentum places Iran in the vanguard of global discourse on women's rights. The voices resonating from movements like My Stealthy Freedom underscore the intricate interplay between historical legacies, evolving cultural norms, and the digital age's potential for catalysing change. By understanding these movements within the context of Iran's broader societal fabric, we unlock insights into the intricate dynamics of a nation in flux, a nation perpetually rewriting its narrative through the pens of activism and progress.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Iran's society is a combination of great history, culture, religion, and modernity. These various attitudes and perspectives not only define a conservative society but also represent the post-modern aspects of Iranian society. The history of the Middle East is filled with numerous social uprisings. Precisely, due to Iran's geographic location and its cultural and political domination in the Middle East, Iran can be a more significant case for studies of contemporary movements and uprisings in the Middle East. Social movements such as White Wednesdays or My Stealthy Freedom 2014 or Girls of Enghelab Street 2017, and the latest movement Zan-Zendegi-Azadi (2022) could be some gender movements in Iran which are seeking to promote the women's rights. For instance, My Stealthy Freedom (Azadiye Yavashaki Man) movement which is an anti-mandatory hijab page plays a significant role in online movements in Iran. This page is run by Masih Alinejad, a Persian activist and journalist. She asked Iranian women to take photos of themselves without hijab in public. It became an online space for discussing sociopolitical and cultural matters, particularly veiling and hijab in Iran (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2017, p. 186).

Mahsa (Jina) Amini was arrested by the morality police in Tehran, Iran, on September 16th, 2022, for breaking the hijab rule. Unfortunately, she died while in police custody. She was from the northwestern Kurdish city of Saez. BBC Persian (2022)¹ reports, by confirming the death of Mahsa Amini in some cities people protested on the streets. And one day after her death Mahsa's funeral ceremony was held in the presence of people and under security conditions in Aichi, Saez. The people present at this ceremony chanted "Jin Jiyan Azadi" which means "Zan Zendegi Azadi", and several Iranian women and men shaved and cut their hair and some others burned their scarves in public to protest against the death of Maha Amini. Social media plays a significant role in this movement and these Iranian performances "spread across all Iran's provinces and involving people of diverse backgrounds chanting the slogan Woman, Life, Freedom to oppose the authoritarianism of the ruling Islamic clerics" (The Lancet, 2022)². Nevertheless, one should accept that nowadays, what is happening in Iran represents the important feminist movement. Slavoj Žižek (2022) believes that the Woman, Life, Freedom movement combines different forms of struggle in Iran. It is a fight against the oppression of women and religious ideologies, and even a fight for political freedom. But it seems that the slogan of Women Life Freedom is slightly different from feminist movements all around the world. It calls the men and women together and with participation, unite against the common problem.

In this study, we use a narrative approach to analyze people's posts on Instagram. We investigate how Iranian posts on Instagram are influenced by, and contribute to, the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran. On the other hand, it is crystal clear that internet technology is one of the most significant changes of the late 20th century. The internet easily connects people all around the world and by using different social media we can access any news across the globe. Bahdi (2000: 881) said, people around the world can easily connect using the internet through their personal devices. Therefore, it can indicate that the Internet has created a global space that has enabled individuals to participate in different activities in various "performativity" (Butler, 1990). Nowadays, the use of the internet and particularly social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. is becoming more and more popular. Many studies show that nowadays, the internet and social media play a significant role in social change around

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/persian/topics/cj6n9211j84t?page=11>

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(22\)00378-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(22)00378-9/fulltext)

the world (Castells, 2009; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Littlejohn et al., 2017; Bahiya, 2018). People share their personal and social engagements with others via the internet. For example, in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran, social media plays a crucial role in showing the world what is happening there. Therefore, the usage of language and particularly social discourse of Iranian individuals play a fundamental role on promoting or not promoting the feminism in Iran through the social movement of “Woman Life Freedom” and I am going to analyze those discourses based on the Critical Discourse Analysis. Fairclough (1993) describes critical discourse analysis as both a methodological tool for examining social and cultural transformations and a means of resisting oppression and power imbalances (pp. 133-134). While the language usage or the use of language is constructed the social identity, social relations, and social knowledge, it is also constructed by them likewise. Furthermore, I am going to explore how do individuals participating in the Zan Zendegi Azadi movement in Iran, as reflected in their personal and social discursive presentations, navigate the intersections of gender identities, and how does this contribute to the promotion of women's rights within the Iranian social and political contexts? I hope this study may provide new opportunities for exploring the social movements. Because of the new feminist movement (Zan Zendegi Azadi) happening in Iran and since the data collection and access to data is included by my fellow Iranians, I can have more control over it. I believe this movement could be a feminist issue that can be studied in gender studies programs, which is gaining global attention and has also caught my interest to study it as well. Since this movement is a completely feminist movement started by Iranian women, the reason for this movement is the suppression of the female gender and other genders, and therefore it is completely an issue in the field of gender studies.

Therefore, this study will begin with analyzing the texts and statements of the words women life freedom which are often used on interviews. This study will cover the users' experiences in the movement for the purpose of change in meaningful ways. I am going to find out how this gender movement navigates the intersections between the identities, and the meaning individuals made from the experiences in their own words? How does Zan Zendegi Azadi promote women's rights with additional identities such as; race, ethnicity, class, ability or disability, sexuality, romance, and so on? How does Zan Zendegi Azadi indicate the Iranian identity that is situated within social, historical, cultural, and political contexts, with a focus on power, privilege, and oppression?

1.3. Research questions and hypotheses

In this study, we analyze the Instagram posts of Iranian individuals in which they represent the Woman Life Freedom movement. This research also explores how Zan Zendegi Azadi discourse is organized by users in virtual life. The research questions are focused on social media site use, particularly Instagram where a rich source of data is used by the individuals to represent the Zan Zendegi Azadi movement and its influence on woman's rights in Iran. The main research question is how the discursive of Zan Zendegi Azadi is promoting women's rights in Iran?

1.3.1. Question:

How do individuals participating in the Zan Zendegi Azadi movement in Iran, as reflected in their personal and social discursive presentations, navigate the intersections of gender identities, and how does this contribute to the promotion of women's rights within the Iranian social and political contexts?

1.3.2. Hypothesis:

Let us note that the people who join the Zan Zendegi Azadi movement in Iran partake in discursive performances that systemically portray how they handle the overload of their gender identity intersections. On the other hand, the processes of her social context showed that these people made notable contributions to women's movements within the Iranian socio-political context. The analysis of social and personal discourses showed how these participants integrated the prevailing rigid interpretations of gender roles, used them, and created new societal images to accomplish the so called progressive gender agendas.

1.4. Purpose of the study

Through this in-depth research, my goal is to analyze the extremely complex domain of gender relations and feminism taking into consideration the scope of the Middle East with an emphasis on Iran. By looking in detail at these topics, I hope to address some of the important and delicate issues surrounding gender relations and feminism in that part of the world. This research project draws on the stories and experiences of those who directly engage in the Woman-Life-Freedom movement in Iran. These narratives will enable me to show how these people strive for self-determination and actively work for the advancement of women's freedoms. Through this lens, the movement opens up

to us a remarkable understanding not only of the heavy gendered injustices these people endure but of their hopes for transformation.

This study focuses on the impact of the Woman-Life-Freedom movement on gender relations on the ground for participants as the movement integrates with their daily life. With a micro-level focus and examining personal narratives, I hope to illustrate how gender relations and feminism in Iran undergo change over a period of time. As the work progresses, an interesting story begins to emerge: the change in gender relations happens on the micro level and helps understand gender and feminism in a much broader context concerning Iranian societies. Understanding these changes helps uncover the wider social, cultural, or even political contexts that prompt such transformations. To anchor this work onto the existing literature, extensive work of research is carried out. This work is not only about analyzing the discourse and the vocabulary used by the participants of the narratives, but it also focuses on the dramatic side of their participation in the Woman-Life-Freedom movement. By paying attention to the language deployed, the stories told, and the deeds done, we will be able to understand what these social movements mean.

It is my intention that this analysis enables us to understand the complexity of individual agency, social norms, and collective change in gender and feminism.

1.5. Significance of the study

This study is of great significance because of its theory, practical, policy-oriented and epistemic contributions in relation to international social movements. In exploring the social dynamics of international social research, this study increases understanding while reinforcing the need to construct relevant practices that are culturally, religiously, and contextually rooted on deeply grounded principles. Also, this study illustrates an important lesson that is: social analysis of certain countries would require a disjunctive reading of some social phenomena that relates to gender order, so that comprehension is achieved. It puts forward the idea that social relations are complex and cannot be explained without understanding how gender relations condition social reality. In the contemporary context of advanced globalization, studying the life paths of people as they struggle for women's rights is one of the most important issues in research. Their struggle provides important insights that explain social realities and comprehensively interpret the challenges that different women encounter in different societies.

In this elaborate context, grasping the issues regarding clashes against the gender gaps in certain countries becomes crucial not only for these countries but also as a case from which other countries undergoing similar transformations can learn. Consequently, the significance of this study encompasses much more than the boundaries shocking scope by providing a useful case through which the complex interrelations of international social movements, gender, and global social problems can be analyzed.

1.6. Theoretical framework

This study centers on measuring the portrayal of gender within the Iranian social movement of Zan-Zendegi-Azadi (Woman Life Freedom) concerning two thousand twenty-two and after. Hence, this study goes beyond analyzing the discourse of Zan-Zendegi-Azadi and attempts to analyze the impact of discourse on social change, especially on women's rights in Iran. Actually, the objective is to analyze not only the verbal features of the discourse of the Zan-Zendegi-Azadi movement, but the processes by which such discourses impact social change. This involves analyzing the discourse of many Iranians who, in one way or another, support or oppose the social movement. By scrutinizing their communication, the research aims to uncover the ways in which discursive construction can be harnessed as a means to drive forward a specific agenda, in this case, the empowerment of women's rights. In order to achieve these research objectives, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective is adopted as the fundamental methodology and framework. This analytical approach is instrumental in dissecting the data collected for this study.

The term discourse and how it is going to be used in this study is a Critical Discourse Analysis. The basic and controversial discretion of discourse which is indicated by Foucault (1972) included power, knowledge, and culture. As he mentioned the discourse is a set of statements that are systematically organized (Foucault, 1972). Foucault (1972) in his book, *the Archaeology of Knowledge*, argue that systems of knowledge are governed by rules and regulations that represent the boundary of language and thought. As Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017: 110) explain, Foucault's concept of discourse does not refer to individual instances of language use but rather to the underlying structures, divisions, and regulatory frameworks that shape a given body of knowledge. Similarly, Norman Fairclough who is wellknown in critical discourse analysis, emphasizes that CDA serves as both a methodological approach for

studying social and cultural transformations and a tool for challenging systems of oppression and power (Fairclough, 1993, pp. 133-134). van Dijk (2011) represent the different feature of discourse which is known as social interaction among people and could be categorized as power and domination. Critical discourse analysis investigates how spoken and written language function as social practices that shape and reflect power dynamics (Wodak & Mayer, 2009, p. 5). On the other hand, van Leeuwen and Kress (2011) highlight critical discourse analysis and define the discourse as “socially constructed knowledge about some aspect of reality” (p. 113). By and large Critical Discourse Analysis which is presented in this research as a special method for examining the discursive usage of Zan Zendegi Azadi could understand by the following definition of van Dijk:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequality (2015: 466).

In this case, discourse is affected and constituted by society and it would be quite effective when examining gender as socially constituted.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Women and the Islamic Revolution of Iran

In the 1960s and 1970s, women with a political leaning attempted to create wider political spaces for themselves while opposing Western modernization and imperialism. Their most important activity helped shape the Iranian revolution of 1979 (Afary, 2009; Paidar, 1995, p. 190; Sadeghi, 2011). The lack of definite gender roles during these times enabled both modern and conservative women to participate in determining the direction of Iran's politics and society for decades to come (Sadeghi, 2011). Paidar (1995) is among scholars who argue that women activism did not solely arise from feminism. However, these women made no secret of their fierce will when they joined men to fight for social and political justice. They fought together toward achieving justice in the social and political life of the country.

The lack of gender differences within society did not cause more loosening of restrictions after the victory of the Islamic regime in 1979, which is quite surprising. During the period subsequent to the Islamic revolution, the newly formed “supreme Islamic ideological” regime focused single-mindedly on enforcing Sharia law as a fundamental element of the Iranian Constitution (Afary, 2009; Kian, 2013; Paidar, 1995, p. 255). Consequently, women experienced a rollback of numerous legal and social rights they had gained over the preceding 75 years, particularly in spheres concerning marriage, veiling, employment, and education (Paidar, 1995; Sadeghi, 2011).

The predominant role for women regressed to their traditional complementary positions as wives, mothers, daughters, or sisters (Paidar, 1995, pp. 257-260). For instance, a segment of the Constitution articulated that a woman's function within the family liberated her from being seen merely as an object or a tool serving consumerism and exploitation. She regained her critical role as a mother, nurturing ideologically committed individuals, and assumed a significant social role as a collaborator with men in essential aspects of life (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1989, p.4). Although there are the government's Article 21, which obligates the government to protect women's rights in Islam, the ambiguity of the article allowed clerics, like the Council of Guardians, to have too much power. Also, The ideal role model changed from the Queen to Zainab, granddaughter of Muhammad, then later Fatemeh, daughter of Muhammad, representing an ideal daughter, wife, and mother (Sadeghi, 2008). Thus,

women in Iran became part of a relational identity, where they are considered the property of the state and men with no substantial control over their own freedom or rights (Razavi, 2006; Sadeghi, 2008).

However, the Islamic regime didn't stand as an anti-modern system. Instead, it sought to eradicate the secularization born out of the Constitutional Revolution, substituting it with its version of modernity to maintain its grip on power (Afary, 2009). Ayatollah Khomeini and other Islamist scholars attributed the sexual objectification of women and family disruptions to Westernization. They advocated for women's suffrage, education, and political involvement to foster politicized Islamic identities among women (Afary, 2009; Paidar, 1995).

This modernity paradox sought to limit women along rigid Islamic lines, but at the same time it enabled them, both individually and collectively, to contest the Islamic patriarchal norms of hijab, gendered division of space, and mobility from the onset of the 1979 revolution (Afary, 2009). While the Islamic regime aimed at promoting a specific type of erstwhile modernity, it unwittingly created a space from which women had to straddle the expectations of tradition and the new modernity being crafted around them. This social dynamic complexity contained the essence of what was expected to be, done, and offered to Iranian women in terms of their activities, social liberty, and even their status. In the modern Iranian context women dealt with the never-ending shifting definitions of their place and identity in the society. They became active actors in carving out their space, breaking and contesting the boundaries defined by the ruling establishment, and also wrestling with traditional expectations.

The life of Iranian women after the Islamic revolution was not a single path to take; rather, it was a complex battle. They lived under a binary of empowerment on one side and social confines on the other, all the while reshuffling and accentuating their positions within the multi-layered milieu that is Iranian society.

2.2 Religion, Gender and Education

The ideology of Islamization triggered a substantial cultural transformation within educational institutions, leading to sweeping alterations in curricula, textbooks, dress codes, and the structure of co-education (Paidar, 1995, p. 314). From 1980 to 1983, a period marked as the "purification" phase of the cultural revolution, state-led closures of universities occurred alongside the Islamization of course materials. This phase

resulted in the dismissal of secular students and faculty, the enforcement of compulsory hijab, gender segregation, and the exclusion of 55 fields of study for women. Furthermore, Farrokhroo Parsa, who served as the Minister of Education during the Pahlavi reign from 1963 to 1968, faced execution after the revolution (Afary, 2009; Paidar, 1995, p. 314; Rezai-Rashti & James, 2009). However, women's education emerged as a critical element in the Islamic national process, pivotal for learning and disseminating Islamic knowledge and piety (Afary, 2009).

Women assumed the role of primary educators and mothers, serving as the linchpin between the private and public domains. They were tasked with imparting Islamic values and cultural teachings to their children. Hence, the "political urgency" placed on women's education positioned them in a pivotal social, political, and economic stance for the state (Paidar, 1995, pp. 312-313). Scholars such as Hoodfar contend that for some women with traditional backgrounds, hijab and the Islamic environment acted as catalysts, encouraging increased socio-educational involvement due to perceived safety and cultural alignment (Hoodfar, 2003). Women, who were previously barred from education, gained the ability to seek permission from their father or husband to attend university (Afary, 2009). Secular women who did not veil willingly adopted Islamic regulations to ensure their continued access to education. Consequently, the proliferation of universities across diverse regions enabled women from all social strata to pursue higher education (ibid).

The discourse surrounding sexuality, once regulated by Urf (custom) and religion, became part of the state's agenda (Afary, 2009; Ahmadi, 2016; Sadeghi, 2008). The state orchestrated the regulation of women's sexual objectification by endorsing ideals of virginity, chastity, advocating for early marriage, permitting polygamy and temporary marriage, while criminalizing pre-marital sex and restricting access to contraception and abortion (Afary, 2009; Aghajanian & Mehryar, 1999; Nomani & Behdad, 2006, table 4.1). The only available educational resource on sexuality and related practices reinforced women's secondary status, emphasizing their chastity and modesty (Mir-Hosseini, 1999, p. 206). Notably, Article 1108 of Iran's Islamic Civil Code legally mandated women to fulfill their husbands' sexual desires; failure to comply without religious justification could result in the loss of financial support (Kaar, 2000, p. 144).

Furthermore, women saw their reproductive rights curtailed by state actions, which criminalized abortion and restricted access to contraception, all under the guise of promoting Islamic population growth (Afary, 2009, p. 278; Aloosh & Saghai, 2015). In a Friday sermon in 1981, President Rafsanjani asserted that birth control contradicted women's Islamic duty to bear children, thereby stripping women of their decision-making authority in matters of birth control and breastfeeding (Paidar, 1995, p. 287). Despite a socioeconomic crisis and a baby boom in 1989, policies restricting birth control were reintroduced, maintaining the illegality of abortion (Afary, 2009; Jarahi et al., 2013; Paidar, 1995, p. 289). The theocratic state, while never advocating gender equality, modified initial gender discrimination to instrumentalize women as political tools in achieving its objectives. While encouraging women's participation in education and politics, the state also upheld women's traditional relational identities. Consequently, women wearing the chador and endorsing Muttah (temporary marriage) found slightly more leeway in sexual matters (Afary, 2009). However, young women without the chador persisted in their premarital relationships within the private realm, delaying marriage, seeking abortion, and asserting their autonomy in matters of birth control (Aghajanian & Mehryar, 1999; Kaivanara, 2016; Nomani & Behdad, 2006, table 4.1). Women's increased presence in public spaces, bolstered by education and financial stability, enabled them to challenge state and traditional norms through their choice of attire, employment, education, sexual expression, and behavior. Over the ensuing twenty-five years, Iranian women began contesting discriminatory laws within the framework of Islam (Kian, 2013; Khiabany & Sreberry, 2007).

This battle within Islam triggered a social change of an intricate nature. The educated Iranian women, with greater knowledge and awareness, commenced fighting discrimination as well as oppressive laws within the boundaries of Islamic principles. The movement aimed to achieve personal freedoms and rights within the confines of religious doctrine. During the efforts aimed at promoting Islamic values and norms, certain segments of the society resisted these efforts such as some women who were exposed to more education and different ways of thinking. The conflict between the state and the changing hopes of women sparked a baffling social gap which led to a negotiation saga of modernity and tradition.

Freedom and progress has allowed women to control their state-restricted lives and fight for their social freedom through their choice of clothing, education, career, and

relationships. With growing education and awareness, Iranian women began to demand their rights when permitted which led to the slow and soft reforming of religion. These shifts started into firmly casting the society perceptions and interpretations to shape to women being in charge of, equally and freely, very deeply rooted Islamic, sociocultural, and political structures. Women asserting their rights and actively participating in governance signaled a shift in the long-standing view of women. To say a religious context exposed women is to say, it has not paid attention to deeply rooted discriminatory customs. The fight marks a phase of Women's emergence within these straits being a manifestation of profoundly eradicating oppression that went on in control clubs. The dialogue on Islam complexion feminism has dominated political construct raised women's severing the globe surpassing signs control.

2.3 Hijab and It's role

The recurrence of mandatory hijab in Iran traces back to the revolutionary period. Iranian women, swayed by Shariati's anti-consumerist and anti-Westernization ideologies, initially embraced veiling as a unified protest against the toppled monarchical regime. At that time, hijab served as a means of desexualization in the politically dominated masculine sphere, granting women a sense of autonomous movement and shielding their identities from the scrutiny of the secret police (Afary, 2009; Sanasarian, 1982, p. 116). However, post-revolution, the symbolism of hijab transformed drastically: it evolved into a representation of "piety" and a mandated religious practice (Cooke, 2001, p. xi; Sadeghi, 2008). Moreover, veiling became a significant political emblem of the new regime, compelling women to adopt hijab to avoid isolation (Abdmolaei, 2014; Hoodfar & Ghoreishian, 2012; Paidar, 1995, p. 232).

Although the discourse surrounding veiling held deep historical roots in Iran, its forced reintroduction triggered social unrest and resistance among women. This resistance, in turn, undermined the legal enforcement of compulsory hijab in two distinct stages (Milani, 1992; Paidar, 1995). In 1979, the initial phase of mandatory hijab targeted women employed in the public sector and those accessing public services. Just a day after the imposition of mandatory hijab on March 8, 1979, around 20,000 Iranian women—both veiled and unveiled—joined by supportive men, staged a protest against compulsory hijab, chanting "na roosari na too sari" (no to the veil, no to persecution) in front of Tehran University (Paidar, 1995; Sadeghi, 2011). This demonstration, lasting five days, faced brutal suppression by Hezbollah forces using

stones, knives, and firearms. In contrast to the anti-hijab demonstration, fully veiled women marched in support of Ayatollah Khomeini's decree on mandatory hijab, under the full protection of the state (Afary, 2009, p. 274). Responding to both protests, Ayatollah Khomeini announced that the hijab mandate was a misunderstanding, revoking the obligation for women to wear hijab (Paidar, 1995, p. 235).

However, public disputes between prominent figures like Taleghani and Bani Sadr, alongside women's protests, delayed the implementation of universal compulsory hijab for a couple of years. Ultimately, Ayatollah Khomeini justified the mandatory hijab policy instituted in July 1981 by asserting that Islamic society could not exist without adherence to Islamic family structures and veiling practices (Paidar, 1995, p. 337; Afary, 2009, pp. 270-273). Following this decree, all women in Iran were mandated to wear at least "a long and loose cloak or overcoat, loose pants, and a large scarf," while displaying any hair, makeup, or nail polish became legally prohibited (Afary, 2009, pp. 270-273; Paidar, 1995, pp. 232-236; Sadeghi, 2011). The sight of women draped in black chadors became symbolic of loyal Iranian Muslim women, while those improperly veiled faced harassment and threats from men in some cities and rejection as customers by bazaar merchants in others (Shirazi, 2014, p. 100 in Afary, 2009).

The Parliament of Iran, which is called the Majlis, introduced Article 102, which sets a punishment of 74 lashes for women who do not wear the hijab in public, along with imprisonment ranging from 10 days to 2 months (Bayat, 2007; Paidar, 1995). Moral policing bodies with various names, Sar-Allah, Edare Amaken, Amre Be Maruf va Nahy az Monkar, began prosecuting cases of improper veiling. During a four-month period in 1990, an official report documented 607 arrests of improperly veiled women, 6589 forced submissions of affidavits, and 46000 official warnings issued (Bayat, 2007, p. 29). Moreover, the state-funded Hezbollah instilled fear by attacking stores serving improperly veiled customers or selling un-Islamic products (Amir Ebrahimi, 2008).

Predictably, previously unveiled middle- and upper-middle-class women, who were active contributors to society, faced the brunt of these mandates. In response, defying the dress code, such as displaying a lock of hair or wearing nail polish, became a form of resistance against the new regime (Afary, 2009, p. 270; Paidar, 1995, p. 342). The state's pressure to control women's bodies through hijab, juxtaposed with women's resistance by disobeying the dress code, widened the gap between women and the state.

Wearing the hijab became a political and religious symbol of social conflict, which, and changed women's movement in public (Fischer, 2003; Koo, 2014). The compulsory hijab not only imposed a dress code, but also changed the life, activities, and visibility of women in Iran. Such restriction changed completely the relations between the government and the women of the country. The second iteration of mandatory hijab, in essence representing the combination of state domination and women's body censorship, turned into a controversial issue of struggle and symbol of resistance. Active Iranian women from the middle and upper middle classes, used to participate in different aspects of the society, found themselves in conflict with the newly introduced rules. Their past participation in public life collided with the stringent codes of veiling enforced by the state.

Subtle acts of obedience sprung up as disobedience in ways of wearing the compulsory dresses. Women, in an act of defiance, purposely revealed few strands of hair or painted their nails regardless of the rules. These weightless actions defined the resistance to many regulations controlling their body discretion and public exposure. As a result, the mandatory hijab policy placed severe restrictions on women and violated their desire to control their lives and be free of government oversight.

The imposition of such regulations had a profound impact on society, arousing animosity and fear among women towards the state's surveillance apparatus aimed at monitoring and controlling their clothing. The image of the proper Iranian woman as wholly veiled and submissive to Iranian propaganda deeply entrenched social cleavages and deepened the alienation of those who did not conform. Women who chose to non-comply with the imposed dress code were subjected to harassment," threats of violence, and arrest, with sentences that included flogging and imprisonment. State violence and oppression to force compliance was, however, met by resistant behaviors through non-obedience in different strata of Iranian society. This reaction against the enforcement of the obligatory hijab was a clear manifestation of the fight for self-determination against an imposed identity that disregarded the individual's rights and liberties.

The issue of headscarf became a problematic topic more than the actual clothing; it became a center stage for fighting women's rights, self governance, and state intervention on personal lifestyle choices. This new pattern of public activity among women, which was marked by greater movement, reflects the growing gap between

state regulation of women's mobility and the women's movement itself. Thus an intricate story of the Iranian hijab was neatly folded into a story of politics, religion, and society all at once, representing the diverse and deep inclination and conflicts for civil rights freedoms and feminism.

2.4 Hijab as a fashion statement

In the 1990s, a period characterized by the Iran-Iraq war and the economic difficulties that followed, Rafsanjani began the "opening" policy, which permitted influence from abroad through satellite television. Young residents of Iran had the chance to see clips that featured Western women not wearing a scarf as happy, active, and confident women, which served as eye-openers for them. Witnessing this representation sparked a subconscious yearning among Iranian women to reclaim autonomy over their bodies. Although the last organized movement against mandatory hijab occurred in 1980, subtle acts of individual resistance among women to the enforced dress code started gaining prominence (Abdmolaei, 2014; Bayat, 2013; Hoodfar & Sadeghi, 2009).

Bayat (2007) described this resistance as a form of "loose imagined solidarity," a spontaneous union among disparate individuals who subjectively crafted shared values and common interests (p. 893). Moreover, female intellectuals and activists, both inside and outside of Iran, including Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, human rights lawyer Mehrangiz Kar, feminist scholar Fatemeh Sadeghi, legal activist Shadi Sadr, actress Golshifteh Farahani, and graphic novelist Marjane Satrapi—lent their voices to this growing movement of dissent. They challenged mandatory hijab through their writings, theatrical works, and research endeavors (Batmanghelichi & Mouri, 2017).

Women began pushing the boundaries of traditional hijab within Islamic norms, turning compulsory hijab into a fashion statement. They defied conservative norms that stigmatized innovative and colorful clothing choices as Westernized and harmful to Islamic values (Hoodfar, 2003; Hoodfar and Sadeghi, 2009). Consequently, their resistance weakened the institution of hijab during Khatami's reformist government (1997-2015). The focus of morality police shifted from minor infractions, like a single strand of hair showing, to more noticeable violations such as wearing shorter or more colorful manteaus, heavy makeup, and loosely worn headscarves. Additionally, the ideology promoting chador as the ultimate symbol of a devout Muslim woman's identity faced challenges under Khatami's administration. Some female members of Parliament

permanently abandoned wearing chadors (Razavi, 2006). In contrast, due to disparities between reformists and hardliners, the state introduced a new form of hijab named "chador melli" (national veil) in 2002.

During the rule of Ahmadinejad (2005-2013), there were more political elements to be considered in the discourse on hijab. Even when Ahmadinejad claimed not to care about hijab, there was an increase in conservative propaganda after he was elected, in particular surveillance and control over women's headscarf. The social environment witnessed the emergence of openly obnoxious "scholars" who shamelessly abused those women whom they did not consider to be wearing proper veils. Statements were made attributing improper hijab to inciting lust in men or causing natural disasters like earthquakes. Nevertheless, Iranian women now easily access the internet and various social media platforms, and without any fear, they appear without the hijab online, challenging the dress code that is imposed on them by the government (Ebrahimi & Salaverria, 2015).

The political resurgence of reformist factions in 2013 paralleled the rise of decentralized digital activism, as exemplified by initiatives such as My Stealthy Freedom and the White Wednesday campaign, both of which pioneered new forms of individual resistance to compulsory hijab laws through online platforms. These campaigns garnered international attention to women's pursuit of autonomy over their bodies. The digital platform provided a unique opportunity for women to globally support each other by engaging with and sharing each other's posts via smartphones, essentially using these devices as tools to document their daily experiences (Koo, 2014). Starting with the My Stealthy Freedom movement, women shared symbolic unveiled images along with personal narratives on a Facebook page. Subsequently, the White Wednesday movement emerged in 2017 as an offshoot of My Stealthy Freedom. The *White Wednesday* movement mobilized Iranian women to perform acts of civil disobedience by wearing white garments in public spaces every Wednesday. Participants documented and amplified their resistance through visual media, sharing photographs and videos of their symbolic protests across social media platforms (Bayat, 2007, p. 30). Combining the aforementioned ideas and movements, as well as the individual activism of Women's Rights advocates, a new social movement emerged, namely dokhtaran-e enghelab, or Daughters of Enqelab. She became an icon when she went on to an electric box on Enghelab street in Tehran on December 27th, 2017, tied

her white scarf to a stick, and protested the Iranian mandatory hijab by trying to set her scarf against the wind. This 'act of defiance' gained huge attention across social media platforms and gradually led many women to partake in this 'ceremony-like' act of defiance in multiple locations across Iran, spreading their photos on the internet.

This is yet another case where the disjunctive balance of power between the reformist and the hardliner ideologies came into play. Most of the women who participated in this performance were nationalist activists who were arrested and sentenced to prison by the government. However, Rouhani's government tried to defend these women. Influenced by the online sphere, the majority of women began to appear without the hijab in public spaces and recorded videos of themselves without it. While some scholars interpret these acts of unveiling or mis-veiling as political challenges to societal customs and Islamic law, these actions may not always represent explicit political protests. In reality, many women hesitate to openly challenge political matters in both public and private spheres (Sadeghi, 2008). For instance, Shaparak Shajari, among the first women detained for participating in the daughters of Enghelab movement, stated in an interview that freedom of attire is a social or individual action, not a political defiance against the state.

Despite women achieving a certain degree of freedom in their choice of hijab amidst extensive propaganda and surveillance efforts, the state continues to regulate women's attire in public spaces. It persists in promoting conservative hijab as the sole acceptable clothing choice for "respectable" women through various forms of propaganda, widespread education, and legal surveillance. For instance, in recent years, the state established kiosks operated by Basiji in public places like parks to promote a more conservative form of hijab through modeling and conversations. Regardless of the state's efforts to force Iranian women back to the outdated dress-code of the 1980s, overtly militant hijab propaganda has turned women against each other, glorifying those who embraced the hijab as "pearls in the shell" and condemning others as "distractions" or "loose women."

Despite Rouhani's government's attempts to exclude chador from the definition of perfect hijab, the Islamic attire law still requires women, to have their civil rights, like employment, to wear chador. Abdmolaei (2014) concludes that imbalances within power relations along with systemic subjugation tends to reduce the actively resisting

capability of the oppressed. However, the undertone of non-compliance to hijab regulations by Iranian women has been shifting the socio-legal landscape of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Regardless, all these conflicting values and practices lead to a sense of anxiety within society.

The ongoing conflict between differing values and practices has created a sense of perplexity and unease within Iranian society. Despite the continuous efforts by women to redefine the norms surrounding hijab, the persistent power imbalances and societal pressures remain substantial hurdles in their pursuit of autonomy over their attire. Notably, the state's persistent regulation and enforcement of conservative hijab norms persistently clash with the evolving aspirations and expressions of Iranian women. The government's relentless investment in propagandist measures and legal surveillance endeavors aims to uphold a particular version of hijab as the standard for women in public spaces.

Like in these examples, the recent attempts of establishing Basiji manned kiosks in public places aim to enforce the conservative hijab by talking and showcasing it as the only suitable garment. However, the state has also had a hard time shifting women back to the dress code of the 1980s. As a result, the ideals of hijab have been propagandized to cut women who do not adhere to the strict standards of hijab and thus, the demeaning disempowerment of women who do not comply to this oppression as morally loose has divided women unfavorably towards those in conforming to such standards.

Rouhani's administration attempted to exclude chador from the strict definition of perfect hijab, yet the Islamic attire law mandates its observance for women to secure their civil rights, particularly regarding employment opportunities.

While Abdmolaei (2014) contends that systemic oppression impedes the ability of the oppressed to actively resist, Iranian women's persistent conscious and unconscious defiance of hijab regulations continues to reshape the societal and legal landscape of Iran. Nevertheless, the contradiction between conflicting values and practices still persists in society perpetuates such confusion and anxiety.

The longstanding clash in Iranian society between pre-existing social structures and new forms of self-expression emphasizes the still-contested story of hijab and women rights applicable in the country. While trying to untangle these different threads, for

women autonomy over their bodies continues to be a protracted journey in the complex political and social realities of Iran.

2.5 Zan Zendegi Azadi

We should know that Zan, Zendegi, Azadi (Woman, Life, Freedom) is a socio-political Kurdish slogan. This slogan seeks to embody the importance of women's rights and gender equality. Even though there are many issues that embody socio-political struggles for equality, the gender equality movement is uniquely centred around raising consciousness of violence and inequality present in social interactions. The stereotypes social political and ethical phenomena of the gender equality movement capture use for their strategic and organizational mobilization encompass the essence of socio-political activities for gender equality and women's rights advocacy. Its purpose is to encourage social consciousness of the significance of women as opposed to discrimination based on gender. This ideology attempts to address issues of inclusivity and equity by pointing out the discrimination and violence suffered by women daily.

One of the significant reflections of this awareness was represented in women's funerals in Diyarbakir (the largest Kurdish-majority city in Turkey) and neighbouring cities where "women murdered on the pretext of honour" (Çağlayan, 2020, p. 194). In the codes of Muslim and traditional funerals, men perform the funeral for men and for women, and women are always supposed to remain as invisible as possible, and they are silenced on the corner. In the 2000s, the Kurdish women's movement has been characterized by the dual struggle for rights and resistance to violence, framing womanhood and Kurdish identity as interconnected (Çağlayan, 2020, p. 196). Therefore, in the city of Diyarbakir, and other neighbouring cities with a significant Kurdish population, a poignant representation of this awareness was witnessed during women's funerals. Traditionally, in Muslim and traditional funeral customs, men are responsible for conducting funeral rituals for men, while women are expected to remain invisible and silent, confined to the margins. However, in the 2000s, the Kurdish women's movement emerged, intertwining the pursuit of rights with the fight against violence, thereby linking womanhood and Kurdishness. The women's funerals marked the main and significant step to display the domestic and institutional violence against women. The symbolization of this bias and violence against women was represented in the slogans such as; The Kurdish slogan "Em jin in, namusa tu kesi nine, namusa me azadiya me ye" translates to "We are women, we are nobody's honor; our honor is our

freedom.” This statement connects women’s assertion of bodily autonomy to their broader demand for liberation (Çağlayan, 2020, p. 196). By indirectly connecting women's ownership of their bodies to their quest for freedom, the slogan emphasized the women's determination to break free from oppressive norms.

Another slogan that was attractive for its spelling and rhythm was “Jin Jiyan Azadi” which means “Woman Life Freedom”. In this slogan “the word woman is associated this time with life and not only with freedom” (Bocheńska, 2018, p. 47) and it is “promoted by left-wing circles in paintings and posters in Kurdistan” (Bocheńska, 2018, p. 139). This slogan which is support the women's rights and is against the murders of women serves as a powerful statement of Kurdish identity and represent their fight for the women's right (Çağlayan, 2020, p. 215). This phrase associated the concept of womanhood not only with freedom but also with life itself. It became an emblem which was extensively publicized through paintings and posters by leftist circles in Kurdistan. The slogan of women’s murders served as a symbolic simplification of a proverbial Kurdish woman and of the perpetual fight of Kurds for women’s rights. It incorporated the will of women to fight as well as support their women to stand together actively to safeguard their essence and being free women in the society.

With these slogans and the socio-political movements, they stand for, Kurdish women are still struggling to gain rights while simultaneously fighting against violence and inequality. The fighting discrimination slogans are tools for mobilization, awareness and justice which help people, both within and outside the Kurdish community, to support the struggle for gender equality and women’s emancipation.

2.6 Mahsa Amini’s Death and Zan Zendegi Azadi

The slogan Woman, Life, Freedom highlights the situation of women in Iran, and the death of Mahsa Amini clearly demonstrates the lack of human rights in the country. Leaving aside the sociopolitical realm, the Iranian society has failed to grasp the real essence of a woman’s role. Mahasa Amini graduated high school, but she had to undergo ‘diversified’ education. This is when girls finish primary school and are taught skills deemed appropriate, such as sewing or cooking, after which they are taught some academic subjects during their secondary school education.\ “She was arrested by the morality police for apparently violating the regime's strict Islamic rules on hijab and

head-covering. During her detention, the police subjecting her to severe physical harassment, which resulted in her death. The killing sparked widespread public outrage, triggering mass demonstrations across the nation as news of her death circulated rapidly through social media platforms (Al Jazeera, 2022¹). Euronews² (2022) reports that Amini's death was an event that spearheaded protests in Iran, as well as internationally from the Iranian diaspora and allies. BBC³ (2022) remarked, the arrest and subsequent death of Mahsa Amini, 22, in morality police custody has ignited nationwide demonstrations of historic scale in Iran. CNN⁴ (2022) described the protest in Iran as more widespread than before and said “A barrier of fear has been broken in Iran. The regime may be at a point of no return”. The New York Times⁵ (2022) reports, on Saturday, Iran witnessed its most significant anti-government demonstrations since 2009, with protests expanding to approximately 80 urban center.

The demonstrations were huge, and they are not organized by a group or any kind of opposition. It runs across the country, to universities, schools, and streets and they were not just protesting for the compulsory hijab which caused Mahsa's death, they were protesting something beyond the hijab, they were seeking life and freedom. According to Tara Sepehri Far, an Iran researcher at Human Rights Watch, the Iranian government may attempt to suppress dissent, but it cannot silence the ongoing discussion about women's rights—a debate that extends far beyond the hijab, a prominent symbol of gender inequality (The Lancet, 2022).

BBC Persian⁶ (2022) gathered information about Mahsa Amini's death and made a report from her arrest to her death. BBC Persian (2022) reports, by confirming the death of Mahsa Amini in some cities people protested on the streets. And one day after her death Mahsa's funeral ceremony was held in the presence of people and under security conditions in Aichi, Saqqez. The people present at this ceremony chanted “Jin Jiyan Azadi” which means “Zan Zendegi Azadi”, and several Iranian women and men shaved and cut their hair, and some others burned their scarves in public to protest against the

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/16/iranian-woman-dies-after-moral-polices-detention-reports>

² <https://www.euronews.com/2022/09/17/iranian-president-orders-investigation-into-death-of-woman-arrested-by-morality-policy>

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/63132235>

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/05/middleeast/iran-protests-regime-intl>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/world/middleeast/iran-protests.html>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-62984076>

death of Maha Amini. The protests reached every province in Iran, drawing participants from all walks of life who united under the rallying cry 'Woman, Life, Freedom' to challenge the oppressive rule of the country's religious leaders (The Lancet, 2022).

The slogan "Zan Zendegi Azadi" has evolved and taken on different meanings, often reflecting the ongoing struggle for women's rights in Iran (The Guardian¹, 2022). While some view it as a way to promote women's liberation from societal and patriarchal constraints, others argue that it could be misused to justify violent actions or radical beliefs (BBC News, 2022).

The death of Mahsa Amini accompanied by the phrase 'Zan Zendegi Azadi' carries immense sociopolitical weight in Iran. It has stirred severe public conversation on a woman's right and freedom and has shown the hindrances women come across for getting equal rights. The tragedy has also shed more light on the Iranian government's use of heavy-handed tactics to silence opposition and curtail activism (Human Rights Watch², 2022).

The event that led to death of Mahsa Amini highlights the fight for women's freedom and rights in Iran (Freedom House, 2021). Several inequalities, such as compulsory hijab and restriction of educational and job opportunities, continue to exist and worsen the situation of women's rights (United Nations³, 2020). On the other hand, the event has also mobilized women's rights advocates from inside the country and beyond to act and advocate for their Iranian counterparts.

2.7 Sexual revolution or modern sexual inequality

Achieving economic, social, and political empowerment, as well as advanced educational opportunities have appreciably improved the women's mastery over their reproductive rights. Significant reforms were made during Khatami's presidency (1997-2005): the legal age of marriage for women was increased; married women were permitted to obtain legal abortions during life threatening conditions for the mother or child prior to four months of pregnancy; mandatory family planning was instituted for unmarried university students, soldiers and married couples; and contraceptive methods

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/oct/03/something-sparked-iranian-women-art-protest-mahsa-amini>

² <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/iran>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/gender-equality>

became more widely available (Jarahi, 2014; Afary, 2009, p. 330; Paidar, 1995). These reforms portrayed the onset of a period when Iranian women began to confront and resist gender inequality by exercising their sexual agency and disrupting the existing power relations in intimate partnerships (Kaivanara, 2016). This newfound sexual autonomy gave rise to a sexual revolution in the 2000s, which altered the sexual and moral behavior of many young women in Iran (Hojat, 2015; Sadeghi, 2008).

At the same time, views regarding women as possessions were greatly interlinked with the concepts of modesty and virginity (Afary, 2009; Mahdavi, 2009; Merghati-Khoei, 2008). Within the framework of Iranian society, the medicalization approach advocated by Foucault (1978) contributed to the belief that being a virgin was synonymous with being physically healthy (Ahmadi, 2016). Thus, socially accepted expressions of sexuality and their corresponding degrees of freedom were equally harsh towards men and women, women, in particular, were forced to be ethnocentric in a way that appreciated and respected the different cultural meanings associated with the idea of virginity. The authoritarian life of patriarchy empowered some women to disobey while at the same time forcing others to submit to patriarchal standards which helped in attempting to achieve virginity through reconstructive surgery or alterative sexual relations. Regardless of the option chosen, women who sought sexual enjoyment were all forms of “subtle defiance” which suggest the lack of a particular society’s jurisdiction over women’s sexual autonomy (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 121; Ahmadi, 2016, p. 232).

Even with the progress towards sexual freedom, women still suffered from various forms of violence due to the absence of legal protections and mentalities that discouraged affection in public, systems of shame, and silences (Mahdavi, 2009; Sadeghi, 2008). A deeply rooted culture of silence and shame stopped women from declaring their sexual wishes because they jeopardized or denigrated their male partners (Janghorban et al., 2015). Several women spoke up and negotiated their sexual needs being met, but many others were still left in a position where sacrificing their wishes was the only option (ibid). In combination with insufficient legal protection, this attitude discriminated against all women by limiting their sexual freedoms. These constraining positions affected married women who, under Islamic law, must meet their husbands sexual needs, and single women who sought to meet men’s urges while managing to be chaste and virginal (ibid).

With no legal sexual rights granted to women and with cultural mores hindering individual action, the advent of the internet radically changed the conversation around sexuality and relationships as a forum for discussion and expression. Women on the other hand were able to combat sexual discrimination through online dating, digital relationships, and sexuality discussions as a form of empowerment in the virtual world. Additionally, feminist-centric channels and pages, like Everyday Feminism, aimed at educating on topics such as virginity, marital rape, and child marriage. Yet, amidst these efforts, women faced criticism for seeking sexual autonomy due to the society's paradoxical values (Akhavan, 2013).

Some critics, exemplified by Natoori's weblog post from April 7, 2008, adamantly advocated maintaining secrecy around sexual discourse, underscoring the prevalence of this viewpoint in Iranian culture. Coupled with limited education, unreliable sources, and a lack of proper knowledge, these factors hindered substantial sexual emancipation, perpetuating ongoing gender disparities, passivity, and double standards in sexual matters (Hojat, 2015).

Certainly, the multifaceted challenges faced by women striving for sexual autonomy persisted despite their active engagement and the emergence of online spaces for expression. The ongoing social and cultural complexities intertwined with legal limitations continued to shape and confine women's choices and freedoms concerning their sexuality.

Women attempting to own a space for their sexual freedom faced counter movements and criticism in the evolving digital landscape. Women's virginity, marriage, and other child marriage issues that require progressive intervention and social norm challenging became universally prohibited topics. As the digital space presented opportunities for discussion and expression, it brought barriers, proving to be a hostile environment in exercising sexual freedom and virginity claiming.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the internet is both enabling and empowering in nature. Some parts of the digital world serve as places where women can challenge the status quo. However, there is equal possibility of online spaces becoming platforms that reinforce women bashing along with the blaming for breaking free from conventions. The potential and the reality put forth serve as two sides of the same coin.

The efforts for the sexual emancipation of Iranian women have, in essence, faced challenges due to difficulties posed by culture, society, law, and technology. Searching to achieve gender equality which is coupled with independence is an ongoing fight requiring the overcoming of many Iranian societal values and cultural phenomena. The hope stems not only from the extensive reforms that are required, but also from the firm determination that women possess to fight for their right and change the deeply embedded sexual attitudes towards women in Iran. Such change is hoped will bring along fundamental shifts in the cultural views of women rights and sexual freedom in Iran.

2.8 The role of Social Media in Social movements

There is a widespread belief that technological progress, particularly in communication, plays a key role in shaping social movements. Nonetheless, how this change is interpreted? What are the consequences, advantages or disadvantages? The public has a legitimate interest in understanding the effects of media, especially the Internet, given the wide range of optimistic and pessimistic predictions about their influence on society and community (Lehr Lehnardt, 2005, p. 55). It is a well-known fact that any revolution and development brings lots of changes, protests, violence, confrontations. Social movements emerge and thrive within the public sphere, which Castells (2009, p. 301) describes as "the arena of social and meaningful interaction where ideas and values are shaped, communicated, challenged, and defended, ultimately serving as a foundation for action and response." Platforms like social media amplify voices on topics that are often suppressed or ignored in mainstream discourse. To understand why social movements, use social media we have to understand how social movements operate. It is essential to examine the conceptual and theoretical foundations of social movements, as social media enables them to engage simultaneously with individuals and broader society.

Castells (2009: 5) claims, "social media, it means they communicate with words and visual effects. Nonikashvili (2013) quotes, "There is a difference between street and online protest. Believe me, it takes a less courage to sit in front of computer". Shirky (2011) mention, social media have reshaped global communication and also changing the way information circulates and redefining interactions between the state and people. Beyond its use as a social networking tool, social media allows for the first time any individual to share content and opinions to a global audience, by passing traditional

media or other modes of information transmission (European Parliament¹, 2013). Digital platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) have empowered activists to broadcast real-time events to a worldwide audience, as exemplified during the Arab Spring uprisings (Pew Research Center, 2012). This connectivity transforms localized struggles into matters of international significance, while fostering solidarity between grassroots organizers and a global network of engaged citizens.

Social media has started to have an impact on social movements in the past years. The term #hashtag is often used in social media such as X, Facebook, Instagram, etc. for sharing and supporting a special case and it became the most significant tool to inform the people via mainstream media. There are several #hashtags terms and even movements such as; #AskHerMore, #Metoo, #BringBackOurGirls, #NiUnaMenos, #DressLikeAWoman, #HeForShe, #WomensMarch and so on, that got an attention and support. Therefore, it seems that in modernintiy #hashtag can be a powerful weapon. There are different #Hashtag movements all around the world which inspired people to lunch a group or movement in their social life. This case, using #Hashtage, became popular all around the world and you can find many cases which uses the #Hashtage to support a case.

In Iran like other countries, social media play an important role to encouraging people and supporting a case. Using social media in Iran for supporting and running a movement started in 2009 Iranian presidential election protests. In that period of time, Facebook plays an important role for this movement. People made a group and announce the time and place for gathering and protesting. By sharing and posting different videos and pictures of protesting in different cities, try to support the movements and share true news about it. But government tried to block and limited the access to the internet. The Green Movement demonstration turned out in Iran, particularly on Tehran streets to protest official claims with the slogan that was #Where is my Vote. This movement was driven out by the Iranian presidential election in 2009 and led to the social and political movements and "mobilizations on a scale not witnessed since the 1979 revolution" (Adelkhah, 2012, p. 17). Sadeghi (2012: 123) analyzed this movement and called it "a struggle against Islamist patriarchy". While the election protest participation was limited in both duration and specific objectives, it

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-7-2013-0402_EN.html

nevertheless served as an influential model for effective civic engagement. It raised women's awareness and took their issues to the general public" (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2010, p. 85).

#WhiteWednesdays or #MyStealthyFreedom is an online performance that is started by Masih Alinejad in 2014. It also became "one of the most popular Iranian campaigns on social media" (Mohammadi, 2020, p. 656). Fassihi in her study focused on this movements and investigated the "women's rights as neo-orientalism" (Fassihi, 2020).

#GirlsofEnghelabStreet is another movement that is performed by Iranian girls against compulsory hijab. The movement started by Vida Movahed when she stood on a utility box in Enghelab street in Tehran on 27 of December 2017 and she tied her headscarf to a stick. After that other Iranian girls did the same performance and they called as #GirlsofEnghelabStreet. In view of these facts, they "become the face of White Wednesdays and a general symbol of anti-hijab protest" (Esfandiari, 2018).

On 16 September 2022, the 22 years old girl Mahsa (Jina) Amini who was born in a Kurdish family in Saqqez, Kurdistan Province in Iran died in Tehran. She died days after being arrested by morality police for allegedly not complying with strict rules on head coverings (BBC Persian, 2022)¹. Amini's death has sparked fundamental protests across the country. The New York Times (2022)² reports that lots of people in different cities in Iran protest and Iran witnessed its most significant wave of anti-government demonstrations since 2009. Indeed, by confirming the suspicious death of Mahsa Amini, in some cities, people started to protest against the state and government. In Mahsa's funeral ceremony in Aichi, Saqqez, people chanted "Jin Jiyan Azadi" which in the Persian language is called "Zan Zendegi Azadi" which means "Woman Life Freedom". The powerful demonstrations at Mahsa Amini's funeral rapidly expanded nationwide, uniting Iranians across all provinces and social strata in chanting "Woman, Life, Freedom" - a rallying cry against the authoritarian regime of Islamic clerics (The Lancet, 2022)³. The slogan, which became one of the most central revolutionary slogans for Iranians during recent protests in Iran as well as outside of Iran, gained significant popularity throughout the world. The constant use of #ZanZendegiAzadi hashtags in

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-62930425>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/world/middleeast/iran-protests.html>

³ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(22\)00378-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(22)00378-9/fulltext)

social media has become one of the most important and active hashtags of the gender movement in the world. This slogan embodies the relationship between the women's rights movement and other economic and social issues.

2.9 Internet and social media in the Islamic Republic of Iran

After the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, Iran entered a period of political transition. Alongside such constructions, the International acknowledgment of women's achievements in literature, filmmaking, journalism, research, and the arts shifted in favor of women, which was argued alongside a more modernist Islam rule that opened Iranian culture and arts (Mir-Hosseini, 1999).

Several Iranian female directors such as Rakhshan Bani Etemad, Tahmineh Milani, Manijeh Hekmat, and Samira Makhmalbaf have gained the international attention when they represent women's issues in their movies. Along the same lines, Shahrnouch Parsipour, Goli Taraghi, Zoya Pirzad, and Fatemeh Haj Seyyed Javadi are some of the famous novelists who wrote about the effects of misogynist culture on women. The *Zanan* (Women), *Huquq zanan* (Women's Rights), *Jense Dovom* (Second Sex), and *Zan* (Woman) magazines were a force to challenge gender-based oppression and discriminatory practices, some of them embracing Western feminism and its successes (ibid).

Women also participated in politics significantly during this time, especially during the reformist presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005). This period was marked by promises for women's rights, social justice, and freedom of expression within the confines of Islamic law (Kian-Thiebaut, 2008, pp. 56-57; Sadeghi, 2009). Women organized non-governmental organizations, like the Women's Society Against Environmental Pollution, while Islamic feminism started to develop under the support of some clerics like Mohsen Said Zadeh, Kadivar, and Abdullah Nuri (Hoodfar, 1998; Hoodfar and Sadeghi, 2009; Nashat, 2003). This more permissive political climate led to women gaining some social and legal autonomy. Barriers in educational and professional domains were dismantled, and enforcement of hijab and restrictions on public interactions eased. Iranian women projected an international image contradicting the stereotype of oppression often associated with them in Western perceptions (Kian-Thiebaut 2008, p. 56).

The time was marked with unstable politics caused by conflicts between the reformists and the hardliners. During the resurgence of reformist movements in 1997, freedom of speech was heavily suppressed which resulted in the arrest of several journalists, women included. At the same time, the growth of the internet offered women a new space to express their issues (Batmanghelichi & Mouri, 2017; Khiabany & Sreberny, 2007, p. 33). Activists and journalists utilized blogs and online forums to express their opinions and stories on a global scale (Rahimi, 2007).

For example, Sahar Maranlou, a scholar and journalist, used her blog to critique and challenge societal perceptions of Islamic modesty for Muslim women. She highlighted issues related to immodesty and questioned the rationale behind mandatory veiling in Iran (*ibid*). Digital feminist platforms including Zanestan (Women's State), Iran-Dokht (Daughter of Iran), Bad Jens (The Mean One), Women in Iran, and the Iranian Feminist emerged as significant spaces for advocating women's rights (Bayat, 2013, pp. 103-105; Khiabany & Sreberny, 2007). Social media, especially Facebook, provided a more accessible space for women to engage in public discourse. Women utilized social media to challenge traditional norms and restrictions, transcending cultural and legal barriers (Ebrahimi & Salaverria, 2015; Jenks, 2003, p. 3).

Drawing from Goffman's theory of self and stages, the online sphere allowed women to narrate and discover their true selves, granting them empowerment in the public domain (Amir-Ebrahimi 2008, p. 4; 2008; Koo, 2014). Online interactions facilitated the formation of a global solidarity among Iranian women, leading to grassroots movements like the one million signature campaigns and the Green movement. Yet, during Ahmadinejad's presidency, the government manipulated the internet, initially using mis-veiled women as a propaganda tool before suppressing women's voices and online activities. Websites containing the words "zan" or "zanan" (woman/women) were filtered, but activists found innovative ways to persist in challenging the status quo online (Afary, 2009, p. 332; Hoodfar & Sadeghi, 2009).

Women actively participated in collective actions against gender discrimination, notably in June 12, 2005, and March 8, 2006, and 2007, despite Ahmadinejad's denouncement of feminist activities and women's NGOs as a "Western plot" (Sadeghi, 2011). The conservative government reshaped the Center for Women, emphasizing

modesty and traditional identity. The head of the center rejected international treaties for women's rights, reflecting a conservative stance (Sadeghi, 2008).

Under Rouhani's reformist government (from 2013 onwards), women's situations showed signs of improvement. He appointed women to key positions, encouraging their participation in sociopolitical spheres and education. However, inconsistencies in the government's approach to women's rights prompted Iranian women to persist in their pursuit of equality both in the public sphere and online. Various online feminist movements emerged, advocating for diverse agendas inside and outside Iran (Batmanghelichi & Mouri, 2017; Koo, 2014).

Platforms like My Stealthy Freedom focused on mandatory hijab, while Zanan online TV and The Iranian Feminist Everyday addressed discrimination, violence, and marginalized identities. Websites like Women Watch, didehban zanan, and Badarzani challenged discriminatory laws and promoted gender equality within the Islamic framework (Batmanghelichi & Mouri, 2017). These platforms started debates regarding women's sexual rights, menstruation, virginity, and marital rape, which aided the discussion of sensitive issues (Batmanghelichi & Mouri, 2017). Regardless of the conservative backlash, Iranian women were still able to utilize online spaces to push back on deeply rooted traditions and fight for gender equality, allowing for the creation of a digital space to voice their frustrations and dreams (Akhavan, 2013).

In Iran, women face an intricate combination of social, cultural, and legal restrictions that impact their freedom of movement, dress, and sexual conduct. The civil disobedience brought forth by women's use of body autonomy took form in digital and public spaces (Amir Ebrahimi, 2008, p. 94). The struggle for women's rights continues, buoyed by the online space that provides a medium for advocating gender equality and challenging entrenched norms and policies.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL BASIS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

After gathering the relevant literature about the topic of the research, this chapter represent the methodological approaches of the research. This chapter enable us to underlie the data collection.

3.2. Methodology for data selection, collection, and analysis

In the second chapter, which is dedicated to the literature review, we begin by discussing discourse as initially related to language use. Gradually, we come to understand the relationship between discourse and social practice. Therefore, in this chapter, we will examine discourse as both constitutive of and constructed by society. It is also important to emphasize that these interrelations are not formed in 'monolithic or mechanical ways' (Fairclough, 1993, p. 134).

3.3. Multi-level analysis as a cornerstone in CDA

No matter which approach to Critical Discourse Analysis a study takes, using different sort of methods of analysis has always been common. For example, Fairclough (1993: 134-5) in his researches represent that language does three main things: (i) it expresses social identities, (ii) it shapes social relationships, and (iii) it reflects shared knowledge and beliefs. This idea represent the Halliday's (1978) theory and also emphasizes that language use for many different purposes. In this perspective, language serves three meta functions: ideational meta function, referring to a text representing ideas, events, entities, and people; interpersonal meta function, referring to relationships between interlocutors; and textual meta function, referring to cohesion and coherence at and above the sentence level. Fairclough (1995: 97) for studying the CDA we shoul consider three issues: text; discursive practice; and socio-cultural practice. At the first dimension, the analyst targets linguistic description on a variety of tools depending on what he or she is examining. Stage Two analyzes how discursive processes are produced, shared, and understood. The final stage then connects these textual and discursive practices to the larger social context. However, this study uses a socio-cognitive approach for analysis. While it builds partly on the earlier framework as its methodological foundation, it also includes mental models to account for cognition. According to van Dijk (2006), cognition serves as a bridge,

enabling the interaction between discourse and society. This approach links surface-level discourse (the actual text) to wider discursive and socio-cognitive meanings. This multi-layered perspective is central to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is not a single, fixed method, nor does it follow one unified theory (van Dijk, 2015, p. 468). The variety of approaches discussed earlier supports this view.

Given this, most CDA studies support using a flexible methodological approach that combines different perspectives. For example, research on women wearing the veil, hijab, or other Islamic coverings often draws on multiple analytical frameworks to explore the issue fully. (like: Farhadytooli, 2022), analysis reveals a triangulation of theoretical frameworks combining aspects of Fairclough's social model, van Dijk's sociocognitive approach and Wodak's discourse historical approach. Consequently, implementing an eclectic methodology was appropriate. Beyond the widely accepted eclectic approach in CDA, another key feature is the multi-layered nature of analysis itself. Fairclough's framework exemplifies this, employing distinct yet interconnected levels of scrutiny. Similarly, van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach integrates multiple analytical tiers—distinguishing between the micro level (e.g., verbal exchanges) and the macro level (e.g., societal power dynamics) (van Dijk, 2015: 468). Yet, a meso level often bridges these extremes, ensuring discursive practices effectively translate between individual interactions and broader social structures. The interplay between micro and macro levels reflects discourse's dual role as both shaped by and shaping society. This allows analysts to design studies in two ways: Bottom-up: Starting with linguistic details (e.g., word choice, syntax) and uncovering their strategic functions (Bayram, 2010). Top-down: Beginning with ideological or communicative goals and tracing their linguistic manifestations. While both approaches are valid and documented in research, they risk oversimplifying discourse as a linear process. In reality, social phenomena demand a nonlinear perspective, where micro, meso, and macro levels dynamically influence one another. A holistic understanding of discourse requires this fluidity, acknowledging that each level continuously reshapes and is reshaped by the others.

This approach still faces some common challenges. For example: should analysis follow a nonlinear method? If yes, where should the analysis begin? This study starts by looking at the broader social and cultural context, then breaks the analysis into connected levels for easier examination. But before explaining these levels, it's important to note that: Most research divides features into either micro or macro levels.

However, some elements of what this study calls the meso level (the discursive context) are often grouped under micro or textual analysis—especially in studies of online writing. This can sometimes make the analysis less clear.

To solve this, our method includes the meso level as a separate step in the analysis. This not only makes the results clearer but also helps connect the gap between micro and macro levels—a known issue in CDA. As van Dijk (2015: 268-9) points out, CDA must "bridge" this gap to create a complete analysis that matches the unified nature of discourse itself. When designing the method, it's also important to remember that these levels don't follow a straight line—they interact with each other in a flexible, back-and-forth way.

3.4. Data selection and collection

To answer the research questions, data will be gathered from Instagram. This data will come from Iranian users who are actively involved in these movements by sharing posts, videos, or pictures on their personal Instagram pages. All these users are Iranian. However, some of the post is written in Persian language while the others are in English. However, their choice to write in English or Persian has an impact on their posts and readerships where non-Iranian could find out more about and what is going on Iran. By posting in English, these Iranian activists aim to connect with more educated Iranians, who they believe are more likely to support their calls for change. They also use English to reach an international audience that may back their efforts for reform.

3.5. Criteria for data selection and collection

Since this research focuses on gender issues, it's important to define what counts as gender-related content. Iran has one of the strictest gender segregation systems globally, so any mention of "woman" or female identity in a text likely relates to gender. This is especially true on social media, where many users openly discuss women's rights. However, not all posts on these pages are relevant to this study. To ensure focus, specific selection criteria were applied:

1. Timeframe: Only posts from 2022 were included because this was when most reform movements gained momentum in Iran.
2. Content: Posts had to directly address women's issues—specifically, topics about what Iranian women can do, what rights they have, or what changes they seek. In other words, the posts had to clearly relate to gender.

3.6. Pilot study leading to main study

Following these two criteria, an initial sample of nine posts was selected for a pilot study. At first, keyword searches were used to identify relevant posts on Instagram. The search terms included: woman, women, girl, girls, lady, ladies, "Woman, Life, Freedom," and Mahsa Amini—all chosen for their clear connection to gender issues. However, this method did not produce enough suitable posts. As a result, for the main study, the researcher switched to manually reviewing posts from 2022 on the selected Instagram pages. This approach ensured that only content directly related to the study's focus was included. A total of 15 posts were collected, comprising the population for the study at hand. These were later divided into categories depending on the topics discussed in them. The categories included the following topics:

- Gender segregation
- Women education
- Women in politics
- Hijab and Islamic clothing
- Woman rights
- A general category with more inclusive content on women rights in Iran.

Naturally, certain topics gained more traction than others in these posts, while some were barely mentioned – likely reflecting their lower prominence in offline discussions. To ensure relevance, the study prioritized themes that received greater public attention, aligning with key women's rights issues in Iran. From these prominent topics, a representative sample of 15 posts was selected, maintaining the same proportion of topics as they appeared in the original dataset.

After that, each post was assigned a number and then transcribed using a clause-based transcription system. Using systemic functional grammar (Halliday & Mattiessen, 2013), we analyzed each post by breaking it down into its main clauses. The primary verb served as the focal point of each clause. We numbered these clauses sequentially (1, 2, 3, etc.). For embedded clauses, we kept them grouped with their main clause but added alphabetical identifiers (e.g., 1a, 1b for clauses embedded within clause 1). This numbering system allowed for organized analysis. Finally, we applied our analytical approach to each topic's posts individually, maintaining consistency across the dataset.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the topic of Women's right in Iran. 15 posts have been randomly chosen from the Instagram in 2022 to study the relevant topic of this research. Therefore, this chapter presents data analysis for the topic in the sample of posts at hand. This topic consists of 15 posts on the topic of women right in Iran.

4.2. Social Media Instagram Engagement of Iranian Celebrities by Profession

This table captures the essence of the data, focusing on the engagement metrics like followers, likes, and comments, as well as categorizing the celebrities by their profession (actors, footballers, political activists, singers).

Table. 1 The table provides key insights into Katayoun Riahi's social media influence:

Account Holder's Name	Profession	Number of Posts	Number of Followers	Number of Likes	Number of Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of Shares	Number of Views	Number of Hashtags in Posts
Taraneh Alidoosti	Actor	325	8.1 million	1,730,063	10,015	72	145,170	2,231,456	2
Katayoun Riahi	Actor	361	1.3 million	1,023,133	142,764	21,171	987,348	1,372,303	3
Golshifteh Farahani	Actor	954	17 million	607,506	12,356	2,969	2,597	1,292,087	2
Mahnaz Afshar	Actor	463	18.8 million	257,208	9,258	6,207	3,672	525,980	1
Hamid Farrokhnezhad	Actor	935	3.3 million	240,766	5,679	7,865	257,652	62,803	0
Ali Karimi	Footballer	646	14.6 million	1,754,774	397,321	80,668	547,706	3,346,786	0
Fatemeh Motamed-Aria	Actor	209	716,000	88,259	4,856	2,097	152,435	1,033,021	2
Narges Mohammadi	Political Activist	968	259,000	10,139	1,760	147,876	3,879	25,790	2
Ali Daei	Footballer	127	12.4 million	1,877,468	15,532	93,589	11,400	3,789,421	0
Toomaj Salehi	Singer	60	2.6 million	584,381	201,607	1,931	30,372	1,486,213	0
Nazanin Boniadi	Actor	1,033	886,000	162,544	6,743	1,556	8,213	476,831	0
Ehsan Karami	Actor	750	1.2 million	88,099	3,879	12	50,390	265,832	0

Shaghayegh Dehghan	Actor	261	931,000	102,000	25,876	2,939	21,431	544,853	0
Maryam Bobani	Actor	863	152,000	34,191	1,537	0	5,987	102,678	2
Karim Bagheri	Footballer	97	3.6 million	975,684	20,921	55,638	63,851	1,435,632	1

4.2.1. Katayoun Riahi:

Katayoun Riahi is an Iranian actress well known for her roles in various films. In the wake of Kadiyar's death, Riahi was one of the few popular actresses from Iran to comment on the tragedy. Observing Riahi's sentiment on social media, she posted a picture of Amini stating: "In mourning for women of Iran." These few words serve as a powerful reminder of how, women in Iran are denied their basic rights by their own government.

Riahi did not only experience personal grief; she sought to utilize the platform she had to speak about the greater human rights violations committed against women in Iran. By speaking of these matters, she went against traditions and brought forth the issue of unrest with the regime. With what she did, Riahi wanted to motivate people to see the increasing apathy and frustration prevailing within the Iranian populace towards the ruling regime's policies. Her actions underscored the need of the moment - to openly express the frustration that has built up regarding the treatment of women and citizens in general and to vehemently call for their rights to be respected.

Katayoun Riahi's response to the death of Mahsa Amini was more than just an act of clear defiance; it was also a wider call for unity and resistance.



Figure 1: Katayoun Riahi's post

Table. 2 The table provides key insights into Katayoun Riahi's social media influence:

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Katayoun Riahi	actress	361	1.3 million	1023133	142764	21171	987348	1372303	3

4.2.1.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.1.1.1. Large Follower Base:

In the Iranian society, having 1.3 million followers counts as a megaphone, and Riahi has this megaphone. Because of her large following, her comments will always matter, especially those concerning socio-political matters like the death of Mahsa Amini.

4.2.1.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (1,023,133): She got a lots of support under her post, particularly those addressing Mahsa Amini's death and advocating for womanist causes.
- Dislikes (142,764): It is obvious that some people do not share the same opinion as her and remain uncomfortable with the degree of her unapologetic behaviours as shown by this figure, though less than the suggested support, still gives the cautionary sign of significant divergence in Iranian society's views especially in the sensitive topic of woman's rights and bashing the ruling system.
- Comments (21,171): The ever-increasing engagement from her audience is evident in the still higher number of comments and the variation this indicates shows. This degree of interaction is suggestive of the reality that her followers are taking part in active conversations and discussions about her posts and most likely the socio-political situation of Iran.

4.2.1.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (987,348): With an estimate of 1 million shares, the highlight here is that her posts are being shared well beyond the reach of her immediate followers which points towards the tendency of her content going viral. The fact that her posts are being shared publicly means that a significant number of people feel her content is valuable, especially in context of women's rights and Iran, which enables her to further amplify her voice.
- Views (1,372,303): With more than 1.3 million views, her posts not only reach her followers but a wider audience. This once again proves how much she can influence the public .

4.2.1.1.4. Hashtags (3):

The absence of numerous hashtags suggests that Riahi prefers to communicate with the audience in a simple yet straightforward manner, instead of using hashtags as a visibility tool. This indicates that she strategically employs the most important hashtags like (Woman, Life, Freedom) which help in her posts being ideal to the underlying issue of the protests.

4.2.1.2. Conclusion:

As a social media influencer, Katayoun Riahi's actions coupled with her quick response to Mahsa Amini's death makes her one of the most prominent public figures pushing for reforms in Iran. Nearly all her actions and postings makes an impact to millions of people in and out of the country. We can see that from her social media activities, she

is really get geared and also she is one of the most important person who is fighting for women's right. She uses social media to creat awareness.

4.2.2. Taraneh Alidoosti:

Taraneh Alidoosti is regarded as one of the most popular actresses in Iran. After the death of Mahsa Amini, she changed her activity to represent and support women's rights in Iran. She posted a photo of herself without a hijab on her page. In her palm was a placard which read the words “Woman, Life, Freedom.”

In the post description, she included a phrase from a poem written by Shahryar Ghanbari, which states: “Your final absence, the migration of the birds of sound, has not ended this tumult.” The phrase “Woman, Life, Freedom” in her post showed a feeling that many Iranians, whether in the country or in exile, yearn for, which is the quest for equality, honour, and basic human rights.

Alidoosti's post was provocative and sensational, especially considering the responsibility she carries due to her standing. She removed her hijab and posed with the slogan in clear opposition to the government's repressive strategies. It was also powerful to add Ghanbari's poem because it evoked emotions that the death of Mahsa Amini and the subsequent fury was not an event, but a continuous phenomenon that required attention.

Now, by sharing this picture and caption, Alidoosti emphasized the significance of representation which is showing the world that there are protests which are not mere symbols of resistance, but actual calls for change and reform. In her actions, she was not just standing against one event, but standing with the Iranian women and urgently drawing the attention of the world to the continuous abuse of human rights in Iran.



Figure 2: Taraneh Alidoosti's post

Table. 3 The table below provides key insights into Taraneh Alidoosti's social media activity:

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Taraneh Alidoosti	Actress	325	8.1 million	173063	10015	72	145170	2231456	2

4.2.2.1. Media Impact:

4.2.2.1.1. Large Follower Base:

Taraneh Alidoosti, with 8.1 million followers, requires absolutely no introduction. It is not an exaggeration to say that her accounts, especially those concerning sensitive topics such as Mahsa Amini's death, have the capacity to reach millions and change their views.

4.2.2.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (173,063): Her like count is lower than would be expected from someone of her stature, however, the amount suggests that despite the sensitive political undertone of

her message, a large portion of her audience was still caught by the propaganda as evidenced by her likes.

- Dislikes (10,015): This figure is fascinatingly low considering her Iranian government opposition stance and is, however, much welcomed when one considers the divided audience she has. Many followers, who don't support her actions, seem to comprise the minority dissatisfied with the number of dislikes.

- Comments (72): The comments section on this post is drastically and surprisingly lower than the considerable amount of voters. This disengagement from dialogue could be a result of the highly sensitive and controversial topic featured in her posts, which makes users reluctant to voice their views within the risks of openly expressing political beliefs in Iran. This could also be a suspension of the commenting ability, either self-imposed by Alidoosti, or set by the host platform to mitigate counterproductive hostility.

4.2.2.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (145,170): The share figure really puts things in perspective, showcasing the content's wide and rapid circulation beyond her followers. With this high number being woman empowerment and political activism content, it really goes to show that a lot of people find it worthy to endorse.

- Views (2,231,456): This amount of views suggests that her posts are being viewed by not just her followers, but a wider, and potentially international audience.

4.2.2.1.4. Hashtags (2):

Alidoosti's posts are distinguishing by using only two hashtags, suggesting a more sophisticated approach instead of just broad categorization. Her choice to employ direct and impactful hashtags such as 'زن زندگی آزادی' (Woman, Life, Freedom) aligns her posts with the core issues of the protest movements, showcasing more refined advocacy as opposed to letting social media do it for her.

4.2.2.2. Conclusion:

One of the most striking features of Taraneh Alidoosti's social media activity is her clear intent to fight for women's rights and freedom in Iran. The post she made after Mahsa Amini's death was not merely a personal protest. Rather, it was an attempt to get the public mobilized by speaking to her fan base. With 8.1 million followers and

substantial interactions on her posts, she represents a considerable voice in the debate on human rights in Iran.

She has shown exceptional recruitment ability to those willing to engage in action within and outside Iran. Alidoosti is a clear indicator of how a single woman daring to ignore the regime's obligatory hijab slogan, "Woman, Life, Freedom," is capable of making a difference in the world. Beyond cinema, Alidoosti's impact is undeniably significant as the nation continues to seek social justice and equality in Iran.

4.2.3. Golshifteh Farahani:

After leaving Iran, Farahani built an international career as an actress, which makes her an accomplished Iranian actress. When Mahsa Amini died, Farahani took the opportunity to speak in public about the injustices and human rights violations taking place in Iran, using the global platform that she had. In particular, she tried to focus the attention of the international community on the pain of Iranian women as well as the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement.

To illustrate her activism, while participating in the protest after Mahsa Amini's death, she decided to capture herself wearing a shirt with the words "Woman, Life, Freedom" written on it. Her attempt was intermixed with a clear desire to protest the protest movement that stemmed from Amini's death. This statement of Farahani's was made by using the slogan, which is central to the movement that seeks women's rights, dignity, and even their most basic freedoms. She did so in order to support the Iranian women who had been protesting and needed their voices heard outside of Iran.

Farahani's activism was not constrained to social media; her message was often carried to international forums, interviews, and public appearances. In these instances, she was able to appeal to the public as a figure in the arts by mobilizing his fame to draw attention to the problems plaguing her country. Farahani sought to close the gap between the Iranian conflict and the outside world by fostering sympathy, understanding, and activism towards the Iranian plight on a global scale.

When she publicly represented the "Woman, Life, Freedom" motto, she demonstrated the power of representation.



Figure 3: Golshifteh Farahani's post

Table. 4 The following table provides an analysis of Golshifteh Farahani's social media activity

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Golshifteh Farahani	Actress	954	17 million	607506	12356	2969	2597	1292087	2

4.2.3.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.3.1.1. Large Follower Base:

Golshifteh Farahani enjoys a vast global audience of 17 million followers. Such a sizable following guarantees her posts, especially concerning major social and political events like the Iranian protests, get widespread visibility around the globe. This helps her greatly in influencing people across the world about Iran's human rights issues.

4.2.3.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (607,506): Given the overwhelming support for Farahani's content, the high number of likes comes as no surprise. Her post in Favor of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement focused on a sensitive issue that many of her followers were ready to support, demonstrating the known audience activism and the importance of the cause she is fighting for.

- Dislikes (12,356): The relatively low number of dislikes show that even though some may not exactly agree with her position or actions, the large majority of followers seem to support her messaging an activism. This may also echo the deeply divided views of Iranian politics and woman rights.

- Comments (2,969): The comments figure is relatively small compared to the followers, which suggests that some degree of engagement from her audience is attracted. Given the sensitive nature of matter at hand, the comment section may shed light on debates, solidarity, and critique

4.2.3.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (2,597): The relatively small numerator value in shares compared to total followers indicates that the passivity of the followers is preferred (by liking or viewing) rather than actively sharing. Regardless, Farahani's shares may have an astounding impact owing to the massive follower base, even if the figure is smaller.

- Views (1,292,087): Viewing her posts, one in every 80 people has seen her content at least once. With well over a million views, her content is reaching a vast viewership. The high view count indicates that her content is getting a lot of attention, and is helping in creating awareness about the protests and suffering of the women in Iran.

4.2.3.1.4. Hashtags:

"Farahnai incorporates few #'s, probably concentrating with one that matters like #زن_زندگی_آزادی. Concentrating her #s makes her message not to be out of context.

4.2.3.2. Conclusion:

Following the death of MAHSA AMINI, Golshifteh Farahani has emerged as a frontline advocate for "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, utilizing her global platform. Regardless of the low number of comments and shares, the modest statistics are amplified by her large audience who are bound to see her posts rallying for women's rights and justice for Iranian women's issues.

In an effort to maintain global focus on the Iranian protests, Farahani has been sharing photos and content featuring the slogan, “Woman, Life, Freedom.” She has made the movement more visible, which motivates further international support and attention. By her activism, Farahani shows how public figures can use their status to draw attention to violence and social issues in bad political environments such as Iran.

4.2.4. Mahnaz Afshar:

Mahnaz Afshar, an Iranian actress known for her work, has actively spoken out against social issues, such as the death of Mahsa Amini. Following the painful event, she turned to Instagram to showcase her support for Iranian women and their injustices. She posted about supporting women in Iran by sharing the image of Mahsa Amini and expressing contempt for the infringement of women’s fundamental rights in Iran. In the postcard, Afshar wrote a powerful message: remarked in peace within her surprise. “I’ll be darned. So this is why he...”

Afshar's message put into doubt the reticence of those who undertook to protect the core values of the nation’s identity and chose to keep quiet when women are suffering violence. With the post, she tried to illustrate the deep rooted systemic violence women face in Iran and called out for strength putting an end to such oppression.

In expressing anguish as well as hurt on the tragic demise of Mahsa Amini, Afshar intended to rally Iranians in particular, and the world at large. The posting shows how peeved so many Iranians are, especially women, due to the continued repression. By reposting, Afghani gave voice to the Iranian elite to continue focusing on the flagrant abuse of human rights and violence against women’s rights in Iran.



Figure 4: Mahnaz Afshar's post

Table. 5 The following table provides insights into Mahnaz Afshar's social media activity

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Mahnaz Afshar	Actress	463	18.8 million	257208	9258	6207	3672	525980	1

4.2.4.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.4.1.1. Large Follower Base:

Profound Follower Count: Afshar Mahnaz boasts an impressive social media following of 18.8 million, which provides her with an invaluable platform to create awareness about critical social concerns in Iran such as fighting for women's rights and the aftermath of Mahsa Amini's death. Thanks to her large following, her voice can be heard by millions of people, inside Iran and outside.

4.2.4.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (257,208): Afshar's supportive stance on women's issues has received enormous support as seen in the likes on her posts.

- Dislikes (9,258): Not surprisingly, there are some detractors, but the quite small figure suggests that the majority are supportive of her. Considering the highly charged nature of her content, this gap depicts robust public support.

- Comments (6,207): The comments received are fairly considerable which suggests that her post generated a fair amount of debate among her followers. Her audience has shown in this instance that they are paying attention to the matters which she raises, and this may lead to other discussions on gender violence in Iran.

4.2.4.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (3,672): Her posts had a total share s of 3,672 which means that her followers are sharing it and are actively trying to amplify her message. Such a potent post on women rights in Iran is sure to use her influence in spreading the news further in many circles inside and outside the country.

- Views (525,980): With over half a million views, Mahnaz Afshar is consumed widely and her posts being the most viewed is a testament to that. This also shows the importance of her presence in the social media world and how much people are interested in her content, especially with regard to social activism.

4.2.4.1.4. Hashtags:

Afshar's selection of just a single hashtag might point to the importance of one overarching idea, possibly “زن_زندگی_آزادی” (Woman, Life, Freedom). This use of a single hashtag categorizes her post within the broader context of the riots emerging in the wake of Mahsa Amini's death, making sure that the content she posts is relevant to the movement fighting for women's rights in Iran.

4.2.4.2. Conclusion:

Mahnaz Afshar has risen to be such a notable figure after the death of Mahsa Amini, taking advantage of her large following on social media platforms to champion the plight of the women of Iran. The post, which outright states the hypocrisy of those timidly guarding the honor of Iran, truly explains how abusive and violent oppression against women is in the country. Afshar's attempts to get her followers to actually take a stand rather than quietly sit back involves her calls for solidarity against such disgusting humanitarian injustices. With over 18.8 million followers and high engagement, her social media presence makes her one of the important activists in

raising awareness of the gender-based violence in Iran. She strongly contributes into “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement in Iran and the world.

4.2.5. Hamid Farokh Nezhad:

An Iranian actor Hamid Farokh Nezhad has always spoken against the social and political chaos in Iran, lately after the sad demise of Mahsa Amini. He shared a post on his Instagram account on December 24, 2022, defending the Iranian citizens standing against the regime while marching on the street. This is what Farokh Nezhad said in his post: “I bow to all those who with deep faith in the overthrow of the regime have willingly set aside their most precious possessions for the sake of solidarity and have wisely set aside their grievances for an entirely different time. They have distanced themselves from anything that would hamper this uprising and prioritized the collective benefit over personal interests.”

The post made clear that Farokh Nezhad appreciated the resolve and courage of the Iranian people who had taken to the streets to get the justice and freedom they so craved. He also pointed out that a lot of the people in the protests had chosen to put aside their pettiness for the greater good, to get rid of the regime. In the determination and perseverance of the protesters, Farokh Nezhad tried to further drown out the already subdued voices of ordinary Iranians on an international platform. The one post served as neutral propaganda, where Farokh Nezhad not only choose to showcase his support for the protests, but more willingly stand in front of the world to scream about the dire state of politics in Iran. It empowered the whole world to join the battle about giving, justice and equality to everyone, no matter who or what they were.



Figure 5: Hamid Farokh Nezhad's post

Table. 6 The following table offers an insight into Hamid Farokh Nezhad's social media engagement

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Hamid Farokh Nezhad	Actor	935	3.3 million	240766	5679	7865	257652	62803	0

4.2.5.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.5.1.1. Follower Count:

Farokh Nezhad is an instantly recognizable name across the political spectrum and to add to that, he also enjoys a healthy 3.3 million followers on Instagram. Even though he pales in comparison to some other famous Iranian personalities, he still possesses a big enough following to influence public opinion in Iran as well as abroad. Considering the sheer volume of his followers, this enables him to steer the much-needed debate on the political and social issues facing Iran today.

4.2.5.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (240,766): His post accrued likes in a considerable volume, which portrays the support he earned concerning his public position towards the protests. It is likely that many of his followers sympathetic to the issues of the regime supports oppressive actions characterized his message.

- Dislikes (5,679): The figure of dislikes is comparatively low, which means that although his post was politically sensitive, a majority of his audience agrees with his position. On the other hand, the existence of some dislikes implies the existence of political divergence in his following.

- Comments (7,865): The high number of comments shows that his post was controversial and therefore elicited extensive debate. Surely, his message of empathy towards the protesters must have induced debates among his audience on the issue of Iran's political disputes as well as the anticipated actions of the regime.

4.2.5.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (257,652): The high figure of shares indicates that his post reached audiences far of his followers. Indeed, with the aid of his post, followers helped in disseminating the message concerning the protests which, as expected, enhanced awareness around the globe.

- Views (62,803): The views along with the other metrics of engagement indicate that he had significant impact through his posts.

4.2.5.1.4. Hashtags (0):

In reference to the post, it is quite intriguing that Farokh Nezhad opted out of adding any hashtags. Perhaps he wanted the message he was trying to convey to be taken more seriously and therefore did not want to associate it with a broader social media

campaign or branding. Or perhaps, it shows that he is more informal and direct in the way he speaks to his audience without having to depend on popular hashtags to gain attention.

4.2.5.2. Conclusion:

Hamid Farrokhnejad's social media activity regarding the death of Mahsa Amini, could be the symbolic social activism of Iranian celebrities, which in this case led to an increase in the voice of protests and calls for social change. Farokh Nezhad in his posts viciously spoke in support of the 'democratic' actions from Iranian people, expressing the pain of the people for the tyranny and injustice suffered.

Farokh Nezhad's post received a lot of attention through likes, shares, and comments even though he has fewer followers than some of his peers. He seems to possess the power to rally and motivate his audience, and his choice to refrain from hashtag use may indicate that he wanted more attention to be directed towards the reality of the situation instead of the "goals" of creating viral content.

His post serves as a reminder that people need to actively participate in expressing support for those fighting for freedom and human rights, not only in Iran but elsewhere too.

4.2.6. Ali Karimi:

Ali Karimi, a former football player, is one of the most well-known characters in Iran's football history. After Amini's tragic demise due to the so-called morality police, Karimi started showing support for the women protesters through his social media accounts.

After the death of Mahsa Amini, he posted, "Be Kess Vatan," (Homeless Homeland). This eloquently sums up the distress and anguish the majority of Iranians were going through. The pain filled remarks of Karimi are to some extent, a reminder of the harsh reality faced by the people of this Republic where for most parts of the nation, it seemed hopeless and powerless particularly when it came to safeguarding the plethora of rights in the midst of human suffering.

Karimi attempted to raise global awareness of Iran's challenges by expressing his anger and the extreme pain and abuse of human rights that the Iranian government is executing. With his prominence as a sports personality, his anger was likely appreciated

in Iran and internationally. In attempting to circulate the narrative, he stood in solidarity with the Iranian protesters, and through multiple posts he also tried to mobilize the rest of the world to understand and act against the violence and oppression that was systematically taking place in the nation.



Figure 6: Ali Karimi's post

Table. 7 The following table provides insight into Ali Karimi's social media presence and engagement

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Ali Karimi	Football Player	646	14.6 million	1754774	397321	80668	547706	3346786	0

4.2.6.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.6.1.1. Follower Count:

- Ali Karimi's social media accounts have over 14.6 million followers, which proves that he is an influential public figure while also being a sports icon. With such a large

follower base, he is able to have a positive impact and reach millions of people, thereby using his influence to voice forth issues regarding politics and social life.

4.2.6.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (1,754,774): The nearly 1.8 million likes on his posts indicate that the individuals appreciate and agree with his actions as well as statements. In particular, the likes depict the deep empathy people had towards his expression on the death of Mahsa Amini alongside the protests that took place later on.

- Dislikes (397,321): While support exists, the remarkably high count of dislikes (near 400,000) implies that his provocative opinions might alienate some of his audience. This might result from divisions in politics or negative reactions from the Iranian regime sympathizers, or from people who are not as supportive of the protests.

- Comments (80,668): Karimi is likely to receive this many comments because his posts are triggering so much discussions which are filled with emotions. Most people do not agree with his messages which is most likely feeding the bushed discourse in Iran.

4.2.6.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (547,706): That over half a million users have shared his posts suggests a great deal of people who follows his posts and regardless of whether they are his direct followers or not, his messages makes a lot of sense to them as people resonate with social and political issues.

- Views (3,346,786): The estimate of over 3.3 million views on Karimi's post is a clear representation of his visibility. The massive number of views portrays his capability to attract an audience, in and outside Iran, and use his celebrity status for a greater purpose.

4.2.6.1.4. Hashtags (0):

It is quite remarkable that Karimi does not use any hashtags on his posts. Perhaps this is part of a more coherent strategy whereby he does not seek to match his content to social media trends, but rather emphasizes the weight and genuineness of his message. By opting out of hashtags, he might be trying to approach his audience in a more personal and unfiltered manner, trusting in the strength of his words and reputation instead of relying on social media marketing strategies.

4.2.6.2. Conclusion:

In the context of Mahsa Amini's death, Ali Karimi has quoted, "Homeless Homeland" and emerged strongly as an advocate of social justice and human rights. His posts have gone viral, receiving millions of views, likes and shares, which indicates that he is able to mobilize not only his followers but the entire world at large. These simple words encapsulate the uncontrollable sorrow and rage of many Iranians. Through his online activity, Karimi casts himself not only as a supporter of the protests within Iran, but he also makes the world hear the plight of the Iranian people.

Karimi's posts receive a lot of dislikes which indicates that he does receive some backlash, yet he continues to support the protesters and uses his influence to highlight the plight of women and other oppressed groups in Iran. Karimi has deliberately stopped using hashtags which suggests he wants to keep the gravity of the issue intact and not get caught up with the other social media antics. With these actions, Karimi shifts not only as a football star but also an icon of defiance against oppression, tyranny and injustice.

4.2.7. Fatemeh Motamed Aria:

Notable Iranian actress Fatemeh Motamed Aria is well known for her human rights activism, especially in behalf of women's rights. Following the unfortunate demise of Mahsa Amini, she used Instagram as a platform to call for the world's attention to the oppression of women in Iran, as well as stand in solidarity with the women of Iran.

One of the posts she had expressed: "What crime is worse than the killing of innocent girls in this land? By what right and which criminal supports this monstrosity?" In this statement, she politically condemned the Iranian authorities' decisions and motivated women's rights defence. Aria emphasized that there was a large gap where the government needed to take action to protect women's rights in Iran. Her post urges people from around the world to rise and answer to the injustices faced by women of Iran.

Motamed Aria's post is an observation of the increasing defiance of women in Iran against social injustices. Her powerful statement is proof of her compassion and support for the Iranians, especially for women who have suffered violence, oppression, and discrimination. Through her social media, she intends to bring national and international attention toward the plight of women's rights in Iran..



Figure 7: Fatemeh Motamed Aria's post

Table. 8 The following table provides insight into Fatemeh Motamed Aria's social media engagement and impact

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Fatemeh Motamed Aria	Actress	209	716000	88259	4856	2097	152435	1033021	2

4.2.7.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.7.1.1. Follower Count:

- Motamed Aria, the actress and human activist, holds an impressive number of followers on social media, a total of 716,000. Although this is comparatively smaller

than the follower base of some other celebrities, this still counts to be a noteworthy number. This is particularly true considering the lengthy career Motamed Aria enjoyed and also her position as a respected personality in the field of arts, as well as a human rights activist..

4.2.7.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (88,259): The volume of likes is staggering. It is evident that her messages resonate her followers especially her post blasting the murder of innocent women like Mahsa Amini. Considering all the engagement on her posts, it is safe to say her sentiments are shared by a great deal of the audience who appreciate her courage in speaking out.

- Dislikes (4,856): In relation to the likes, dislikes as a metric is rather low. This shows her audience in general is supportive of her human rights and women issues activism. The some dislikes do exists which could be an indication of resistance from the audience who prefer to identify as more conservative.

- Comments (2,097): The number of comments is a reflection of a highly supportive audience. This shows that her posts serve as a basis of conversation, reactions, and further creates a desire in people to engage with the issues she raises which is evident from the variety of thoughts expressed in the comments.

4.2.7.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (152,435): The shares of her Motamed Aria post on other platforms exceeds 150,000 which shows her message goes beyond the intended target audience. The viral nature of her post indicates that her call for justice and attention internationally is being spread by varying audiences including human rights activists and advocacy groups.

- Views (1,033,021): With her posts, she has surpassed a million views which underlines her influence.

4.2.7.1.4. Hashtags (2):

Motamed Aria only employs two hashtags in her posts which indicates her reluctance in tagging her posts. There is a chance that she prefers to be sincere in her words rather than just getting with social media norms, Furthermore, she chooses to shun marketing tactics, giving her voice authenticity and credibility when it comes to her activism.

4.2.7.2. Conclusion:

Fatemah Motamed Aria has freely advocated for women rights in Iran after the heart-wrenching death of Mahsa Amini and has been more active in the social media advocacy. She cares for the girls that have been unjustly punished, and her posts tagged with “So where is the Justice” encapsulates her dedication to fight for humanity and the much needed transformation in society.

People all around the world heard her voice, and women's rights became one of the most important issues and concerns. She asked other communities outside of Iran to pay attention to Iran and to women's rights in Iran. Although her social media activity involves little to no hashtags, her messages are direct and speak to the audience, making them feel deeply and strive for change. With her activism, Motamed Aria has showcased her talent as an actress, while at the same time, bravely fighting for justice and equality, for the women of Iran, and for a better future.

4.2.8. Narges Mohammadi:

Narges Mohammadi is a well-known political activist and a fierce defender of human rights in Iran, who has been continuously speaking and campaigning on issues such as women’s rights and defiance of the Iranian government repression. For her activism, she has been imprisoned, but that does not deter her from speaking out and taking Iran’s human rights record, especially regarding women, to the rest of the world. Narges Mohammadi shared on her Instagram account while in jail, her call being the Iranian government’s removal from the UN Commission for the Status of Women on December 13, 2022. She emphasized that the regime’s violence and violation of women in Iran is what drives her to claim: All of us who signed want the Islamic Republic of Iran to be expelled from the UN Commission because of the state's violence against women. In that post, she additionally showed the names of those who, in her view, joined the effort to not only support women, but also force the government to be answerable internationally. Although in prison, Mohammadi remains an activist. She puts the world’s attention to the violence of the regime and invites the world to take a closer look, using her voice to fight for justice and vying for a better deal for women. Her actions reflect the strength of feminism in Iran.

As a post-graduate woman, she represents the unyielding equation of Iranian woman standing up to the galling government and exposes the underbelly of violence and oppression, even in the most extreme situations. She does not just criticise the regime

but moves the face of the political structure globally. Mohammadi and her followers insist that the UN Commission on the Status of Women, as an institution that claims to work for the advancement of women, must respond and condemn the Iranian government's actions as contrary to everything they stand for.



Figure 8: Narges Mohammadi's post

Table. 9 The table below highlights key data related to Narges Mohammadi's Instagram engagement

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Narges Mohamadi	Political Activist	968	259000	10139	1760	147876	3879	25790	2

4.2.8.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.8.1.1. Follower Count:

- Narges Mohammadi has 259,000 followers, which is a large number, especially for a political activist working under very harsh circumstances. It is not surprising that her followers are numerous because her advocacy is appealing to a lot of people in Iran and beyond.

4.2.8.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (10,139): Her audience appreciates her courage to speak out on the critical matters like human rights and the violations of women's rights.

- Dislikes (1,760): The low number of dislikes indicates that Mohammadi's followers, in general, support her views. The fact that she does receive some dislikes at all, is indicative of the division within political debate in Iran, particularly around controversial issues like state repression and the rights of women.

- Comments (147,876): The huge volume of comments indicates, her posts provoked considerable discussion and response, which translates into the amount of emotional engagement. It is evident from the comments made by people, the issues being addressed and the sort of response that it evokes strongly afflicting emotion.

4.2.8.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (3,879): The number of shares stands below other entertainment figures, however, considering she is a political activist, these numbers are impressive. This clearly indicates that her audience is spreading her message and further propels the call to action.

- Views (25,790): The figures mentioned need some interpretation, which is why I would say that there is also significant constituent engagement within her posts, even if they seem more modest than celebrity accounts. It appears that her impact is more limited to those, or communities, who are politically active or politically sympathetic.

4.2.8.1.4. Hashtags (2):

The two hashtags added by Mohammadi on her posts suggest that she pays attention to the primary areas of her activism. The message is clear, her focus is on creating an impact rather than going viral.

4.2.8.2. Conclusion:

Narges Mohammadi's activism as well as her activity in social media is striking, considering the degree of her imprisonment and the difficulties she faces with regard to external communication. Her post was a great example of supporting women's rights in Iran. Compared to other celebrities who have many followers, she has fewer followers, but the high audience engagement shows that her message was truly important to her audience. She received around 147,000 comments, which indicates that she plays a major role in the Iranian women's rights discourse on social media

Even though the risks are severe, Mohammadi's bravery stands out so much more because of how she tries to focus the world's attention on Iranian women. With boldness, she tries to rally not just her supporters but the entire world to fight and stand in solidarity with her to end the injustices happening in Iran. Her activism, rooted in the painful truth of her own imprisonment, is a living example of the constantly unfulfilled struggle for justice, equality, and human rights.

4.2.9. Ali Daei:

Renowned Iranian footballer, Ali Daei, Daei, took to his platforms to support women and people of Iran during the protests that ensued after Mahsa Amini's death. On 28th September 2022. Daei shared a message on Instagram to support the citizens of Iran which read: "Iran is my pride. My Mother and Father, My daughters, siblings and citizens are my family through and through. I am committed to standing for them forever. Rather than violence, arresting people, labelling them as rioters or traitors, or trying to suppress them, why not try to solve their problems? To all the people shouting about revolutions and proclaiming the vision of martyrs, do you actually know that these principles never included poverty, neglect, moral decline and theft?"

This statement deeply illustrates Daei's open condemnation towards the government's suppressive actions on any form of dissent. He called for several issues to be resolved such as corruption and poverty rather than silencing citizens their human right to freedom of expression. He did so in hopes of empowering women and letting their struggle be known beyond the borders of Iran, particularly to the western world. His comments highlight his support for the Iranians not only as an athlete, but as a public figure who has the responsibility to advocate for humanity and social justice. His request for solving issues related to social disorder, as well as promoting harmony,

demonstrates agreement with people's pain for justice and reform, especially the harsh actions taken against women's rights.

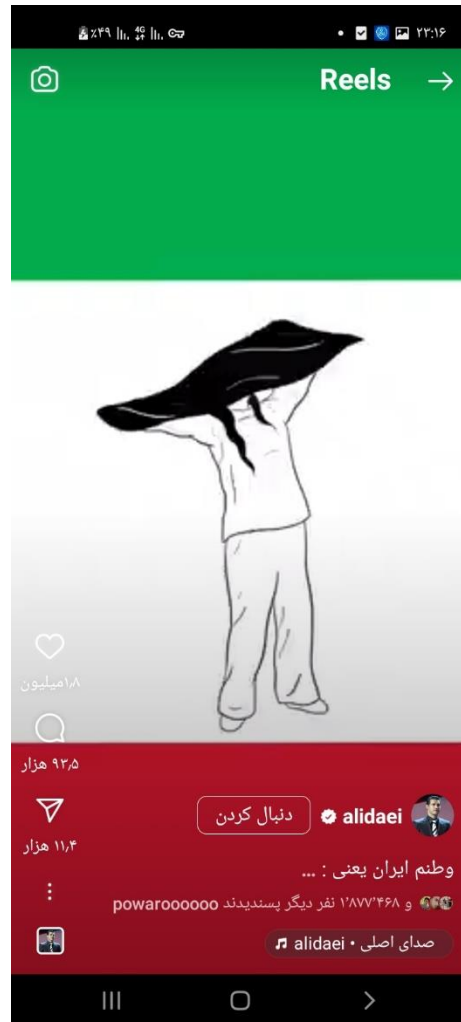


Figure 9: Ali Daei's post

Table. 10 The table below provides insight into Ali Daei's Instagram metrics

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Ali Daei	Football Player	127	12.4 million	1877468	15532	93589	11400	3789421	0

4.2.9.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.9.1.1. Follower Count:

- Daei is leading with an Instagram following of 12.4 million, which is a remarkable figure not just as an athlete but also as a famous personality. Daei carries a significance that goes beyond football, making him important to many social and political issues.

4.2.9.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (1,877,468): The impressive likes on Daei's posts indicate a special bond between him and his audience. His posts are liked a great deal which shows not only support from his fans but also their agreement to his calls for justice.

- Dislikes (15,532): The tiny percentage of dislikes compared to overall engagement reveals that there might be some resistance but in general his opposition is supported by most of his followers.

- Comments (93,589): The large number of comments means that Daei's posts generate active debates among his fans which proves that people are not only interested in sports but also in what he has to say about significant social matters.

4.2.9.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (11,400): The number of shares indicates how far his messages are travelling on the platform and perhaps to an even larger audience as the followers of his followers share his posts.

- Views (3,789,421): Daei's posts are seen by a significant number of people nearly 3.8 million views. This demonstrates how he takes advantage of his platform and the effectiveness of his posts in reaching a large audience.

4.2.9.1.4. Hashtags (0):

Daei has not used any hashtags in his posts, and yet his engagement remains incredibly high. This goes to show how his influence stems from the strength of his personal brand and message rather than social media tactics such as hash tagging.

4.2.9.2. Conclusion:

Ali Daei's activism alongside powerful presence social media allows him to talk about considerable social and political issues happening around Iran. Daei aims to not only support the citizens of Iran, but actively push the government towards making real change through his renowned social media presence. With 12.4 million followers on

social media and millions of views on his posts, his metrics prove how much they matter to humanity. Even with the fame that comes with being a footballer, Daei is a known advocate for humanitarian issues and using his fame to speak on the crisis in his country. This image sheds light on the greater influence public icons exercise on open chats and public amenity transformations in Daei's situation public censorship.

4.2.10. Tomaj Salehi:

The 38-year-old Tomaj Salehi is a famous singer in Iran who has always used his voice to advocate for human rights especially during the protests that erupted after the death of Mahsa Amini and the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement. Salehi has always been a strong supporter of equality and justice in the country and uses music and social media to advocate against the unjust conditions in the country. In one of his posts, he put out a message which showed strong support to the cause where he said, "Men and women, side by side, will fight for our rights. Interfering in the most personal matters of citizens is not just oppression, it is an insult to humanity."

While making such a post, Salehi not only showed his individual support towards the fight for freedoms and rights in Iran, but also showcased the support that he had towards the fusion of men and women against the injustices that occur. He states that the government's control to people's private spaces is not just an infringement to rights, but also a denial to what it fundamentally means to be a human. In this post and his activism, Salehi depicts the current battle in the world's women's rights arena as a contest of competition drawn between the genders which defies the regime's attempts to butcher fundamental freedoms. Additionally, he goes beyond the realms of music in order to give a voice to the voiceless and works relentlessly to help women who have suffered under the hands of the Iranian regime to speak out.

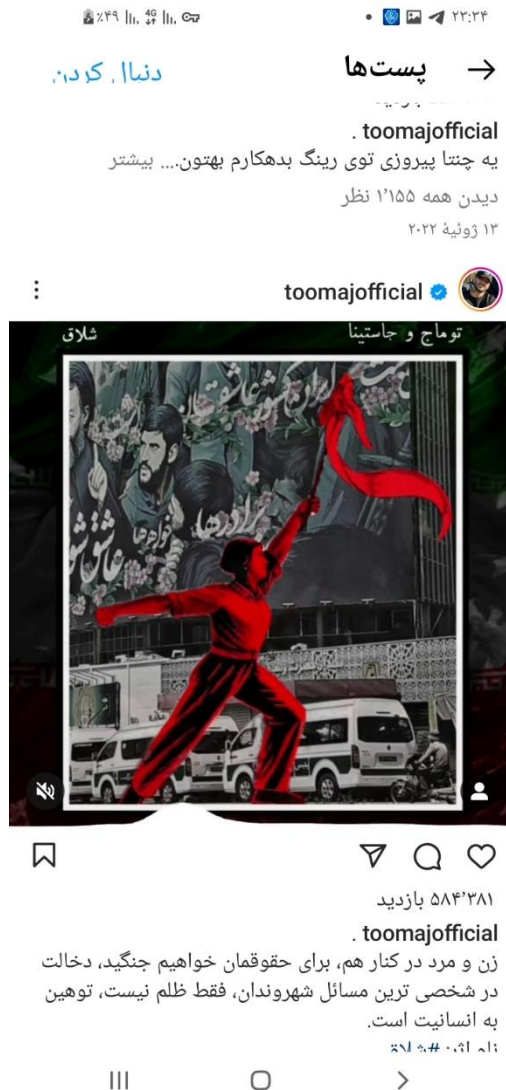


Figure 10: Tomaj Salehi's post

Table. 11 The table provides an overview of Tomaj Salehi's presence on Instagram, with the following metrics

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Tomaj Salehi	Singer	60	2.6 million	584,381	201,607	1,931	30,372	1,486,213	0

4.2.10.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.10.1.1. Follower Count:

- Salehi is greatly followed by 2.6 million followers on Instagram. As a singer who tackles social issues, he is more than an entertainer and his influence stretches within Iran and beyond its borders.

4.2.10.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (584,381): The likes illustrate Salehi's strong support. An activist of social and political issues, his followers having this kind of engagement means that they are heavily supporting the cause of social justice.
- Dislikes (201,607): The disproportional numbers of likes and dislikes indicate that while Salehi has a considerable supporting base, his stance on issues also tends to get negative reactions probably from people who don't believe in the protest movement or supporters of the Iranian regime.
- Comments (1,931): It seems that Salehi's posts receive fewer comments than likes and dislikes, and these comments are most likely partisan and counter-partisan debates of the issues he talks about.

4.2.10.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (30,372): The posts have been shared a lot, which means that the followers are actively disseminating his message further, which in turn aids in his advocacy work, particularly for the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement.
- Views (1,486,213): His posts also enjoy great viewership, almost 1.5 million. It shows that his content is viewed by a large audience as the citizens of Iran and the outside world can access his content, which he uses for campaigning.

4.2.10.1.4. Hashtags (0):

As a matter of fact, he received significant engagement even if he did not place mayor tags on the post. This clearly shows how powerful Salehi's personal influence is as well as the content of his message.

4.2.10.2. Conclusion:

Tomaj Salehi, as a singer, has an underlying purpose for his voice, and that purpose encompasses profound issues in society especially women's rights and the fight for freedom in Iran. His message about men and women joining hands in the battle for rights shows the struggle from a collective angle, which is how most people are familiar with oppression in Iran. To Salehi, feminism is a facet of a multi-dimensional battle against the state's infringement on individual liberties. Salehi's social media figures indicate the depth of his activism which to the public remains hidden. As a holder of 2.6 million followers, his platform is considerable, and the considerable engagement on his posts (more than two hundred thousand likes and almost one million views) confirm

that he is appealing to many people in Iran and abroad. The large amount of dislikes perhaps demonstrates that his militant activism also brings controversy, which is a normal phenomena for people with such overbearing oppositional voices in the face of authoritative rule.

Tomaj Salehi's activism does not stop at music. He consistently defends the marginalized vocal, especially women, and calls for people to unite against government repression which makes him an important figure in the ongoing struggle for social change in Iran. Through his artistic works and activism, he effectively rallied his audiences which cemented his status as a notable leader for justice and equality in the country.

4.2.11. Nazanin Boniadi:

A List of Israeli Actors in Hollywood Nazanin Boniadi is an Iranian actress based outside of Iran, who uses her platform to advocate for human and women's rights in Iran. After the death of Mahsa Amini and the emergence of the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement, Boniadi came out in support of Iranian women and her co-actor, Taraneh Alidoosti, who bravely challenged the regime from within the country. In one post, Boniadi shared an image of Alidoosti who was standing without her hijab, and holding a scorching poster with "Kurdish Women, Life, Freedom" slogan written on it. Boniadi wrote on the photo this phrase:

"Taraneh Alidoosti, one of Iran's most beloved actresses, posts a picture of her with missing hijab, holding 'Women, Life, Freedom' sign in support of #MahsaAmini and all the freedom defenders of Iran. So brave!"

This post demonstrates While bringing attention to the need of support for Iranian women, Boniadi is portraying the heroism of women like Alidoosti who, in spite of the oppressive laws in Iran, happen to dare to openly defy these laws. Boniadi doesn't stop at social media posting. She has stepped up to raise the issue of the women's rights in Iran at international platforms claiming support and action from the women's world to her country. She wants to show the world the courage of Iranian individuals, especially Iranian women, and to represent the injustices in Iran as well.



Figure 11: Nazanin Boniadi's post

Table. 12 The table provides an overview of Nazanin Boniadi's Instagram activity and engagement metrics

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Nazanin Bonyadi	Actress	1033	886000	162544	6743	1556	8213	476831	0

4.2.11.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.11.1.1. Follower Count:

- Boniadi has a big number of followers, 886,000 on Instagram. With such a big audience, she can speak out on important issues like the fight for women's rights in Iran and the world can hear her.

4.2.11.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (162,544): The actress possesses strong support from her followers as shown by the relatively high number of likes on her posts. Boniadi, who is an actress turned activist, seems to be handling moderate engagement from her audience.

- Dislikes (6,743): The figure for dislikes is very low when compared to the likes, which means that even though there is some level of criticism, her posts tend to appeal to a larger crowd. Perhaps, some of the people opposed to her social and political activism are the ones who dislike her posts.

- Comments (1,556): The moderately large number of comments on Boniadi's posts suggests that a range of people comment as they try to engage in the politics of Iran and the rights of women that Boniadi seeks to address.

4.2.11.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (8,213): This particular statistic increases the most, which means that her followers actively disseminate her message, extending her influence beyond her immediate audience. Sharing information concerning women's issues in Iran greatly contributes to enhancing her advocacy and use of social media on a global level.

- Views (476,831): Her post received a lot of views, which may represent people's interest in her post, its content, and the way she presents the human rights issue.

4.2.11.1.4. Hashtags (0):

The absence of hashtags does not stop Boniadi's posts from receiving high engagement. This shows how personally relevant she is and the matters in her posts illustrates the content is consumed because it is important, instead of the visibility through hashtags.

4.2.11.2. Conclusion:

Nazanin Boniadi's support of Taraneh Alidoosti and other courageous women in Iran demonstrates her willingness to fight. Boniadi aims to get the world's attention towards the human rights abuse women in Iran face and calls the world to action and support.

The volume of her followers, which exceeds 886,000, proves her influence and the impact of her posts is clearly depicted through the high engagement metrics. Even without hashtags, the interactions speak volumes about the value of her post and the connection it has with the audience. Boniadi still campaigns for the rights of Iranian women through social media and conveys their plight to the world.

4.2.12. Ehsan Karami:

Ehsan Karami posted an astonishing picture of Amini in a hospital bed and described how, in his opinion, she was severely mistreated. In the post, he said, "You take a girl

to the detention centre for her improper hijab with the intention of ‘teaching’ her something! After some hours this young girl who shows too much hair is in fact lying unconscious in a hospital bed. Not only do all of Iran but many parts of this world will see his innocent face in a few hours...”

Karami's message powerful message captured the heart of gruesome violence done against women in Iran. He claimed not only the ridiculousness of Mahsa Amini's arrest, but the sheer violence she experienced for being so exposed. His statements showcased how fragile women in Amini's condition and many others are in Iran, and the atrocities they have to suffer in their ongoing fight for basic rights and freedom. Karami's post motivated women to fight for their rights, while targeting activists, lawyers and human rights organizations to demand further action.



Figure 12: Ehsan Karami's post

Table. 13 The table presents key details of Ehsan Karami's Instagram activity, demonstrating his social media influence and engagement

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Ehsan Karami	Actor	750	1.2 million	88099	3879	12	50390	265832	0

4.2.12.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.12.1.1. Follower Count:

- Karimi has 1.2 million followers, which gives him a good opportunity to speak about social topics on his page, and people engage with these topics on social media.

4.2.12.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (88,099): Karami received an incredible amount of likes which shows how much support his followers give him. His choice to fight for women's rights through social media advocacy is appreciated by a great deal of his followers.

- Dislikes (3,879): Even though the number remains quite low, this still suggests that there are people who oppose him which may stem from his policy on women's rights or political climate in Iran.

- Comments (12): The infrequently low amount of comments on this post equates to controlled interaction or free form allowed commenting, but in all, engagement with the post and its message is possible.

4.2.12.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (50,390): This proves that most of Karami's followers are willing to help him spread the message of his post and the idea in general rather than the message itself. Karami's followers working to increase the visibility of his post is a crucial metric to assess how engaged his audience is with the cause.

- Views (265,832): With over 265,000 views, the post has reached a significant number of people and further disseminated the message of women's rights violations in Iran and the call for justice after Amini's death.

4.2.12.1.4. Hashtags (0):

Even in the absence of hashtags, Karami's post singlehandedly reached a multitude of people and demonstrated that the power and the seriousness of his message was strong enough to not need hashtag visibility.

4.2.12.2. Conclusion:

The Instagram post from Ehsan Karami from the Iranian Social Justice Movement regarding the death of Mahsa Amini illustrates his continuous fight for women's social justice in Iran. Through his powerful post, Ehsan was able to share his emotions and anger, thus adding to the larger movement against the oppression and violence inflicted on women in Iran. His attempts to rise these issues to the world needed global attention show the need of humanitarian action that he so bravely aims for.

The impact of Karami is marked by the high engagement rates of his posts which include 265,832 views combined with his follower count of 1.2 million. The 50,390 shares also depict how his message is reaching a lot of people. Such powerful impacts are seen without the use of hashtags making it clear that he and other celebrities use their platform to strongly advocate for human rights, which in return surely inspires a lot of people to take some kind of action. Karami's voice along with others who speak up for the injustice and unequal treatment of women in Iran further amplifies the cause of women's freedom and dignity.

4.2.13. Shaghayegh Dehghan:

Shaghayegh Dehghan is an Iranian actress who boldly voiced her support to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement on her Instagram on October 5, 2022. Shaghayegh shared a video of Nika Shakarami, one of the minors shot during the protests in 2022 in Iran, with no further comment. What she captured offered compelling evidence of the heinous events taking place in Iran. Her use of silence bore testimony to the sufferings of a majority of Iranian women, especially those in detainment or have been marginalized to having no voice. In this post, Dehghan aimed to capture the emotion felt by women who are on the receiving end of the violence and oppression and the life-altering protests that have followed.

Dehghan's decision to share the video without any form of narration showcases the power of activism through visuals. In bringing Nika Shakarami into the picture, Dehghan enabled her audience to relate to the horrific outcomes that came from the government's reaction towards the protests. Her post was in sync with the wider campaign on women's rights and freedoms, which aimed at unifying people towards fighting these dreadful things.



Figure 13: Shaghayegh Dehghan's post

Table. 14 The table below outlines key details of Shaghayegh Dehghan's Instagram activity, providing insight into her reach and engagement levels

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Shaghayegh Dehghan	Actress	261	931000	102000	25876	2939	21431	544853	0

4.2.13.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.13.1.1. Follower Count:

- Shaghayegh Dehghan has 931,000 followers on Instagram, which allows her to raise social and political issues through posts that can be seen by a significant number of people.

4.2.13.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (102,000): The post has over one hundred thousand likes, which means her audience supports her attitude and narrative towards the subject being discussed. That speaks volumes about how the followers visualize and understand her message, even when expressed purely through calm imagery.
- Dislikes (25,876): The number of dislikes is considerably high, adding to the allegation of opposing her claim or the nature of the protests being controversial. This shows the split picture of the political situation in Iran, where some people chose violence and protest, while others distance themselves from this phenomenon.
- Comments (2,939): Dehghan's followers did not fail to share their thoughts in the comments, as the almost three thousand comments suggest. While the amount is not overly high compared to her follower count, they do demonstrate that many people were affected and demanded some form of action in response to the video and its poignant narrative.

4.2.13.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (21,431): This post was shared over 21,000 times which is superb in sharing the message. The shares enhance the visibility of her content and make it accessible to her further audience.
- Views (544,853): Shakirami Nika's video has been viewed to an extent of 544,853 which shows substantial interest and awareness attention received via Dehghan's post. This demonstrates the proficiency her platform has in passing vital information regarding social movements and human rights issues.

4.2.13.1.4. Hashtags (0):

The fact that Dehghan did not use any hashtags in the post but managed to garner impressive engagement goes to show the strength of the post's emotional and visual impact. This proves that there was so much impact and resonance with the audience emotion that lesser visibility via hashtags was not an issue.

4.2.13.2. Conclusion:

Shaghayegh Dehghan's post about Nika is a clear and vivid example of using an online platform to represent human rights. Visual storytelling devoid of any text explanation enabled a raw connection which is emotional making them understand the captivity of the issue in Iran. Considering her 931,000 followers and 102,000 likes, we can see how

much of an influence she can have as a public figure when it comes to focusing on women's rights and the issues that women have to deal with in Iran. The amount of views 544,853 and the number of shares, 21,431, indicates her capability of mobilizing her audience and disseminating important information.

In spite of Dehghan not using any hashtags, her post was able to put together all of her followers into the bigger picture of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, which goes to show that sometimes the beauty of the message and the power that it holds lies in how simplistic and emotional it can be. She can also be regarded as a champion of social media in so far as she supports Iranian women and, while not the only one, fights for justice and brings together people and makes them do something.

4.2.14. Maryam Bobani:

"I strive to make my people proud rather than gather followers." The Iranian actress, Maryam Bobani, posted on her Instagram account during the aftermath of Mahsa Amini's untimely demise on September 18, 2022. In her reaction, she associated her feelings with a poem which goes as follows: "Here in this little garden, where why does that terrible sound of the axe severing limbs not stop? Why does the sound of falling continue? How long must we mourn the cypress trees? How long for the plane trees? Of how many cypress and plane trees that are left, for the cruel teeth of the axe are not yet appeased by pulverizing them?"

Through this post, Bobani attempts to underscore the injustices against women in Iran, in particular, the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. The "axe" symbolizes the oppression and violence that women face, while the poetry serves as a call for a halt to their suffering. Referring to Amini's death serves as a centrepiece so that both local and foreign audiences turn their ears towards the noise of relentless violence against women in Iran. Bobani's statement is part of the increasing number of Iranian personalities who have cried out for justice and social change. She takes advantage of her podium not only to share her personal sorrow, but also to fight for women's rights while connecting the death of Mahsa Amini to the larger dysfunctions of Iran.

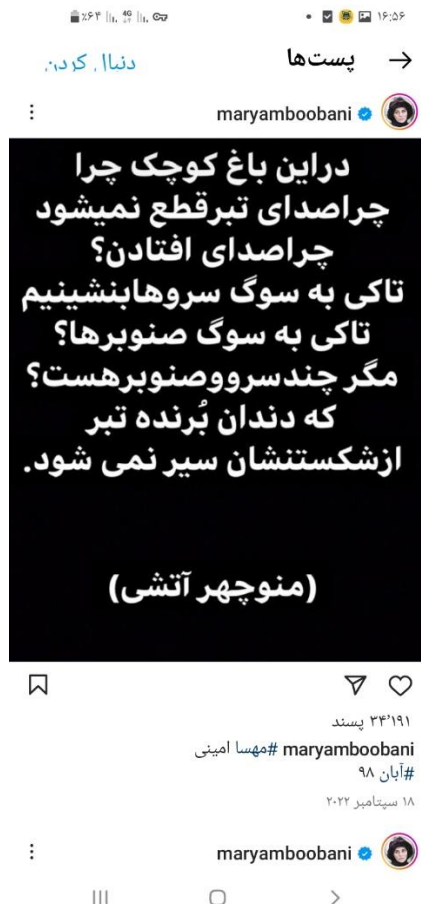


Figure 14: Maryam Bobani's post

Table. 15 The table below outlines the details of Maryam Bobani's Instagram activity, providing insights into her reach and engagement levels

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Maryam Bobaii	Actress	863	152000	34191	1537	0	5987	102678	2

4.2.14.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.14.1.1. Follower Count:

- Maryam Bobani is an Iranian public figure who, with a following of 152,000 people, has a smaller audience than many but still a considerably large one. Through her platform, she can start conversations about highly delicate and controversial social problems like governance and women's rights.

4.2.14.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (34,191): The post received more than 34,000 likes which show the post resonated with her followers. Given her follower base, this engagement suggests that her audience is emotionally connected to the content she shares, especially regarding societal issues.
- Dislikes (1,537): The number of dislikes is relatively low so it can be argued that the majority of her audience is supportive of her message, although some may oppose due to the contentious nature of the protests.
- Comments (0): Surprisingly, the table does not summarize the total amount of comments which might suggest some level of commenting restriction placed on this post. This could have been done to avoid receiving any form of backlash or negative dialogue revolving a sensitive issue.

4.2.14.1.3. Shares and Views:

- The post has been shared close to 6,000 times indicating its virality and impact the post had on users. This high amount of shares further proves how Bobani's message transcended her own follower population and created awareness about the concern.
- Views (102,678): The post has been viewed over 100,000 times which goes to prove that the audience has a reasonable proportion of interest. The large quantities of views serves as evidence that people do not only like, but actively engage with the content of her posts.

4.2.14.1.4. Hashtags (2):

Unlike some other public figures, Bobani used two hashtags which can be linked to particular movements such as Woman, Life, Freedom. Hashtags boost visibility, however, in this case, Bobani's limited use of hashtags surprisingly resulted in high engagement.

4.2.14.2. Conclusion:

Post such as that of Maryam Bobani highlights how public figures can shed light on important social issues. The post by Bobani engages with the wider Women, Life Freedom movement and positions her as a change advocate. Calling out systemic violence towards women in Iran through a poetical lens makes her audience reflect, thus becoming Bobani's metaphorical language that draws attention to take action. Clearly, with 102,678 views, Bobani's post had an impact that resonated with her

followers and audience. 34,191 likes and the astonishing number of 5,987 shares portrays the viral nature of her post and contributes to raising awareness about the ongoing protests and need for reform in Iran concerning women rights.

This and many other posts showcases a new wave of solidarity expressed by public Iranian figures with the local and international revolutionist who aim for justice and decentralization in the governance system.

4.2.15. Karim Bagheri:

Karim Bagheri is a former member of Iranian national football soccer team and also serves as a coach at Persepolis Football Club. Bagheri had this to say: "What is it that is so troubling about supporting our people for you?"

In this instance “you all” means the officials of the Islamic Republic suggesting that the government has a negative response politically when well-known figures display sympathies or disfavour to the government. Bagheri’s comments capture the profoundly oppressive nature of Iran, which as Bagheri suggests, few acts of voluntary supports of the public as so simple can generate enormous government anger and counter measures. Here, Bagheri is trying to tell people about Iran without telling them directly, especially women suffering in silence while fighting for their rights. His participation on the Woman, Life, Freedom movement marks a shift amongst allowing public figures in Iran to accept and act towards social injustices.



Figure 15: Karim Bagheri's post

Table. 16 The table below presents an overview of Karim Bagheri's Instagram activity, illustrating his reach and engagement levels

Name of the account owner	Profession	Number of Posts	Followers	Likes	Dislikes	Number of Comments	Number of shares	Views	Number of Hashtags
Karim Bagheri	Football Player	97	3.6 million	975684	20921	55637	63851	1435632	1

4.2.15.1. Social Media Impact:

4.2.15.1.1. Follower Count:

- As an influential figure in Iranian sports and society, Bagheri's follower count of 3.6 million gives him audience attention. This scale of following increases the impact of his remarks, particularly related to social matters.

4.2.15.1.2. Engagement (Likes, Dislikes, Comments):

- Likes (975,684): His post receiving over 975k likes shows how broad the support for the message is in the context of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement and resonates deeply with his audience.

- Dislikes (20,921): While the number of dislikes is notable, it in no way compares to achieving the same scale of likes. This indicates support from the majority of his followers.

- Comments (55,637): With a little over 55k comments, it is clear that his followers have a particular opinion towards his content, and he motivates them to not only substantially engage on the social media platforms but also have meaningful discussions.

4.2.15.1.3. Shares and Views:

- Shares (63,851): Over 63k shares indicate it went viral, which also suggests that Bagheri's message is receiving attention beyond his immediate follower base and more people who are interested in the issues he raises are likely to see it.

- Views (1,435,632): Bagheri's post garnered more than 1.4 million views which is impressive. It's paramount to spread awareness about the condition of women in Iran and the protests in the country which continues.

4.2.15.1.4. Hashtags (1):

Bagheri used one hashtag in this post. This hashtag simply help the mark the important topic in social media

4.2.15.2. Conclusion:

Karim Bagheri's post in Favor of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement showcases how sports personalities can utilize their platform for important social issues. His harsh assessment of the government's response to sympathizers is telling of the repressive climate in Iran, where even benign supportive messages could trigger government

hostility. Bagheri's post has over three million followers, almost a million likes, and 1,435,632 views. Bagheri's post also has considerable engagement, and his high follower count implies that he has a lot of influence. The considerable number of shares and comments is in pointer to the interest of the public in the matters he raises, which underscores the need for support in the struggle for women's rights in Iran.

In speaking about societal matters, Bagheri contributes to the already prevailing women's discourse whilst encouraging other public figures, including sportspersons, to act. This is a powerful demonstration of the burgeoning civic movement for change and justice in Iran, which is indeed positive in deepening the struggle for a better life.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This study analyzes the discursive use of the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement on social media to highlight women's rights. This research has analysed and interpreted the movement's digital activism through the multi-level critical discourse analysis (CDA) technique focusing on its textual, discursive, and social aspects. This last chapter integrates the results and discusses their relevance while providing a direction for further research and practice.

5.2. Framework for Analysis of Findings

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is useful for looking at the relationship between language, power, and social institutions. Using a multi-level analysis allows us to construct meaning in the discourse of the Zan Zendegi Azadi movement at different levels, integrating individual utterances with broader societal context. In this case, Instagram posts from Iranian celebrities were analysed to reveal the underlying discourses on gender identities and the socio-political advocacy of women's rights in Iran. The analysis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model:

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level): Examines linguistic and semiotic features of the posts.
2. Discursive Practices (Meso-Level): Focuses on how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed, including engagement metrics and hashtag use.
3. Social Practices (Macro-Level): Analyze the different issues, such as social, political, and cultural contexts, in which discourse both shapes and is shaped by these contexts.

5.3. 5-3. Data analyzing

This analysis focused on 15 Instagram posts shared by various selected Iranian activists and celebrities including politicians, actors, footballers and singers. Based on the CDA approaches, the findings highlight the following important points:

5.3.1. Micro-Level Analysis: Textual Features of Instagram Posts (Textual Strategies)

At the textual level, the posts analysed reflect deliberate choices in language, tone, and imagery to:

- Convey urgency and solidarity (e.g., through hashtags like *#ZanZendegiAzadi*).
- Employ personal and emotional narratives, as seen in statements by figures like Taraneh Alidoosti and Narges Mohammadi, which aim to humanize the movement.
- Utilize visuals (photos/videos) to complement textual content, emphasizing solidarity or depicting women's resistance against oppressive norms.

The mobilization of discourse makes extensive use of emotive language, personal stories, and visual images to elicit empathy and solidarity. Hashtags of this nature, such as *#ZanZendegiAzadi*, act as potent identifiers of the movement, while serving as a digital tool to express multiplicity and identity at the same time. These posts are rhetorical in nature and seek to inspire followers to actively petition, post, or join the demonstrations, illustrating the role activist work in activating online participation.

5.3.2. Meso-Level Analysis: Discursive Practices (Digital Engagement)

This level considers how the posts are produced and engaged with, highlighting the digital dynamics of the movement:

- High engagement metrics (e.g., Ali Karimi's 3.3M views and Ali Daei's 3.7M views) suggest the effectiveness of celebrity influence in amplifying the discourse.
- Hashtag Culture: The strategic use of hashtags like *#ZanZendegiAzadi* creates a cohesive digital space for activism, enabling users to locate, share, and contribute to the movement.

- **User Comments and Reactions:** The high number of comments (e.g., Katayoun Riahi's posts with 21K+ comments) shows how users actively engage, reinforcing the message's reach and creating participatory dialogue spaces.
- **Multi-Professional Representation:** Posts from diverse professions (actors, footballers, activists) enhance the movement's credibility and reach, showing solidarity across societal strata.

The high performance (likes, comments, shares, and views) which underscores the performance of activism on Instagram marks it as a participatory rather than just a spectator platform. These illustrates how the well-known Iranian footballer Ali Daei and actress Taraneh Alidoosti endorse the different domains of the professional cross-identity and capture the attention of different audiences. The social media movement is fuelled by the clever combination of hashtag activism and call-to-action, which enables individual participation to be integrated into group activism. This level corresponds with the new ways in which musicians and actors use social networks not just for publicity, but for digital activism.

5.3.3. Macro-Level Analysis: Societal and Political Contexts (Socio-Political Dynamics)

The *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement operates within a highly charged socio-political environment:

- **Challenging Gender Norms:** The discourse explicitly contests patriarchal norms by reframing women's identities as central to societal progress. Posts often highlight the symbolic power of women as agents of change.
- **Opposing State Suppression:** Activist posts from figures like Narges Mohammadi directly address systemic oppression, representing a counter-hegemonic discourse against the state's control of women's rights.
- **Global Solidarity:** The posts' high engagement reflects a transnational dimension, as global audiences align with the movement, amplifying its resonance beyond Iran.

The *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement's discourse contests patriarchal and state-centric narratives by making women an axis of the societal change. The movement intertwining personal and political stories not only oppresses the system but also

changes the constructs of gender within Iran. International engagement with the movement highlights its global resonance and the universal appeal of gender equality. At this level, the discourse reveals its dual function: (1) to resist local gender-based oppression and (2) to mobilize international attention and solidarity.

5.4. Question Analysis

How do individuals participating in the *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement in Iran navigate intersections of gender identities, and how does this contribute to promoting women's rights within Iranian social and political contexts?

The Instagram information provides evidence about how numerous public figures, categorized within professions such as actors, footballers, political activists, singers, use their status to support the *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement. Their discursive strategies, which can be estimated with likes, comments, and shares, show a high level of interaction with their audiences. This interaction expresses that those supporting the movement actively participate:

1. Challenging traditional gender norms (e.g., through advocacy posts and public petitions).
2. Creating spaces for discourse and solidarity online.
3. Leveraging their profession and follower base to contextualize gender rights within broader political activism.

This alignment between their public identity and their posts' content underscores the interconnectedness of personal and collective gender struggles in the movement.

5.5. Hypothesis Validation

Hypothesis: Participants in the *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement engage in discursive presentations that challenge traditional norms, redefine perceptions, and catalyse progress toward gender equality.

The Instagram engagement metrics in the table corroborate the hypothesis:

- High engagement rates (e.g., Ali Karimi's 3.3M views; Ali Daei's 3.7M views) suggest the potency of these posts in creating awareness and stimulating discourse.

- Content categorization reveals petitions and personal statements, indicating a blend of collective and individualistic approaches to activism.
- Cross-professional engagement (actors, footballers, activists, singers) shows the multi-dimensionality of the movement, reflecting its widespread resonance across different societal strata.

Through these metrics, it becomes evident that participants' posts:

- Amplify *Zan Zendegi Azadi*'s core message of gender justice.
- Foster discussions around equality and rights by framing them within broader social justice contexts.

5.6. Contributions to Women's Rights Advocacy

The *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement raises an example of how the Internet is used to promote women's rights. The *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement fosters unity and upliftment of silenced women, challenging the established order and encouraging discourse regarding the advancement of gender equality. The movement relies on celebrities and public activists, encouraging increased reliance on them as tools for cross-sectorial participation in activism.

The findings also reveal that participants navigate the intersections of gender identities through digital storytelling, which:

- Challenges traditional notions of femininity and masculinity.
- Highlights the intersectionality of oppression, considering factors such as political dissent, socio-economic status, and cultural heritage.
- Encourages reimagining Iranian women's roles as agents of social and political change.

The analysed Instagram posts demonstrate how *Zan Zendegi Azadi* as a discourse operates as a grassroots digital movement. Reframing gender identities, posts reflect efforts to challenge oppressive norms (e.g., critiques of traditional patriarchal systems). Empowering women through visibility, the high engagement from celebrities ensures greater exposure for the movement. The use of shared hashtags and comments impose an understanding of an activism net model, where a call for action is answered with massive responses and consolidated approach. These factors illustrate the movement's

capacity to shift personal and social constructs, allowing Iranian gender politics to be redefined.

5.7. Conclusion

Movement for women's rights in Iran reached a drastic milestone with the Zan Zendegi Azadi movement. This movement demonstrates how Digital activism can not only fight against oppression but also give the power to minorities that are often silenced. The use of social media innovatively grows support for gender equity and inspires support from different parts of the world. With the advancement of digital tools, we ought to remember Zan Zendegi Azadi and similar movements for their ability to create a just environment. In conclusion, this dissertation emphasizes why further work and advocacy to harness the momentum of Zan Zendegi Azadi towards transformational impact in Iran and elsewhere is essential.

Instagram discourse of the Zan Zendegi Azadi movement stem from multi level CDA framework which display a Transformed gender scheme of participating women and a general change in the women's rights paradigm. The analyses indicate that these platforms are new sites for social and political engagement, showing the impact of discourse on the fundamentally unequal conditions of the Iranian society. This study demonstrates that digital spaces, through a combination of textual and discursive plus societal analysis, are transformed into spaces for collective defiance and transformation.

5.8. Theoretical Implications

This research could be useful in illustrating the use of online platforms and feminist discourse by:

- Highlighting the importance of hashtags as modern discursive tools that shape collective identities and foster activism.
- Providing a case study of the *Zan Zendegi Azadi* movement as a model for grassroots activism in restrictive political environments.

5.9. Practical Recommendations

1. For Activists and Practitioners:

- Leverage multimedia elements (text, images, videos) to enhance engagement and emotional connection with audiences.
- Prioritize inclusivity in digital movements by amplifying diverse voices, particularly those of marginalized communities.

2. For Policymakers and NGOs:

- Develop initiatives to support digital activism as a legitimate form of political expression, particularly in authoritarian contexts.
- Advocate for greater protections for online activists to mitigate risks associated with state surveillance and repression.

3. For Researchers:

- Expand studies to other social media platforms to explore how multi-platform activism contributes to movements like *Zan Zendegi Azadi*.

5.10. Limitations and Future Research

- The study focused solely on Instagram posts; analysing other platforms (e.g., Twitter, TikTok) could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the movement.
- The sample size of 15 posts limits the scope of generalizability. Future research could analyse a larger dataset to identify trends over time.

Future studies might also explore the movement's offline implications, examining how digital discourse translates into tangible social and political change within Iran and beyond.

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Appendices

Acknowledgement of AI Assistance

During my research and writing process, I utilized artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist with grammar checking and text refinement. These tools helped identify and correct grammatical errors, improve sentence structure, and enhance overall clarity. However, all critical analysis, interpretations, and conclusions remain my own, with AI serving solely as an aid in ensuring linguistic accuracy.

Academic Confirmation Statement

By Dr. Morteza Farhadytooli

PhD in Gender Studies

As a scholar specializing in Gender Studies, my research focuses on the complex interplay between gender and language, with particular attention to sociolinguistic and sociopolitical dimensions. My academic work engages deeply with social movements, particularly those concerning gender equity and women's rights. Having examined Rahil Golgiri's thesis and conducted independent research on the gender movement in Iran, I can affirm that the "Woman, Life, Freedom" (Zan, Zendegi, Azadi) movement has indeed brought significant shifts in the discourse and activism surrounding women's rights in Iran. The events described in the thesis align with documented sociopolitical developments, and my own research corroborates that this movement has had a tangible impact on women's rights advocacy, both in visibility and structural challenges.

I confirm that these events occurred as described and that the movement has influenced the trajectory of gender rights in Iran, marking a notable contrast between pre- and post-movement conditions.

Morteza Farhadytooli