



**WOMEN AS A POLITICAL SYMBOL IN IRAN: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN
PAHLAVI REGIME AND ISLAMIC REVOLUTION***
**İRAN'DA SİYASİ BİR SEMBOL OLARAK KADINLAR: PEHLEVİ REJİMİ İLE İSLAM DEVRİMİ
ARASINDA KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR BAKIŞ**

Masoumeh BANEINIA
Atılım Üniversitesi
masoumeh.banaee@gmail.com
ORCID No: 0000-0002-0706-343X

Doç. Dr. Duygu DERSAN ORHAN
Atılım Üniversitesi, İşletme Fakültesi, Uluslararası
İlişkiler Bölümü
duygu.dersan@atilim.edu.tr
ORCID No: 0000-0002-0618-1530

ÖZET

ABSTRACT

Geliş Tarihi:

02.10.2021

Kabul Tarihi:

13.11.2021

Yayın Tarihi:

30.12.2021

Anahtar Kelimeler

İran, Kadın Hakları
İslam Devrimi
Siyaset, Sembol.

Keywords

Iran, Women Rights
Islamic Revolution
Politics
Symbol

İran İslam Devrimi'nden sonra İranlı kadınlar sosyo-politik tartışmaların en önemli konularından birisi olmuştur. Bu makale, İran İslam Devrimi'nden sonra kadın hakları konusunda yaşanan değişimi anlamak için Şah rejimi ve devrim sonrası döneme odaklanarak karşılaştırmalı bir bakış açısı benimsemektedir. Çalışmada her iki dönemde de kadınların rejimler tarafından siyasi bir sembol olarak kullanıldığı, Pehlevi rejimi sırasında modernitenin, Devrim'den sonra ise İslam'ın bir sembolü olarak sunulduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma İran'da kadın hakları konusunun her dönemde sadece iç mesele olmadığını, güçlü bir dış politika aracı olarak ve İran'ın dış dünya tarafından nasıl algılandığına dair bir imaj unsuru olarak kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Kadınların sadece dış görünüşüne odaklanan kadın hakları tartışmalarının birçok önemli konunun ihmal edilmesine yol açtığı düşünülmektedir. İran Devrimi'nden bu yana ülkeyi yöneten liderlerin kadın haklarına yönelik farklı tutumlara sahip oldukları da çalışmada ortaya konmuştur. İran İslam Devrimi'nden sonra kadın hakları, cumhurbaşkanlarının kadın sorunlarına ilişkin vizyonlarına bağlı olarak ileri veya geri gittiği değerlendirilmiştir. Konu, kadınların sosyal ve siyasi hayattaki rolleri, siyasete katılım düzeyleri, farklı hükümetlerin kadın giyimine ilişkin politikaları ve eğitim hakları çerçevesinde incelenmiştir.

Iranian women have been one of the most important topics of the socio-political discussions after the Iranian Islamic revolution. This article adopts a comparative perspective through focusing on the Shah regime and the post-revolution era in order to figure out what has been changed in Iranian women rights after the Islamic Revolution. It is argued that in both periods, women were used as a political symbol by the regimes; a symbol of modernity during the Pahlavi regime and a symbol of Islam after the Revolution. This study also argues that the issue of women's rights in Iran is not only a domestic matter in every period, it is used as a strong foreign policy tool, an element of image about how Iran is perceived by the outside world. It is considered that women's rights discussions, which focus only on the outward appearance of women, lead to the neglect of many important issues. It is also demonstrated in the study that the leaders who have ruled the country since the Iranian revolution have different attitudes towards women's rights. After the Islamic revolution of Iran, women's rights have gone back and forth depending on the visions of the presidents on women issues. The subject has been examined within the framework of women's roles in social and political life, their level of participation in politics, the policies of different governments on women's clothing and their education rights.

<https://doi.org/10.30783/nevsosbilen.998581>.

Baneinia, M. ve Dersan Orhan, D. (2021). Women As A Political Symbol in Iran: A Comparative Perspective Between Pahlavi Regime and Islamic Revolution. *Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi SBE Dergisi*, 11(4), 1906-1919.

*This study is based on Masoumeh Banaeina's unpublished M.A. thesis (Iranian Women Rights After the Revolution 1989-2013, M.A. Thesis, Atılım University, 2017).

INTRODUCTION

Women rights in Iran has been a topic which attracts attention of scholars during the last three decades, especially after the 1979 revolution which made wearing Islamic hijab as an obligation for women. The ruling of Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) opened up a new stage for women which had a perspective of modernization of Iran. Through Reza Shah's decision to ban veiling, women became "westernized" and achieved to be more visible. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 totally altered the lives of the women with the implementation of sharia laws.

The aim of the article is to analyze Iranian women rights between Pahlavi regime and the Islamic Revolution through a comparative perspective. By comparing the status of women in Iran before and after the Islamic revolution, this study seeks to go beyond the discussions solely focusing on veiling issue as oppressing women. There is a general understanding that women in Iran became political symbols with the Islamic Revolution. However, this study argues that women were always a political subject in Iran; forced to be fashionable in Reza Shah period and being modernized in Mohammed Reza Shah regime and then forcing to wear hijab after revolution were all under the control of the governors. Moreover, there is a perception that the Islamic Republic of Iran's approach towards women is the same as during all leaders. However, this article aims to reveal the different approaches of the leaders towards women who govern the country after the Islamic revolution. The article is limited to the beginning of Rouhani presidency in 2013. Roles of women in social and political life have been examined primarily within the framework of their level of participation in politics, the policies of different governments on women's clothing and their rights to education.

This study aims to contribute to the Iranian women's rights literature by not only limiting the issue of women's rights in the post- Islamic Revolution era, but also comparatively analyzing the political, social and educational positions of women both during the Pahlavi period and the post-revolutionary period. In addition, this study shows that the issue of women's rights in Iran is not only a domestic matter in every period, it is used as a strong foreign policy tool, an element of image about how Iran is perceived by the outside world which is an issue not analyzed by the previous works.

1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of political subjectivity helps to understand how people relate to political governance and guides us about how authoritarian conditions create political citizens. The study of subjectivity also helps conceptualize the type of political citizens produced by Iranian governments both during the Pahlavi regime and after the Islamic revolution. Political subjectivity carried out over the female body in different periods of power in Iran can also be closely linked and analyzed through body politics. Scientific research on body politics was greatly influenced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1977) who used the terms "biopower" and "anatomo-politics" to refer to the instigation of the state and institutional power into people's daily activities. He argued that such a power shaped the subjectivity of people and how they felt as individuals. From Foucault's point of view, discipline mechanisms such as prisons, medical knowledge and the education system provide discourses, ideas, resources, and procedures where individuals know who they are and learn to follow them.

Michel Foucault, who went to Iran for the first time in 1978 as the special reporter of the Italian newspaper *Corriere Della Serra*, witnessed mass movements prioritizing the Revolution in this process and had the opportunity to observe the events. Foucault's observations and experiences in Iran are shared in the work through articles published in *Corriere Della Serra*. According to Foucault, Islamic revolution toppled the Western-backed modern power that emerged in a non-Western society. Foucault's views on power are examined through modern power techniques, which he discusses in the *Birth of Prison* (Foucault, 1977), aiming to create docile individuals. Based on this work, the Shah administration is identified with modern power; the intensification of the public pressure of the government aiming at modernization is explained by SAVAK and the Shah administration is described as a tamer modern state (Afary and Anderson, 2005). This study, unlike Foucault's, reveals that a strong political subjectivity was

maintained both in the Pahlavi period and in the post-Islamic period, and the women's body was instrumentalized in this process.

During the literature review, it's seen that there are few studies examining the status of women before and after the revolution in a comparative manner. Most of the available literature focuses on the Iranian women rights after the revolution. Povey and Povey (2012), Esfandiari (2001), Keddie (2007), Moinifar (2011), Povey and Poya (1999), Paidar (2001), Nafisi (2008) would be given as the major works analyzing the changes in the status of Iranian women after the revolution.

Despite the general argument that, women started to be oppressed with the Islamic Revolution, some of the works suggests that women rights have been improving since the establishment of the Islamic regime. Keddie (2007) challenges the Western perception about Iranian women as if they lost all of their rights with the revolution. She argues that Iranian women are apparently enjoying many freedoms when it is compared with the other women in the Middle East. Similarly, Moinifar (2011) examines the political status of women after the revolution. She argues that political status of Iranian women is improving despite the obstacles. Impediments to women participation in politics are listed as state ideology, legal conditions, economic problems and culture. Povey and Povey (2012) contend that although women are seen as the victims of the Islamic Revolution and gender inequalities were always existed in Iran, but there has been an increase in women's position in Iran since 1990s.

Some of the scholars focusing on the status of women in the aftermath of revolution suggest that Iranian women never gave up the struggle and took their rights, even under difficult conditions. Esfandiari (2001) argues that although the clerics who came to power with the Islamic Revolution designed a traditional role for the women, women managed to play a significant role in the society. According to Povey and Poya (1999), despite the efforts of the Islamic regime to isolate women within their homes, women reacted to the oppression and gender awareness is higher than the pre-revolution period.

Studies on women's rights in Iran can be grouped by their focus of study like veiling, education, political participation and labor. Nafisi (2008) in *Reading Lolita* concentrates on the veiling policy of the Islamic regime through the personal experiences of some Iranian women. Asghar (2015) emphasizes the politics of women clothing in Iran. Similarly, Faraji (2014) focuses on the forced hijab policy of Islamic regime. Education of women also tackled by some of the writers and they argue that education level of Iranian women apparently increased after the revolution. Goli (2015) argues that women's access to education has increased at unprecedented levels during the Islamic state. Similarly, Shavarini (2005) suggests that there has been increasing numbers of women in Iran attending higher education since 1989. According to Winn (2016), the rise in women's participation has contributed to the rise of Islamic feminism. On the political participation, Paidar (2001) explores the relationship between democratization and feminist movements in Iran, Kian (1997) emphasizes how Iranian women mobilized at the political and social level and formed a gender consciousness. Povey and Poya (1999) analyze women participation in the labor force during the Islamic regime.

In the light of the previous studies, this work suggests that understanding the change in the women's lives in Iran with the Islamic Revolution also requires an understanding of the pre-revolution period. In addition, we argue that taking the post-revolutionary period as a whole has its drawbacks. Although the Islamic regime has a general understanding of the women based on Islamic law, a different analysis of women's rights has emerged during each president's term. In this respect, it is important to consider the post-revolutionary period in itself.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explores the following issues:

1. The status and the rights of women during the Pahlavi dynasty.
2. The change in the position of the women after the Islamic Revolution.

3. Differences and the similarities in the status of women during three presidencies after the Islamic Revolution; Rafsanjani, Khatemi and Ahmedinejad.
4. The factors affecting the women rights in Iran during different leaders like the relationship between religious establishment and the presidents, personal visions of the leaders and their relations with the external world.

Descriptive and analytical method is used in the paper. The research is a qualitative study mainly relied on secondary sources such as books, academic articles and media products. Newspapers and magazine articles published in Middle East Online, the Guardian, Deutschwelle in Persian, ISNA (Iranian Students News Agency) and Tahiyate are used. In the selected news, the reflections of the policies followed by the heads of state on the issue of women before and after the Islamic Revolution are examined. In addition, relevant sources of the official institutions like Iranian Human Rights Documentation Centre, Justice for Iran, Ministry of Interior were also cited in the article. In the selection of sources, both English and Persian sources were chosen and different perspectives have been comparatively researched. In this context, the existing findings related to the subject were combined with the obtained findings and analyzes were made.

3. PAHLAVI DYNASTY AND WOMEN RIGHTS

After consolidated his power, Reza Shah pursued economic, social and cultural reforms. He believed that in order to reach to the objective of modernization, religious and the traditional values should be replaced by the modern ones and special attention should be given to the status of women. He was inspired by the ideas of Turkish Republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the status of women after meeting with him in Turkey in 1934. Reza Shah started to elevate the status of women and modernize them in order to compete with western women (De La Camara, 2012).

As a part of the modernization program, Reza Shah commanded to establish new educational institutes and called Tehran University to take action for registering girls. A new civil code was accepted by majles (parliament) in 1928 which gave the right to women to initiate divorce under certain conditions. Reza Shah planned to establish Women's Center under the control of Ministry of Education and headed by her daughter Shams and Hajar Tarbiyat (Sahimi, 2010). In late 1930s, women were promoted to enter the labor force. Reza Shah enacted the ban on veiling in 1936 and changed the style of women clothing that was inspired by the Western examples. Reza Shah's tearing of women's chadors created negative reactions. Reza Shah period is criticized by even his cabinet members due to forced changes. Although supporters of monarchy considered unveiling as a vital component of modernization, it produced contrary results. According to statistics, there were about 3470 female students when Reza Shah came to power; the number was decreased to 2600 in 1935 (Sahimi, 2010).

The biggest challenges for Reza Shah's rule were the clerics and the Ulema. He tried to maintain the transfer of power from the Ulema to the state. However, as Keddie (2007: 20) states, this reforms and actions of Reza Shah could not stop Ulema's influence on several issues including the women rights. Ulema continued to play a considerable role in Iran under Pahlavi dynasty.

Reza Shah abdicated from the throne and his son, Mohammad Reza Shah rose to power in 1941. Mohammad Reza Shah had the similar vision with his father on the issue of modernization and the role of women in that process. Between the years 1941 and 1953, women started to organize politically. In 1943, Women's League was established by pro-Soviet Tudeh Party. The institution name was revised to Organization of Democratic Women in 1949, and renamed again in 1951 as the Organization of Progressive Women (Sahimi, 2010).

During the years between 1951 and 1953, Mohammad Mossadeg, the Prime Minister of Iran formed a nationalist government. Women supporters of Mossadeg within the National Front played an important role in that period. In 1952, the National Council of Women demanded political and economic rights

for women and their right to vote through submitting a petition to Prime Minister Mossadegh, the Majles and the United Nations (UN) with 100.000 signatures. This demand was rejected by the religious wing and the clergy on the ground that women do not have the right to vote. Majles approved a social insurance code in 1953 that gave women maternity leaves and disability allowances (Povey and Poya, 1999: 42).

After Mossadeg's of nationalization the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, an American sponsored coup was organized against Mossadeg known as "Operation Ajax" and Shah nominated a new Prime Minister, General Fazlollah Zahed. Bill and Leiden (1998: 42) asserts that, it is almost impossible to ignore the fact that the Iranian domestic and foreign policy was under the effect of international forces constantly.

After the coup, Shah prevented the activities of civil society groups including women's organizations. Pahlavi regime did not allow women's independent organizations and actions until the 1960s. However a number of state-sponsored publications and organizations continued their activities under the control of the regime (Povey and Poya, 1999: 43). In order to protect the country from opposition, SAVAK was established as a secret political force in 1957. The forces of SAVAK and its strong policy of punishment increased the anger against the regime. Women started to organize against the policies of Shah and SAVAK. Some of them were killed in the armed confrontations by SAVAK.

Between 1953 and 1962 there was not any obvious reformist action taken by Pahlavi related with women rights. In 1963, Shah enacted some reforms seriously, named White Revolution. It was included a new election law which granted women the full right to vote in all elections. It seemed to be an important change on equal rights of the sexes. In 1967, first Family Protection Law (FPL) was introduced that provided women with parental rights and rights for divorce. The legal age of marriage for girls increased from 15 to 18. Shah was also convinced with the importance of gender issue in terms of economy by showing a modern image of women in the labor force. Women were nominated to be a judge, a deputy in the Majles and also a cabinet member (Sahimi, 2010). Laws were originally western oriented and opposed by the religious traditionalists.

During Mohammad Reza Shah period, the first female lawyers in the national assembly were voted in 1963. In this period two women namely; Farrokhroo Parsa and Mahnaz Afkhami also served as ministers. Many women were also active in political parties as the most characteristic, one can be noted: Ashraf Dehghani. Women in this period were free to attend all activities like arts including cinema, which lots of actresses played in different films, and attending all sports activities. Activities of women and the education for girls spread all over the country including the rural areas (Esfandiari, 2009).

Granting the right to vote and the divorce right was an improvement of women rights during Mohammed Reza Shah's regime. Another important point is that women from the different segments of the population including the middle and the upper classes which had only participated in charitable works previously, started to work in high level jobs and even in governmental posts (Najmabadi, 1991: 62).

Women achieved to be in more visible positions. In media, women were shown by fashionable clothes including short skirts. Although women were "modern" in appearance, they were not free at all, regime always tried to keep women under control. Most of the rights remained in paper and not transmuted into reality (Shahidian, 1994: 10). There was too much focus on the "unveiling" issue which led the society to ignore other issues in women rights.

4. IRANIAN ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND WOMEN

On April 1, 1979, Islamic Republic of Iran was proclaimed by the religious leader Ayetollah Khomeini. Women participation in the demonstrations against Pahlavi regime was considerably high. Islamic women community played a positive role in the movement of Imam Khomeini. It has reported that Iranian women presences in the victory of Islamic revolution had several forms. Some of them were gathering news, others gave shelters to activists or injured people, and lots of them were protesting in

the streets, even some women were fighting with guns, as Imam Khomeini said: we owe this movement to women (Tahiyate, 2014).

After the revolution, the Family Protection Law which provided certain rights to women was declared as invalid. The Penal Code (The Islamic Punishment Rule) was accepted and according to 638th article of the law; “women, who appear in public places and roads without wearing Islamic hijab, shall be sentenced from ten days to two months imprisonment or a fine of fifty thousand to five hundred Rials” (Iranian Human Rights Documentation Center, 2012). Waves of media started their activities of making propaganda for the veiling culture. Under these conditions Islamic republic started with its policy of pressure on women and their way of life.

After the revolution, women were forced to wear hijab, and most of the female in governmental offices became unemployed. Schools for girls and boys were separated. As Keddie (2007: 23) stated that the consequences of 1979 revolution illustrates a huge difference with the premises of the revolution. The revolution had promised to improve the poor and the deprived in rural and the urban areas. The policies of Imam Khomeini showed that he did not have any egalitarian ideas. Thus, they have quickly changed most of the rules regarding freedom and rights for women just as Family Protection Law, to support the Islamic laws (Keddie 2007: 23). Farhi (2001: 65-66) argues that the most affected gender in the Revolution were women, women served as the political and cultural tool of the political movement.

A traditional role was defined for women under the Islamic leadership. Women were conceived as housewives and mothers primarily. The government intervention was felt in all the aspects of women’s lives including education, dressing and their manners. These regulations were making the men as the primary decision makers which have the right to decide on behalf of women in their social and the private lives.

Since the 1979 revolution with the forces of Imam Khomeini regarding veiling, pressures in the governmental offices were increasing. Some people were challenged the rule of compulsory veiling, hence they considered it as a personal matter rather than a collective one. Protesters of forced veiling were arguing that hijab was not mandatory even in the early Islam; it had been a subject to the whims and wishes of the people themselves (De La Camara, 2012).

According to many Iranian women who were in the position of losing their freedom through the way of dressing, wearing hijab was unacceptable. They were supporting that freedom is one of the important basic parts of human rights and through this law, freedom in wearing is taken from women and this is a human rights violation. Thus, after Ayatollah Khomeini’s speeches, lots of women from north, center and west part of Tehran started to protest against the new rules. Their slogan was: “hijab does not bring innocence and purity should be inside” (Deutchwelle- Persian, 2014). They tried a lot to resist the forced veiling. However, they haven’t received any results and the rule of veiling started to work after March, 9, 1979, exactly the day after International Women Day. Such moments of protests and women activities were watched by the other countries and the international women organizations.

Iranian women were very active during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Lots of young women volunteers were sent to the front during the war to provide logistical support (Koolae, 2014). The newly formed Islamic society after the revolution was influenced by Iran-Iraq war. Because of the political and physical threat, there was the unity of men and women together and society became stronger after Saddam Hussain’s attack to the country. After Iran-Iraq ceasefire, Iran became an important regional player in the Middle-East.

4.1. Rafsanjani Period (1989-1997)

The presidency of Akbar Rafsanjani refers to “constructional era”. The main concern of his government was the reconstruction of the country after the eight year war with Iraq that had left many ruins and needed to be renovated as soon as possible. Society was in the stipulation of high risk and it was the first time after revolution that men and women had to play roles within the same complex together. Rafsanjani’s main policy was to get rid of international isolation. He started to communicate with other countries; even with the western world and these strategies affected women affairs as well.

In addition to economic recovery and the rebuilding of infrastructures after the war, President Rafsanjani particularly looked at the reconstruction of cultural and social issues of women and family affairs. Rafsanjani established the ‘Socio-Cultural Council of Women’ to encourage women to be active in social and economic life. Gender equality and women rights have been some of the main issues during Rafsanjani period. Female parliamentarians occupied only 1.5% of the seats in the first three parliaments. However their presence in the 1992 elections doubled and reached to 9, which refers to 3.3% of the seats, to 13 in 1996 elections (Ministry of Interior, 2009). While the Iranian political process in the reconstruction era was still based on male-dominated decision-makers, women activities in political arena have increased and Iranian government has tried to promote their increased participations. Hence, increased numbers of female representatives in Iranian government’s key posts was evident.

Since the revolution, veiling has been an obligation for women in Iran; otherwise they were arrested or prosecuted. It is expected that women should completely cover themselves with scarves, long dresses with the slogan to keep the society far away from sin and crime. During Rafsanjani period, women suffered less pressure and enforcing hijab was allocated to governmental offices. It can be argued that the women veiling in the early revolution and during presidency of Rafsanjani were clearly different. Around 1979 and during the years of war, women veiling was too rigid, dark colors and completely closed scarves with long dresses or chadors were used, but after 1989, during Rafsanjani presidency, women way of dressing was a little more flexible, although the governmental authorities tried to set them back by arresting or noticing in the street. The first presence of women in the society after Iran-Iraq war had lots of problems for women particularly for the female governmental employees.

Education of women is one of the most important issues for the development of all communities. In developed countries, most expenses of the society have spent for the educational services and it is compulsory and free of charge. It seems Rafsanjani knew it well, so he established a university with lots of branches around the country. Free education is a constitutional right up to the doctoral level for both men and women (Moinifar, 2011: 30). However, state-owned universities were not able to provide enough seats for them; as a result many people have to pay lots of money for entering the open universities in Iran.

One of Rafsanjani’s contributions to women affairs was to establish Islamic Azad University (IAU) all around the country. He considered that most universities were in big cities and there were lots of girls with ambitions and desires of higher education, but still were in prejudiced families who did not let them to leave their own cities alone even for studying. Educated families were even scaring in those years. Despite the low supporting base on that issue, Rafsanjani continued his policy and increased the number of the universities country-wide. Islamic Azad University is the memorial of Rafsanjani, through the development of knowledge in society, especially in the women affairs. Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA) has reported Rafsanjani’s words in his demise reportage: “As I read the new world history, I realized that the developed countries which are in a high level of sciences, have progressed scientifically. It was very frustrating that universities were closed during war, but after that we could bring science to the people’s houses with educating women, because they were not allowed to study in far cities” (ISNA, 2017). As a result of this policy, the number of women attending university showed a great shot in the 1990s (Shavarini , 2005: 335).

4.2. Khatami Period (1997-2005)

In the 1997 elections, seven women wanted to be nominated, but they were rejected by the Guardian Council. Faizeh Rafsanjani (youngest daughter of President Akbar Rafsanjani) in a press interview in July 1997 criticized that situation as follows: “What is the difference between the presidency of the Republic (Iran) and the management of a government service? None. Both positions involve responsibilities in the executive branch. Therefore, why should a woman not lead the country when she can legitimately be at the head of a government service?” (Moinifar, 2011).

Various female politicians were brought to important positions during this period. Newly-elected president Mohammad Khatami named Masoumeh Ebtekar as the vice president in charge of environmental affairs. Aazam Nouri appointed as the deputy Culture Minister for legal and parliamentary affairs and Zahra Shojai named as Iran’s first director-general for women affairs (Moghadam, 2004).

The reformist government had started by the Khatami presidency and that political victory led to a freer public sphere, and formation of various women organizations and NGOs. However, the emergence of a reformist understanding in governance was interpreted as a danger by the hard religious thinkers in the government. As Sadeghi (2012) noted that the Guardian Council and the judiciary were dominated by the conservatives and they used their veto power to block some of the parliamentary decisions.

Paidar (2001) has asserted in the Gender of Democracy that, the reformist administration of Khatami led to the mobilization of civil society, albeit limited. In this environment, women had the opportunity to write articles in various women's magazines and increase their interactions with each other. With all these situations Iran experienced some actions from Iranian women activist too, as Ahmadi Khorasani (2006) states: “however it was Shirin Ebadi’s receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize for her promotion of democracy and women’s and children’s rights that brought recognition and energy to the Iranian women movement as a whole, but especially to the secular women’s movement, which was now firmly a force to be reckoned with. In fact in June 2005, secular women collaboratively organized the largest oppositional protest since the early years of the revolution, demanding a revision of the constitution to put an end to legal discrimination against women”.

Peaceful and reformist understanding of Khatami’s governance also had some reflections on the veiling issue. Khatami allowed women to wear long uniforms, rather than chador. This relaxation in veiling led to new discussions in Iran. Asghar T.J. in the Politics of Women’s Clothing in Iran noted that, soon after that relaxation for hijab, women using more perfume and make up. This softening on the veiling issue was criticized by the conservative wing and the Khatami administration was forced to step back.

During Khatami’s presidency, involvement of women in education was increased. It reached to highest levels since the establishment of universities in Iran. As Emadeddin Baghi (2004) asserts that, in the 2002-2003 academic year, the number of women enrolled in the universities exceeded the number of men for the first time since the 1930s when universities were firstly established. Youth literacy rates also increased for both males and females during Khatami period. (Center for Women’s Participation , 2005: 76-78).

4.3. Ahmadinejad Period (2005-2013)

In 2005 elections, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad won the majority of the votes and he governed Iran for two terms until 2013. He was conservative both at the domestic and the international level and the policies pursued by him led to the international isolation of Iran. After Ahmadinejad’s election success, the government tried to launch the Shari’a more in their policies towards women. Religion has taken a backseat in his governmental policy, furthermore his lack of democratic structure caused the inequality

in gender issues. However, Iranian women tend to insist more on their rights and independence in political structures. Ahmadinejad's rising to power caused the widespread of women dissent due to the rising the name of Shari'a on strict rules, whereas it was undermining the religious legitimacy.

Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election victory forced him to nominate three women to the parliament for ministerial posts. The competitive presidential elections in June 2009, between Mir Hossein Mousavi-former Prime Minister of Iran- and Ahmadinejad was resulted with Ahmedinejad's victory. After the elections, people protested in the streets regarding their claim of election fraud. Hence, Ahmadinejad felt obliged to attract the public attention. He came up with the decision to nominate three women to the parliament. However, only one of them was confirmed. Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, the only woman who received the confirmation from parliament in Ahmadinejad cabinet, became the Health minister (The Guardian, 2009). Ahmadinejad dismissed her at the end of his second round of presidency just because of her insistence on keeping Bagher Larijani, her deputy at the Ministry of Health (Middle East Online, 2012).

Although there were female ministers and vice president in Ahmadinejad government, which was a growth in the key political posts, there were still impending laws, gender clichés and social obstacles in the area and power and even decision makers for women political participation in Iran during 2005-2013. Despite his allocation of women in politics even as decision makers, his presidency was the dimmer period for women political policies and activities; he had closed all the doors of political powers to women in Iran. He has emphasized the role of women in family life.

Since the establishment of the government of Ahmadinejad with fostering the fundamental changes in women affairs, one of the heavy laws was related with veiling style. He was imposed new restrictive rules on women dressing. The policy of his government was, 'Islamic republic should have Islamic women'. Through putting lots of pressures in public places, universities, shopping centers with police forces, a fear society was created. However, it was created opposite results. As a response to the infliction of restrictive dress code, women used more make-up and wear short and tight uniforms in the streets became a silent-way of protesting against Ahmadinejad's veiling policy. Two years after his starting of presidency, in 2007, his government established a new police group named: 'Guidance Patrols' to notice women and most of the time arresting even pregnant women. The institution, Justice for Iran (2014) stated that, since 2007, the disciplinary forces in Iran settled a new police group named "guidance patrols" for monitoring the public spaces and community centers, operating as one of the fellow charged with the implement of this act. The distinguishing the criteria of the implication of 'improper hijab' and after a few hours after arresting them, the detained women had to provide Islamic uniforms before releasing from their families. Those who were declining to cooperate with police were transferred to judicial courts (Justice for Iran, 2014).

The darkest period of Islamic Republic after revolution was during the presidency of Ahmadinejad and the state government directed to undo the reform policies which were managed more than two and a half decades before, that Ahmadinejad's government mention it as denigrate of religious and entering westernization. For veiling issue during 2005-2013, women had no right to oppose the new strict rules due to the unbelievable pressures.

All lenient laws under the reformist presidency of Khatami were destroyed under the conservative presidency of president Ahmadinejad in women educational issues. Since 2005, the new government attempted to discourage women participation in universities in indirect ways. In Iran, there is an exam to enter the university called as kunfur. After passing the first step of this entering exam, the participants have to choose their favorite field of study. During Ahmadinejad government the options of choosing fields for females reduced and most of females participated in kunkur were disappointed. Women were banned from entering 77 fields of study. (Goli, 2015). Other important issue which happened during his presidency was firing the reformist professors whom were appointed during the presidency of Khatami.

They were supporters of opposition parties in Iran. Among them female professors were more. Shahrivari (2005: 331) noted that numerous reformist professors were dismissed from higher educational system during Ahmadinejad government. Iranian women experienced significant challenges of gender inequality in educational system since the revolution.

CONCLUSION

In the article, it is argued that the unveiled women gave political power to the Pahlavi regime. Pahlavi dynasty was too connected, related, and dependent on the west. The regime focused on the westernization of the country and women were at the center of his project. In fact the government promotion in education of women was a part of westernization program as well. It could be argued that Shah's main concern was the image of Iran, rather than the Iranian women rights. Most important concern of Pahlavi dynasty was how they are viewed from the Western countries. Modernization of women was associated with to be unveiled, beautiful and fashionable. Regarding to this, Brooks (2008) stated that Pahlavi regime just focusing on the ban on veiling and tended to ignore all actions and powers about the Iranian female population both in politics and society.

Female identity in Iran based on the Islamic structures after 1979 revolution by wearing hijab and chadors showed the religious aspects of Iranian Islamic Republic to the other societies. Western countries started to judge obligatory veiling as the violation of human rights. The enforcement on veiling issue resulted with the restrictions on education, occupation, social activities. Through being independent from western countries and having power under the name of Islam again, new Iranian regime used women as a symbol of Islam.

It has been demonstrated that the leaders who have ruled the country since the Iranian revolution have different attitudes towards women's rights. Since the Islamic revolution of Iran, women's rights have gone back and forth depending on the visions of the presidents on women issues. Although Rafsanjani and Khatami are considered to have a desire to improve the status of women, they faced various obstacles. The main obstacle is the religious establishment in Iran. They have faced with a certain reaction from the conservatives and the religious leaders in their modernization attempts. They have tended to remove the dictatorial sphere from Iranian female society by being more liberal instead of conservative in that issue. However, women participation in political life in those years was limited. On the other hand, through making collaboration with the religious wing, Ahmedinejad never experienced any pressure from police forces and any challenges from Ulema and religious establishment during his two rounds presidencies. Ahmedinejad government appointed women to the top political posts in his second round of presidency and brought them to power but it is regarded just a show off to change the atmosphere after the controversial presidential elections in 2009.

It is found out that there is a strong relationship between foreign relations of Iran and the women rights. As analyzed in detail, during Pahlavi regime, women were the symbols of modernity and used as a showcase in Iran's close and dependent relations with the West. After the Islamic revolution, it is analyzed that, as the government opened its doors to the outside world, it tended to be offer more to the women in terms of social rights. As the leaders get more open to the outside world, they provided more opportunities for women. Thus, women affairs improved in late period of Rafsanjani and Khatami. On the other hand, international isolation of Iran during Ahmedinejad period affected Iranian women in a very negative way. During Ahmedinejad period, like the times of early revolution, men and women were totally separated from each other in the public sphere. It is also observed that, women also became the victims of economic crisis in Iran. Due to international sanctions and economic problems emerged during the presidency of Ahmedinejad as a part of nuclear problem with the Western world, women lost their jobs and they forced to leave labor force.

When comparing women's rights in Iran before and after the revolution, the most obvious difference is undoubtedly the subject of compulsory veiling. On the other hand, the issue of women's rights is subject

to the approval of religious authorities. Religious authority in Iran is considered to be one of the most important obstacles to women rights. During the Shah, religious authorities made statements about the social roles of women, but their influence was limited due to the secular perspective of the Shah dynasty. Although the Shah period was discursive, especially in its foreign relations, it remained at this symbolic level, and the education rate of women and the number of women in important positions were limited. It is important to note that although women were under great pressure in the post-Islamic period, a significant increase was observed in women's education and political positions when it is compared with the pre-revolution period. Although it has to do with increasing literacy rates and diversification of opportunities around the world, it should be analyzed as a product of the Islamic regime's inclusion of women in political and social life. However, this policy has very clear limits. Women are appointed to certain positions by the male leaders, but they are not allowed to run for Presidency. Related with the evaluation of three Presidents in the aftermath of the revolution, Rafsanjani and Khatami would be considered as modernists. Rafsanjani through creating a balance with the religious rules and the changes required by the social life introduced some reforms related with the women rights. Although Khatami had a modern and reformist perspective, he has been hindered by religious authorities and there have been no major gains in terms of women's rights. The period of Ahmadinejad was a period in which women were subjected to great pressure and lost some of the rights they gained in previous periods. However, Ahmadinejad's good relations with the religious authority and the fact that he was not obstructed by the Ulema resulted in women being placed in important political positions.

KAYNAKÇA

- Ahmadi-Khorasani, N. (2006). *Women's Letter: Iranian Women's day of Solidarity*. Tehran: Iranian Women's Cultural Center.
- Afary, J. and K.B. Anderson (2005). *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Asghar, T. J.(2010). Good Hijabi, Bad Hijabi: The Politics of Women's Clothing in Iran, *Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar Middle Eastern Studies Student Association*, 10.
- Bayat, A. (2007). *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brooks, C. M. (2008). *Moments of Strength: Iranian Women's Rights and the 1979 Revolution*, Honors Theses. Paper 292. Retrieved March 5, 2017, from <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorstheses/292>
- De la Camara, A. (2012). *Women's rights in Iran during the years of the shah, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Khamenei*. HIM, 1990- 2015.1350, Retrieved February 15, 2017, from <http://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015/1350>.
- Deutchwelle (Persian) (2014). *Chegonah dar Avayele Enghelab Hijab Ejbari Shod*, Retrieved February 12, 2017, from <https://www.dw.com/fa-ir/>.
- Esfandiari, H. (2001). *The Politics of the 'Women's Question' in the Islamic Republic, 1979-1999*. In *Iran at the Crossroads*, J. L. Esposito & R.K. Ramazani (Eds). New York: Palgrave: 75-92.
- Faraji, M. (2014). *Thirty-five years of forced hijab: the widespread and systematic violation of women's rights in Iran*, Justice for Iran.
- Farhi, F. (2001). *On the Reconfiguration of the Public Sphere and the Changing Political Landscape of Post-revolutionary Iran*. In *Iran at the Crossroads*, J. L. Esposito & R.K. Ramazani (Eds) New York: Palgrave: 57-74.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, London: Allen Lane
- Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, (2012). *Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Retrieved February 7, 2017, from <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Iran-Islamic-Penal-Code-of-the-Islamic-Republic-of-Iran-1991-eng.pdf>
- ISNA, 2017. *Daneshgah Azad Yadegare Paydare Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani*. Retrieved, January 10, 2017, from isna.ir/news/95102113418/
- James, A.B. & Leiden, C. (1998). *Politics in the Middle East*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown Company.
- Justice for Iran (2014). *Thirty-five Years of Forced Hijab: The Widespread and Systematic Violation of Women's Rights in Iran*.

- Keddie, N. R. (2007). Iranian Women's Status and Struggles since 1979, *Journal of International Affairs*, 60 (2), 17-33.
- Kian, A. (1997). Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: the Gender Conscious Drive to Change, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 24 (1): 75-96.
- Koolae, E. (2014). The Impact of Iraq-Iran War on Social Roles of Iranian Women, *Middle East Critique*, 23 (3): 277-291.
- Maloney, S. and Katz. E. (2019) Iran and the headscarf protests, Brookings, OP-ED, Retrieved February 15, 2019, from <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/iran-and-the-headscarf-protests/>
- Middle East Online (2012) Sole woman in Iran cabinet sacked, Retrieved February 10, 2019, <https://middle-east-online.com/en/sole-woman-iran-cabinet-sacked>
- Ministry of Interior. (2009). Gozaresh-e Entekhabat Majlis-e Shoraye Eslami (Majlis Election Report).
- Moghadam, V. M. (2004). Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Legal Status, Social Positions, and Collective Action. Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Moinifar, H.S. (2011). Participation of Women in Iran's Polity, Essay, *GEMC Journal*, 3 (2): 24-35.
- Nafisi, A. (2008). *Reading Lolita*. New York: Random House
- Najmabadi, A. (1991). Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran, In *Women, State, and Ideology*, D. Kandiyotti (Ed), Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 48-77.
- Paidar, P. (2001). Gender of Democracy: The Encounter between Feminism and Reformism in Contemporary Iran. Geneva, DGHR Paper 6.
- Povey T. and E.R. Povey (2012). *Women and Politics in the 21st Century Iran*, New York: Routledge.
- Povey, E. R. and M. Poya (1999). *Women, Work and Islamism: Ideology and Resistance: Ideology and Resistance in Iran*. New York: Zed Books.
- Goli R.R.M. (2015). The politics of gender segregation and women's access to higher education in the Islamic Republic of Iran: the interplay of repression and resistance, *Gender and Education*, 27 (5): 469-486,
- Sadeghi, F. (2009). The foot soldiers of the Islamic Republic's "Culture of Modesty", *Middle East Report*, 250,: 50-55.
- Sahimi, M. (2010). Iranian Women and the Struggle for Democracy, *Frontline*, Retrieved February 20, 2017, from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/04/iranian-women-and-the-struggle-for-democracy-i-the-pre-revolution-era.html>.
- Shahidian, H. (1994). The Iranian Left and the 'Women Question' in the Revolution of 1978-79, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26 (2): 223-247.
- Shavarini, M. (2005). Feminisation of Iranian Higher Education, *Review of Education*, 51(3): 29-347.
- Tahiyate. (2014). *Nagheshe Zanan dar Piroozi Enghelabe Islami va Nehzate Imam Khomeini*. (In Persian).
- The Guardian (2009). Iran appoints first female cabinet minister for 30 years, Retrieved February 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/03/iran-woman-cabinet-minister>.
- Winn, M. K. (2016). "Women in Higher Education in Iran: How the Islamic Revolution Contributed to an Increase in Female Enrollment, *Global Tides*, 10 (10)

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç

Makalenin amacı, İran'da kadın hakları konusunu Pehlevi rejimi ile İslam Devrimi sonrası döneme odaklanarak karşılaştırmalı bir bakış açısıyla incelemektir. İran kadın hakları konusundaki mevcut literatür incelendiğinde, çalışmaların büyük bir çoğunluğunun devrim sonrası döneme odaklandığı görülmektedir. Bu çalışma, kadın hakları konusunu İslam Devrimi sonrası dönemle sınırlandırmayıp, kadınların hem Pehlevi döneminde hem de İslam Devrimi sonrası dönemdeki siyasi, sosyal ve eğitim konularını karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz ederek, İran kadın hakları literatürüne katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Literatürde gözlemlenen diğer bir eksiklik, Devrim sonrası dönemde kadın hakları konusunda odaklanan çalışmaların bütüncül bir yaklaşım sergilemesidir. Bu çalışma, İran İslam Devrimi sonrası kadın hakları konusundaki politikaların her lider döneminde farklılıklar içerdiğini ortaya koymaya çalışmış ve bu çerçevede İslam devriminden sonra ülkeyi yöneten liderlerin kadınlara yönelik politikaları ayrı başlıklar halinde incelenmiştir. Konu, kadınların sosyal ve siyasi hayattaki rolleri, siyasete katılım düzeyleri, farklı hükümetlerin kadın giyimine ilişkin politikaları ve eğitim hakları çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir.

Metodoloji

Çalışmanın araştırma soruları; Pehlevi döneminde kadınların statüsü ve hakları nelerdir? İslam Devrimi'nden sonra kadınların statüsü ve haklarında ne gibi değişimler olmuştur? İslam Devrimi'nden sonra iktidara gelen Rafsanjani, Hatemi ve Ahmedinecad dönemlerinin birbirleriyle benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları nelerdir? İran'da farklı iktidarlar döneminde kadın haklarını etkileyen faktörler nelerdir? Liderlerin dini kurumlarla ilişkileri, kişisel vizyonları ve dış dünya ile ilişkileri kadın hakları konusundaki politikalarını nasıl etkilemiştir?

Araştırma, ağırlıklı olarak kitaplar, akademik makaleler ve medya ürünleri gibi ikincil kaynaklara dayanan nitel bir çalışmadır. Middle East Online, the Guardian, Farsça Deutschwelle, ISNA ve Tahiate'de yayınlanan gazete ve dergi makaleleri kullanılmıştır. Seçilen haberlerde devlet başkanlarının izlediği politikaların kadın meselesine yansımaları incelenmiştir. Ayrıca, İran İnsan Hakları Dokümantasyon Merkezi, Justice for Iran, İçişleri Bakanlığı gibi resmi kurumların ilgili kaynaklarına da atıfta bulunulmuştur. Kaynak seçiminde hem İngilizce hem de Farsça kaynaklar kullanılmış ve farklı bakış açıları karşılaştırmalı olarak araştırılmıştır. Bu kapsamda konuyla ilgili mevcut veriler elde edilen bulgularla birleştirilerek analizler yapılmıştır.

Bulgular

Çalışmada, batıya fazlasıyla bağımlı olan Pehlevi hanedanı döneminde kadınların, İran'ın modernleşme projesinin merkezinde olduğu ortaya konmuştur. Bu dönemde kadınlara boşanma, miras, seçimlere tam katılım ve toplumsal hayata katılımı ilgili önemli haklar sağlanmıştır. Ancak bu noktada, Şah'ın esas kaygısının kadın haklarından ziyade, İran'ın uluslararası toplum nezdindeki imajı olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Pehlevi rejiminin ağırlıklı örtünme yasağına odaklandığını ve İranlı kadın nüfusu ile ilgili hem siyasette hem de toplumda tüm eylem ve yetkileri görmezden gelme eğiliminde olduğu ele alınmıştır.

İran devriminden bu yana ülkeyi yöneten liderlerin kadın hakları konusunda farklı tutumlara sahip olduğu ortaya konmuştur. İran İslam devriminden sonra kadın hakları, cumhurbaşkanlarının kadın sorunlarına ilişkin vizyonlarına bağlı olarak ileri veya geri gitmiştir. Rafsanjani ve Hatemi'nin kadınların statüsünü iyileştirme arzusu olduğu düşünülse de, çeşitli engellerle karşılaşmışlardır. Modernleşme girişimlerinde muhafazakarlardan ve dini liderlerden tepki görmüşlerdir. Öte yandan Ahmedinecad, dini önderlerle işbirliği yaparak, iki dönem başkanlık yaptığı süre boyunca hiçbir zaman polis güçlerinin baskısını, ulema ve dini kurumların herhangi bir meydan okumasını yaşamamıştır. Ahmedinecad hükümeti, Cumhurbaşkanlığı'nın ikinci turunda kadınları üst düzey siyasi görevlere atamışsa da bunun sadece göstermelik bir hamle olduğu değerlendirilmiştir. Bu çerçevede, liderlerin dini otorite ile ilişkileri de kadın sorununa bakışları ve bu konudaki politikalarını hayata geçirmeleri konusunda belirleyici olmuştur.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

İran'da devrim öncesi ve sonrası kadın hakları konusu karşılaştırıldığında, en belirgin fark kuşkusuz zorunlu örtünme konusudur. Şah dönemi özellikle dış ilişkilerinde kadın konusuna vurgu yapsa da bu sembolik düzeyde kalmış, kadınların eğitim oranı ve önemli mevkilerdeki kadın sayısı sınırlı kalmıştır. İslam Devrimi sonrası dönemde kadınlar büyük bir baskı altında olmalarına rağmen, devrim öncesi döneme göre eğitim düzeylerinde ve siyasi süreçlere katılımlarında önemli bir artış gözlemlenmiştir. Her ne kadar bu konu dünya çapında artan okuryazarlık oranları ve fırsatların çeşitlenmesi ile bağlantılı olsa da, İslami rejim kadınları siyasi ve sosyal hayata dahil etme konusunda politikalar izlemiştir. Ancak bu politikanın da çok net sınırları vardır. Kadınlar, erkek liderler tarafından belirli pozisyonlara atanmış, ancak Cumhurbaşkanlığı için aday olmalarına izin verilmemiştir. Devrim sonrası üç Cumhurbaşkanı'nın politikaları değerlendirildiğinde, Rafsancani ve Hatemi modernist olarak ön plana çıkmıştır. Rafsancani, dini kurallar ve toplumsal hayatın gerektirdiği değişikliklerle denge kurarak kadın haklarıyla ilgili bazı reformları hayata geçirmiştir. Hatemi modern ve reformist bir bakış açısına sahip olmasına rağmen dini otoriteler tarafından engellenmiş ve bu dönemde kadın hakları açısından büyük kazanımlar elde edilememiştir. Ahmedinecad dönemi, kadınların büyük baskılara maruz kaldıkları ve önceki dönemlerde kazandıkları bazı hakları kaybettikleri bir dönem olmuştur. Ancak Ahmedinecad'ın dini otorite ile iyi ilişkileri olması ve ulema tarafından engellenmemesi, kadınların önemli siyasi pozisyonlara yerleştirilmesine neden olmuştur. Çalışmada, İran'ın dış ilişkileri ile kadın hakları arasında güçlü bir ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Pehlevi rejimi döneminde kadınlar modernitenin simgesi olmuş ve İran'ın Batı ile yakın ve bağımlı ilişkilerinde bir vitrin olarak kullanılmıştır. İslam devriminden sonra kadınlar, rejimin temel sembollerinden birisi olarak kullanılmıştır. Rejimin kapılarını dış dünyaya açmasıyla birlikte sosyal haklar açısından kadınlara daha fazla olanaklar sunulmuştur. Liderler dış dünyaya daha açık hale geldikçe, kadınlara daha fazla fırsat sağlanmıştır.