

## Gendered Power Struggles: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Restrictive Practice in Contemporary Journalism Under Taliban Regime

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### Abstract

This study investigates the complex relationship between power dynamics, gender inequalities, and ideological influence in journalism during the Taliban regime's rule. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used in this study to investigate the various constraints faced by female journalists and media workers. This study focuses on specific texts, emphasizing language use, power dynamics, and discursive mechanisms. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study examines recurring themes, patterns, and language structures regarding gender, power, and journalism in the new Taliban regime. It investigates power distribution and execution with a focus on how women journalists communicate and deliver their concerns, particularly in the context of gendered power dynamics. Furthermore, CDA examines linguistic characteristics such as pronoun usage, metaphors, and lexical choices that either reinforce or challenge power dynamics. This study investigates the consequences of limited information access as well as widespread arrests and intimidation by both government officials and fighters. The study also examines Taliban's strict limitations on media activities, such as the division of workspaces, the requirement for women to cover their faces while on screen, and the regulation of analysts' involvement in political programming. This analysis revealed the intricate power dynamics that underpin their narratives. The de facto government and combatants are portrayed as entities attempting to maintain their authority, whereas the Taliban attempts to impose regressive ideologies on women who work in the news media. Furthermore, this paper provides useful insights into current discourse practices and potential solutions to the challenges in contemporary journalism practice.

**Keywords:** Media, Critical Discourse Analysis, Power, Gender, Women, Afghanistan, Taliban.

### Introduction

Since the resurgence of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the world has witnessed a dramatic shift in its political and social landscape. In this context, media and journalistic practices have become highly impacted, reflecting the changing gender-power dynamics under the new government. The concepts of representation and political control are fundamental within the

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domain of governance and democracy.<sup>1</sup> Representation is a core democratic principle wherein elected officials act as proxies, representing the interests and preferences of their constituents.<sup>2</sup> This complex system guarantees the inclusion of a wide range of voices and perspectives in the decision-making process, thus mitigating the potential consolidation of power among a select few individuals.<sup>3</sup>

The history of journalism in Afghanistan has been marked by ever-evolving challenges and pressure. However, with the reassertion of the strict rules of the Taliban regime, journalistic practices, especially those involving women, have become more limited and constrained. This creates a highly complex environment in which power and control over public narratives become increasingly gendered, reflecting deeper conflicts regarding women's roles and rights in society. This opposite with quote that promotion of effective representation plays a crucial role in cultivating inclusivity and social cohesion<sup>4</sup>, thereby empowering marginalized groups to actively participate in decision-making processes regarding policies that directly impact their lives.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the task at hand involves finding a harmonious equilibrium between precise portrayal and the inherent risk of political manipulation.<sup>6</sup> Elected officials possess substantial authority, and the choices they make have the potential to shape the course of a country.<sup>7</sup> This situation prompts enquiries regarding the concept of accountability, as the presence of conflicting priorities or the misuse of authority can result in disillusionment and the gradual deterioration of public confidence.

Political control refers to the strategies and tactics employed by individuals, parties, or institutions to govern and oversee the operations of a governmental system.<sup>8</sup> Representation serves as a mechanism to ensure the inclusion of a wide range of perspectives<sup>9</sup>, while political control encompasses the tactics employed by individuals in positions of authority to influence the policy agenda and exercise power over the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.<sup>10</sup> The intricate relationship between the act of representing and the exercise of political control is a fundamental aspect of democratic governance.

Struggles for control can be observed in the form of partisan conflicts, lobbying endeavors, and institutional tactics<sup>11</sup>. Attaining a state of harmonious equilibrium between these two facets is

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<sup>1</sup>Park, Sanghee, and Jiaqi Liang. "A comparative study of gender representation and social outcomes: The effect of political and bureaucratic representation." *Public Administration Review* 81.2 (2021): 321-332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13092>

<sup>2</sup>Pickering, Michael. *The politics of representation*. Palgrave, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Karp, Jeffrey A., and Susan A. Banducci. "When politics is not just a man's game: Women's representation and political engagement." *Electoral studies* 27.1 (2008): 105-115. DOI:

<sup>4</sup> Kiguwa, Peace, and Malose Langa. "Rethinking social cohesion and its relationship to exclusion." *Psychology in Society* 49 (2015): 1-6. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2309-8708/2015/n49a1>

<sup>5</sup> Pannilage, Upali. "Excluding the Worthy: The Need of Marginalized Groups in the Decision-Making Process". "Social sciences and humanities-Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna 2.2 (2015): 86-99.

<sup>6</sup> Reisach, Ulrike. "The responsibility of social media in times of societal and political manipulation." *European journal of operational research* 291.3 (2021): 906-917.

<sup>7</sup> Muwaffiqillah, Moch. "The Trichotomy of Islam, Democracy, and Secularism in Indonesia After the Conservative Turn." *Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 34, no. 1 (2023): 79-94.

<sup>8</sup> Wolsfeld, Gadi. "Media and political conflict: News from the Middle East." *The Political Communication Reader*. Routledge, 2023. 69-74.

<sup>9</sup> Andersen, David, and Jørgen Møller. "The transhistorical tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control." *Political Studies Review* 17.3 (2019): 284-295. DOI:

<sup>10</sup> Ansell, Christopher, Arjen Boin, and Sanneke Kuipers. "22. Institutional crisis and the policy agenda." *Handbook of public policy agenda setting* (2016): 415. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784715922.00033>

<sup>11</sup> Selber, Major W. "A Question of 'Government' Control: Afghanistan DDR Programs Since 2001." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 2 (2018): 344-366.

of utmost importance for the effective functioning of a democratic system. When there is a significant level of representation but insufficient checks on political control<sup>12</sup>, there is a potential for the emergence of autocratic tendencies or the gradual erosion of individual freedoms. On the other hand, an overemphasis on political control in the absence of authentic representation may result in policy choices that neglect the interests and ambitions of the wider population.

The fundamental nature of democratic governance is exemplified by the interplay between representation and political control.<sup>13</sup> An ideal democratic system guarantees the authentic representation of all citizens' interests, thereby preventing the concentration of power within any particular group.<sup>14</sup> Concurrently, it ensures that the mechanisms of political control exhibit transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the collective desires of the populace. Maintaining this intricate equilibrium necessitates ongoing attentiveness, strong participation in civic affairs, and a dedication to preserving the tenets of impartiality, parity, and judicial rectitude.<sup>15</sup> The ongoing development of societies necessitates the persistent examination of representation and political control, as these factors play a pivotal role in determining the course of nations and upholding the fundamental principles of democracy.

In previous research examining media coverage of the Taliban conflict, Hussain and Siraj conducted a comparative analysis of the Pak-Afghan press to investigate media coverage of the Taliban conflict.<sup>16</sup> Their research revealed distinct portrayals of ongoing conflict. Their research contributes to the comprehension of how media narratives were formed in the context of conflict, establishing a basis for investigating the complexities of journalism during the Taliban regime. Expanding on this, Iqbal and Hussain examined the wider impact of media in Pakistan, specifically focusing on conflict dynamics and peace journalism.<sup>17</sup> Their study expands the discussion by examining the broader consequences of media practices in influencing public perceptions and influencing societal attitudes during periods of conflict.

Further, Rasul, Robinson, and McDowell broadened the geographical extent of their investigation by analyzing the reporting of the Taliban conflict in prestigious South Asian newspapers.<sup>18</sup> This cross-regional perspective provides valuable insights into the transnational elements of media portrayal and narrative connections in regions affected by conflict. Knightley's initial publication on journalism, conflict, and war offers a conceptual structure for comprehending the inherent difficulties and moral deliberations linked to reporting in areas of conflict.<sup>19</sup> This fundamental viewpoint guides the investigation into the impact of external influences, such as

<sup>12</sup> Zurriyati, Zurriyati, Fadhlur Rahman, and Mohammed H. Alaqad. "Language and Power: How News Media Construct a Biased Structure of Information in Public Discourse during the Presidential Election." *Malikussaleh Social and Political Reviews* 4.1 (2023): 12-18.

<sup>13</sup> Wolak, Jennifer, and Eric G. Juenke. "Descriptive Representation and Political Knowledge." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 9, no. 1 (2021): 129-150.

<sup>14</sup> Mattingly, Daniel C. *The Art of Political Control in China*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Kuru, Ahmet T. *Islam, Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment: A Global and Historical Comparison*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Hussain, Shabir, and Syed Abdul Siraj. "Coverage of Taliban conflict in the Pak-Afghan press: A comparative analysis." *International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 4 (2019): 305-326.

<sup>17</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad Zubair, and Shabir Hussain. "Conflict and Peace Journalism: Role of Media in Pakistan." *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2017): 90-108.

<sup>18</sup> Rasul, Azmat, Barbara C. Robinson, and Stephen D. McDowell. "The Taliban factor: conflict in Afghanistan and elite South Asian newspapers." *The Journal of International Communication* 22, no. 2 (2016): 273-292.

<sup>19</sup> Knightley, Phillip. "Journalism, conflict and war: An introduction." *Journalism studies* 3, no. 2 (2002): 167-171.

government constraints, on journalistic methods, as analysed in this study on journalism during the Taliban regime.

To provide context for this study, Rahimi, Ziarmal, and Jalali evaluated media coverage of the Afghan conflict. They conducted a comparative analysis of war and peace journalism.<sup>20</sup> Their research provides valuable insights into the evolution of media narratives during times of conflict, as well as the media's potential role in promoting peacebuilding efforts. The integration of these studies' findings yields a comprehensive synthesis that provides the foundation for understanding the distinct challenges and dynamics of gendered power struggles in modern journalism during the Taliban regime. The combination of these studies provides a more comprehensive understanding of the role of media in conflict zones, as well as the unique challenges posed by authoritarian governments.

Within the intricate web of global sociopolitical dynamics, the intricate correlation between power dynamics and media control has gained acknowledgement as a significant factor in shaping the narratives and norms that form the foundations of societies. The interdependent relationship between power and the media has gradually transformed into a pivotal aspect of contemporary governance.<sup>21</sup> In light of this situation, the examination of the interconnected notions of gendered power dynamics and media impact becomes particularly pertinent and captivating within the context of Taliban governance.

This study, therefore, aims to explore the complex dynamics present in the ever-changing field of contemporary journalism.<sup>22</sup> The main aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive and insightful examination that reveals the underlying strategies used to limit gender equality and suppress the expression of diverse viewpoints in the field of journalism. The thorough analysis of the relationship between gender inequalities and the manipulation of media narratives sheds light on a wider range of sociocultural implications resulting from this convergence.<sup>23</sup> The interconnections between power, media, and gender are complex and have far-reaching implications. Understanding this intricate relationship is crucial for societies that are dealing with the complexities of governance in authoritarian regimes.

This paper aimed to answer these specific research questions; 1) How do power dynamics manifest in the discourse of journalism under the Taliban regime? 2) How do gender roles and identities shape journalistic narratives, and how much do they influence societal norms and political ideologies? 3) How do discursive choices influence the construction of narratives that either reinforce or disrupt established power dynamics, particularly those related to gender?

## Method

The present study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a comprehensive framework to analyze the complex dynamics within the context of journalism during the period of

<sup>20</sup> Rahimi, Abdul Wahab, Mujeeb Rahman Ziarmal, and Abdul Qadir Jalali. "War And Peace Journalism: Evaluating the Media Coverage of Afghan Conflicts.

<sup>21</sup> McChesney, Robert W., and Victor Pickard. "News media as political institutions." *The Oxford Handbook of political communication* 1 (2017): 263-274. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199793471.013.74>

<sup>22</sup> Buoncompagni, Giacomo. "The Other World: The Religious and Gender Dimensions in Afghanistan According to the International Media." *Advances in Social Sciences and Management* 1.7 (2023): 68-82. <https://hspublishing.org/ASSM/article/view/156/115>

<sup>23</sup> Mackie, Vera. "The 'Afghan Girls': Media representations and frames of war." *Continuum* 26.1 (2012): 115-131. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2012.630146>

Taliban rule.<sup>24</sup> The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework is a comprehensive analytical method that facilitates the examination of power dynamics, ideological subtleties, and linguistic tactics inherent in communication.<sup>25</sup> This study seeks to utilize Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to reveal the various constraints experienced by women journalists and media workers. The objective is to provide insight into the power dynamics that contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequalities and media control.<sup>26</sup>

The initial aspect of analysis pertains to the scrutiny of the difficulties encountered by female journalists and media professionals. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allows for the identification of linguistic indicators that reflect power asymmetries, gender prejudices, and limited information accessibility, by means of a methodical examination of textual and contextual components.<sup>27</sup> This methodology enables the identification of covert mechanisms of influence that contribute to the marginalization of women's perspectives in media.

Furthermore, the study examines the ramifications of the widespread arrests and intimidation strategies implemented by individuals holding de facto positions within the government and armed groups. Through a meticulous examination of linguistic patterns, the objective of this analysis is to unveil the discursive justifications and normalization strategies employed, thereby illustrating their contribution to the perpetuation of a climate characterized by fear and compliance within the realm of journalism.<sup>28</sup>

**Table. The texts for sources of data**

Date	Author	Title	Word Count
8 March 2023	Wahida Faizi	The Taliban wants Afghan women in media to become invisible	778 words
1 February 2023	Sara Perria	Female Afghan journalists continue their fight from abroad	1453 words
28 July 2021	Abubakar Siddique	Afghan Women Journalists Give Up Work for Survival Amid Taliban Advances	976 words
9 March 2022	Shadi Khan Saif	World Press Freedom: Women Afghan Journalists Silenced and Exiled	555 words

The second aspect of analysis involves an investigation into the Taliban's rigors limitations imposed on media operations. This study utilizes Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the linguistic strategies utilized in the enforcement of gender-segregated workspaces, as well as the requirement for women to cover their faces on screen. The objective of this analysis is to shed light on the utilization of language in order to validate these practices, establishing a connection between them and more extensive gender ideologies and socio-political agendas.

<sup>24</sup> Richardson, John E. *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Fairclough, Norman, and Ronny Scholz. "“Critical discourse analysis as ‘dialectical reasoning’: from normative critique towards action, by way of explanation”. Interview with Norman Fairclough conducted by Ronny Scholz." *Mots. Les langages du politique* 122 (2020): 113-123. 0

<sup>26</sup> Waisbord, Silvio. *Media sociology: A reappraisal*. John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Fairclough, Norman. "Critical discourse analysis." *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis*. Routledge, 2013. 9-20.

<sup>28</sup> P Philo, Greg. "Can discourse analysis successfully explain the content of media and journalistic practice?." *Journalism studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 175-196.

Moreover, the study conducts a thorough evaluation of the level of control exerted by the Taliban over the involvement of analysts in political programming. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a framework through which one can discern the discursive strategies employed to legitimize this control, which encompass the utilization of language manipulation to stifle opposing viewpoints and uphold the prevailing dominance of the Taliban's narrative.

## Result and Discussion

To start the result analysis and comprehensive discussion, we provide some preliminary evidences from previous studies. First, Zahid's work offered a fundamental comprehension of the correlation between Islamic ideology and human rights, serving as a foundation for this paper for examining the potential impact of these theories on media discourse within a framework of restricted governance.<sup>29</sup> Further, Fakhria and Marpuah's research investigates the opposition of Moroccan women to the decline of Islamists and male authority by analysing the Muslim family law in Morocco.<sup>30</sup> By using a normative juridical approach with a statutory perspective, the study aims to explore the difficulties and possibilities of safeguarding women's rights within this legal framework, and this study will serve a significant framework to provide an argumentative evidence to support women's right in Islamic society context. In addition to that, the analysis conducted by Ramanathan and Tan functions as a methodological reference, connecting this research to established frameworks for discourse analysis.<sup>31</sup> This strengthens the comprehensiveness and rigor of the research methodology. In order to better comprehend the power dynamics related to gender in contemporary journalism during the Taliban regime, these references offer a comprehensive approach that incorporates insights from Islamic ideology, legal structures, comparative political ideologies, and discourse analysis techniques. By integrating these diverse perspectives, a comprehensive analysis can be conducted on how media discourse addresses issues of gender, women's rights, and human rights within a heavily restricted and ideologically driven context.

The utilization of CDA framework in analysing the provided text enables a comprehensive examination of the complex relationship between language, power dynamics, and gender ideologies. This utilization allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the fundamental frameworks that influence communication, providing insight into the ways in which language serves as a reflection and reinforcement of power differentials and gender-based ideological constructs.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Zahid, Reza Ahmad. "Islamic Thought and Internationalization of Human Rights." *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 30, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>30</sup> Fakhria, Sheila, and Siti Marpuah. "A Discourse of Mudawanah al-Usrah; Guaranteeing Women's Rights in Family Law Morocco's." *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 33, no. 2 (2022): 309-324.

<sup>31</sup> Ramanathan, Renugah, and Tan Bee Hoon. "Application of Critical Discourse Analysis in Media Discourse Studies." *3L: Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* 21, no. 3 (2015).

<sup>32</sup> Boonzaier, Floretta. "The Life and death of Anene Booyens: Colonial discourse, gender-based violence and media representations." *South African Journal of Psychology* 47.4 (2017): 470-481.

### Text 1

"Naznin (name changed), a woman journalist, told IMS that she went to a conference held by the Taliban to make a report, but she was kicked out by the Taliban because she was the only woman in the conference. She says that, according to the guidance of the Taliban, she was wearing a full hijab and had her face covered, but the Taliban asked for her to be expelled from the conference."<sup>33</sup>

**(Excerpt from "The Taliban wants Afghan women in media to become invisible")**

The provided passage details the narrative of Naznin, a female journalist, who endeavored to cover a conference organized by the Taliban. Naznin's involvement in the activities was abruptly terminated on account of her gender, despite her meticulous adherence to the Taliban's instructions, which included wearing a complete hijab and concealing her face. The act of expulsion serves as a manifestation of power being enacted through the use of discourse, whereby the Taliban, in their role as the conference's gatekeepers, exercise their authority to control participation by imposing gender-based regulations.<sup>34</sup> The act of exclusion serves to perpetuate the existing gender norms within the context under Taliban control, thereby illustrating their resolute commitment to upholding rigid divisions between males and females. The expulsion serves as a clear demonstration of the direct and observable outcomes resulting from the power dynamics and gender ideologies deeply rooted in the rhetoric of the Taliban.

The occurrence concerning Naznin transpires within a wider sociocultural and sociopolitical framework that is significantly shaped by the ideologies of the Taliban. The region's deeply entrenched gender norms are evident in the rigor's segregation of genders and the enforcement of conservative dress codes. The compliance exhibited by Naznin towards the dress code, followed by her subsequent expulsion, serves as a testament to her awareness of the underlying power dynamics and her readiness to navigate them in order to fulfil her journalistic responsibilities. This exemplifies how the dominant ideology, which is based on a hierarchical structure of gender, moulds individuals' cognitive frameworks and impacts their actions, while simultaneously strengthening the Taliban's power in determining societal standards and principles.<sup>35</sup>

The incident, at its essence, functions as an illuminating representation of the wider social structures and power dynamics present in the Taliban-controlled environment. The conference's manifestation of hierarchical control by the Taliban is indicative of their prevailing influence as a socio-political entity, as well as their ability to dictate the parameters of public discourse. The aforementioned occurrence highlights the Taliban's unwavering commitment to a stringent ideological framework that promotes hierarchies based on gender. The decision to dismiss Naznin, despite her compliance with their guidelines, underscores their unwavering dedication to maintaining and disseminating these gender norms,<sup>36</sup> even within the context of a supposedly professional undertaking. This incident serves as a demonstration of the complex dynamics that

<sup>33</sup><https://www.mediasupport.org/blogpost/the-taliban-wants-afghan-women-in-media-to-become-invisible/>

<sup>34</sup> Negm, Mohamed Said. "Resisting power in discourse." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 192 (2015): 284-289.

<sup>35</sup> Rahimi, Abdul Wahab, Mujeeb Rahman Ziarmal, and Abdul Qadir Jalali.

<sup>36</sup> Fakhria, Sheila, and Siti Marpuah.

exist between language, power, ideology, and social structures in relation to the influence exerted by the Taliban.<sup>37</sup>

## Text 2

"I could do only what the Taliban wanted," Niazi says. "I lost my job, I couldn't participate in social activities, I couldn't show up, I couldn't stay in certain places for fear of the Taliban. My life changed a lot and I lived in constant tension." Once in Pakistan, she could not stop thinking about the female journalists who were left behind. "How will they spend their time?" she asked herself. So she took the decision to found an all-women online media outlet -- naming it The Afghan Times -- focusing on human rights and women's issues."<sup>38</sup>

**(Excerpt from "Female Afghan journalists continue their fight from abroad")**

The provided text offers an insight into the significant impact of power dynamics within the framework of the Taliban's governance, as depicted in Niazi's story. The portrayal of individuals being limited to conform exclusively to the desires of the Taliban highlights the extensive control they exert over personal autonomy.<sup>39</sup> Expressions such as "My actions were limited to conforming to the Taliban's demands" effectively communicate the profound constraints placed upon her, illustrating a deprivation of individual agency.

The utilization of linguistic framing in this context serves to illustrate the complex interplay between language and power,<sup>40</sup> as the specific choice of words employed by the individual in question conveys a surrendering of personal agency. The utilization of recurring expressions such as "I couldn't" effectively portrays a vivid depiction of her constrained existence, highlighting the far-reaching influence of the Taliban's power, which extends beyond overt actions to encompass even the most ordinary facets of everyday existence. The subsequent analysis of other female journalists who find themselves in comparable situations further highlights the cumulative effect of this dominance, illustrating how linguistic control not only affects Niazi but also a wider cohort of individuals who experience similar limitations. Niazi's narrative reveals a significant instance of empowerment and resilience within the confines of the Taliban's authority. The establishment of "The Afghan Times," an online media outlet exclusively for women, can be seen as a notable and oppositional reaction to the oppressive influence of the Taliban's narrative.<sup>41</sup>

This transformative initiative signifies a purposeful endeavor to question the ideological foundations of the existing state of affairs, utilizing the influence of language to establish a medium that supports and promotes human rights and women's concerns.<sup>42</sup> The narrative of Niazi encapsulates the fundamental concept of resistance,<sup>43</sup> as her ability to use language undergoes a transformation from a state of limitation to one of empowerment. Through the establishment of an alternative discourse, the individual in question makes a valuable contribution to the

<sup>37</sup> Hasan, Mahedi. "A Metaphorical & Visual Analysis of Gender in Al Jazeera & BBC coverage of Afghanistan after the Taliban takes over." *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (2022). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4463744>

<sup>38</sup><https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Life/Female-Afghan-journalists-continue-their-fight-from-abroad>

<sup>39</sup> Selber, Major W.

<sup>40</sup> Zurriyati, Zurriyati, Fadhlur Rahman, and Mohammed H. Alaquad.

<sup>41</sup> Hussain, Shabir, and Syed Abdul Siraj.

<sup>42</sup> Buoncompagni, Giacomo.

<sup>43</sup> Ghabra, Haneen Shafeeq. *Muslim women and white femininity: Reenactment and resistance*. Peter Lang, 2018.

construction of a narrative that surpasses the limitations imposed by the Taliban's authority. By engaging in this action, Niazi not only asserts her personal autonomy but also provides a source of inspiration for individuals who face similar challenges. The linguistic agency possessed by the individual in question serves as a means to envision a more just and fair state of affairs, wherein communication acts as a channel for both personal growth and empowerment in the face of challenges.

### Text 3

In nearby Mazar-e Sharif, the biggest city in northern Afghanistan, Shakiba Saeedi, a young journalist, covers the region for *Hasht-e Subh*, a leading daily in Afghanistan. "Journalism is my passion and it is a major responsibility, so I am continuing working despite the major changes in our environment," she told *Gandhara*. "Our major challenge is security as fighting continues in many provinces." "The ideology of the Taliban is clear to everyone," she said. "The Taliban is the same as it was in power two decades ago when it deprived women of key liberties," she said. "It deprived women of the right to choose, education, employment, and even the right to go out of their houses," she added. "We are now seeing that the Taliban is again imposing the same restrictions on women in the areas they control."<sup>44</sup>

#### **Excerpt from "Afghan Women Journalists Give Up Work for Survival Amid Taliban Advances")**

The above text provides an introduction to Shakiba Saeedi, a tenacious and determined journalist based in Mazar-e Sharif, the largest city in northern Afghanistan. In light of the complex obstacles presented by the contemporary context, Saeedi's resolute commitment to her journalistic endeavour remains evident. The individual's recognition of journalism as both a personal passion and a significant obligation highlights their unwavering dedication. The individual directly addresses the predominant security concerns, acknowledging that persistent conflicts still have a significant impact on her field of work.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, the aforementioned passage effectively portrays Saeedi's unwavering resolve to endure in the face of challenges, as exemplified by her resolute declaration to persist despite the significant upheavals in her environment. The depiction of her character serves as a compelling illustration of the significant impact that journalism has, even in the midst of widespread uncertainty and peril.

Saeedi's narrative contains a deep examination of power dynamics and gender ideologies within the intricate socio-political structure of Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup> Through unapologetically questioning the prevailing ideology of the present-day Taliban, she establishes a clear and direct link to its historical position on the issue of women's rights.<sup>47</sup> The user's text effectively captures the correlation between the current situation and historical context, asserting that the actions of the Taliban bear resemblance to their previous imposition of limitations on women's freedoms during their prior governance.

This insightful observation highlights the significant role of language in elucidating the fundamental changes in power dynamics and the perpetuation of oppressive narratives. Saeedi's

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghan-women-journalists/31382287.html>

<sup>45</sup> Hussain, Shabir, and Syed Abdul Siraj.

<sup>46</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad Zubair, and Shabir Hussain.

<sup>47</sup> Buoncompagni, Giacomo.

narrative serves as a means of counter-discourse, extending beyond its personal scope, and making a valuable contribution to the wider discourse on gender equality, human rights, and the inherent conflict between ideology and implementation. The core of her narrative encapsulates the complex relationship between language, power, and ideology in the dynamic realm of journalism and women's rights in Afghanistan.

#### Text 4

Madadi was a leading reporter for the Salam Watandar Radio Network in the capital, Kabul. Even after the Taliban's takeover of the country, she confronted powerful individuals with her courageous journalism before militants stormed her office and forced her to flee Afghanistan. Now living in exile in neighbouring Pakistan in hope for a safe haven somewhere else, Madadi has been frustrated with the lack of support for Afghan female journalists inside Afghanistan and in exile worldwide. "We are simply forgotten and neglected by the world," she said.<sup>48</sup>

#### (Excerpt from "World Press Freedom: Women Afghan Journalists Silenced and Exiled")

The provided passage acquaints readers with Madadi, a prominent journalist associated with the Salam Watandar Radio Network in Kabul, Afghanistan. Following the rise of the Taliban, Madadi demonstrated exceptional journalistic courage by fearlessly confronting influential individuals within the nation.

The individual's steadfast dedication to the pursuit of truth within the dynamic political environment highlights the crucial significance of journalism in challenging established power structures.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the individual's relentless quest for knowledge and veracity incurred a significant toll when armed extremists forcefully breached her place of work, thereby necessitating her relocation to the nearby country of Pakistan in order to find safety and protection. The present narrative of embarking on a journey of exile effectively encapsulates the inherent risks that journalists, specifically those who identify as female, face when navigating power dynamics within areas of conflict.<sup>50</sup> Madadi's expression of frustration, as she asserts that Afghan female journalists experience a sense of being overlooked and disregarded by the international community<sup>51</sup>, highlights a discouraging truth. This truth entails that media professionals who face challenges are compelled to navigate perilous circumstances without the necessary assistance and acknowledgement.

The narrative presented by Madadi exhibits a notable interaction between language, power dynamics, and sociopolitical critique. The individual's unwavering determination to engage in journalism despite significant risks serves as a prime illustration of language's role as a means of resistance in exposing truths and safeguarding democratic ideals.<sup>52</sup> The individual's audacious

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<sup>48</sup><https://www.fairplanet.org/editors-pick/world-press-freedom-women-afghan-journalists-silenced-and-exiled/>

<sup>49</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad Zubair, and Shabir Hussain.

<sup>50</sup> Rasul, Azmat, Barbara C. Robinson, and Stephen D. McDowell

<sup>51</sup> Mackie, Vera.

<sup>52</sup> d'Agostini, Franca. "Alethic Rights: Preliminaries of an Inquiry into the Power of Truth." *Social Epistemology* 35, no. 5 (2021): 515-532.

encounters with influential entities highlight the subversive capacity of language in questioning and contesting those in power.

The narrative delves deeper into the intricate network of sociopolitical circumstances, highlighting the grave predicament faced by journalists in conflict-ridden areas through her compelled banishment. Madadi's expression of frustration, characterized by a perception of worldwide disregard, resonates as a mode of counter-discourse.<sup>53</sup> The statement highlights the ideological and ethical gap that exists between the media's crucial function in areas of conflict and the insufficient level of support provided to these professionals.

The analysis of the narrative above highlighted the complexities of power, language, and critique, revealing how these factors come together to shape the actual experiences of individuals navigating challenging environments. Fairclough's CDA is a highly valuable analytical framework that provides profound insights into the intricate fabric of socio-political discourse. It explores the intersection and influence of power, language, and critique in shaping the narrative landscape.

## Conclusion

This study delves into the complex interplay between authority, media, and gender dynamics, revealing new insights into the multifaceted mechanisms at work. The findings shed light on how those in positions of power use media to stifle dissent and perpetuate gender inequality in journalism. The study not only highlights the immediate consequences of such actions but also reveals the broader implications of manipulating media in an environment marked by competing ideologies. This study demonstrates the powerful role that media play in shaping societal norms and power dynamics, particularly in the complex landscape of today's Taliban-controlled context. The unfolding narrative serves as a clear demonstration of Fairclough's CDA framework, which reveals the complex interaction between power structures that significantly impacts discourse. This narrative explores the complexities of journalism, gender dynamics, and displacement in a troubled society within the intricate tapestry of language. An analysis of journalistic practices reveals subtle criticisms, emphasizing how power dynamics influence the spread of information and shape societal narratives. Simultaneously, investigations into gender expose the intricate aspects of power dynamics, as language serves as a means of both tyranny and struggle.

In essence, this investigation highlights the need for increased vigilance in protecting media freedom and gender equality, recognizing their critical roles in fostering inclusive societies. The findings are consistent with broader global discussions about the responsibility of the media to challenge authority and advance gender equity. As we navigate increasingly complex sociopolitical environments, it is becoming increasingly important to recognize and critically analyze the conducted manipulation as a means of consolidating power and suppressing opposition.

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