



Woman in Development and Politics

Discourse Formulation of the Modern Woman Subject in the Discourses of Constitutional Era

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 15 November 2023 Received in revised form: 17 April 2024 Accepted: 28 April 2024 Published online: 5 July 2024</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Critical Discourse Analysis,</i> <i>Discourse,</i> <i>Modernity,</i> <i>Modern Woman,</i> <i>Traditional Woman.</i></p>	<p>Introduction Amidst Iran's confrontation with Western modernity and the subsequent discursive conflicts, women's lives, identities, and living conditions came to the forefront as prominent topics of discourse. This resulted in an extensive array of discussions concerning them, thereby transforming women into a subject of tension. This article analyzes the discourses that emerged concerning women in the writings of the Constitutional era. It employs critical discourse analysis to investigate how the modern woman subject was formulated in the most prominent discourses of this era. The objective of this study is to comprehend the ideologies that govern each discourse of the Constitutional era as they pertain to the modern woman subject. Additionally, the position and status of each discourse within the hegemonic discourse are examined.</p> <p>Methodology The current investigation employs a qualitative methodology. This research employs discourse analysis as its methodology, and it is conducted in accordance with critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough. His all-encompassing discourse analysis strategy incorporates a multidimensional framework for examination that can encompass text-context interactions. In accordance with his methodology, we have structured this investigation into three distinct phases: Initial phase: Description; during this phase, the formal characteristics of the text were extracted, including the syntactic structure, vocabulary denoting positive and negative value meanings, and textual structure. Stage two involves interpretation. We have progressed through the two-step process of text interpretation thus far: first, the structural interpretation of the text; and second, the context interpretation of the text. Structural interpretation involves the extraction of propositions, semantic episodes, and the textual structure of texts pertaining to women. We have addressed the interpretation of the text's context, which Fairclough refers to as intertextuality, in the second aspect. Third stage: Explanation; at this juncture, our analysis has expanded beyond the semantic networks of texts to encompass the social structure, discourse context, and their impacts on the social fabric. The present study examines written and aural texts that were published during the period following the Constitutional Revolution and prior to the establishment of the Pahlavi government, which pertain to the target population. The sampling technique utilized in this study is intentional.</p> <p>Findings According to the research findings, the modern woman is defined uniquely by each of the discourses in contemporary Iranian history that were analyzed. Each discourse presents a constructed meaning of the modern woman that is diametrically opposed to the others. In particular, the modern woman is a subject that is juxtaposed with established social conventions. Within progressive discourse, this particular subject is portrayed as a "critical and demanding woman." "Gender equality" becomes the primary focus of progressive discourse, with additional areas including women's education, political and social rights, criticism of marriage traditions, and endeavors to emulate European women orbiting around it. In conventional discourse, the modern woman is portrayed as a "woman who has been Europeanized and is unrestrained," a conception that is both unpopular and rejected. In order to marginalize it, social discourses and actions are orchestrated. The discourse places significant emphasis on the empowerment and sanctity of religion. The critique of the intrinsic gender inequality in Sharia law serves to undermine the fundamental tenet of</p>

progressive discourse concerning women. The subject of the traditional woman is the desired subject, in contrast to the modernist-constructed subject. This favored topic possesses distinct discursive components and subtleties; she is regarded as a "chaste woman" and "woman of integrity," is affiliated with the "inner household," and is "conscientious in carrying out feminine responsibilities." As per the integrative discourse, the contemporary woman is characterized as "sacred-duty-oriented, well-educated, and Sharia-compliant." In this discourse, the desirable woman opposes both the traditional and modern (Europeanized) female forms of femininity. In this discourse, the modern woman is characterized as an individual who obtains modern attributes such as education, while simultaneously upholding her traditional roles in accordance with Sharia law. By effectively applying the knowledge she gains to her designated responsibilities, she prevents the perpetuation of traditional gender stereotypes and cultural deprivation (including sorcery, superstition, and fortune-telling) through the disciplined upbringing of her children. Through diligently carrying out these responsibilities, she actively promotes both her personal growth and that of her nation.

Conclusion

The integrative discourse, through its discursive articulation of both modern and traditional concepts and propositions, has positioned a woman at the center of its narrative. This woman has critiqued social traditions, specifically in regards to illiteracy and social and cultural poverty, without conflicting with religious and customary elements. In fact, some of these traditions, such as the hijab and feminine duties, are even in alignment with the integrative discourse. The organization has endeavored to convince both its general and specific audiences by using Islamic Sharia as a justification for its opposition to traditions, including the ban on women and girls attending new schools. Neither the modern nor the traditional woman is entirely denied or affirmed in this discourse. In contrast to the traditional discourse, which emphasized the sanctity of religion, the integrative discourse has shifted its focus to the empowerment of religion. Despite concerted attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the traditional and customary social structure, it has managed to secure a more favorable position by focusing on more attainable objectives and avoiding overt confrontations with the traditions that the majority of society still adheres to. Additionally, it has achieved this by applying the concept of progress within a local context and in accordance with the demands of the time and place. Despite its introduction to Iranian society with Western notions of progress, advancement, and the transformation of women's status, the discourse of modernity was unable to establish a substantial foothold and garner public support. This was primarily due to its disregard for the cultural context of the country, its staunch opposition to religious aspects of society, and its uncritical fixation on Western ideals while disregarding customs and language. Consistent with the findings of previous research (e.g., Vahdat, Azadarmaki, and Mirsepassi) on the challenges posed by tradition and modernity, this study demonstrates that Iranian intellectuals during the Constitutional era held a skewed view of modernity, regarding it as preeminent and deeming dialogue between tradition and modernity unattainable. They further believed that imitation was the sole means of achieving progress.

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