



## Woman in Development and Politics

# The Power of Online Media: The Role of Strengthening Voices and Choice in Gender Equality

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b> Received 12 May 2024 Received in revised form 26 July 2024 Accepted 31 August 2024 Published online 06 October 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>gender equality,</i> <i>Online media,</i> <i>people's voice,</i> <i>right to choose.</i></p>	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>The study of Iran's online media is of significant importance, as these platforms have a profound impact on the awareness and critical thinking surrounding gender issues. By examining online media, individuals can acquire a more profound analysis and a broader spectrum of perspectives on gender issues, as well as a more profound comprehension of the challenges and opportunities associated with gender equality. Moreover, studying online media enables the identification of emergent trends and developments in the field of gender equality in Iran. The promotion of this subject in society can be facilitated by the introduction of initiatives and activities related to this field. Therefore, the study of online media in Iran is of paramount significance in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of gender issues, increase awareness, and develop a more nuanced understanding of gender equality. This issue necessitates a special focus. In this regard, the purpose of this investigation is to evaluate the direct and indirect influences of online media on the attitudes of citizens toward gender equality.</p> <p>Specifically, the study will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze the direct effects of online media on citizens' attitudes towards gender equality.</li> <li>2. Analyze the indirect effects of online media on citizens' attitudes towards gender equality through the value of the right to choose.</li> <li>3. Analyze the indirect effects of online media on citizens' attitudes towards gender equality through the value of people's voices.</li> </ol> <p><b>Findings</b></p> <p>The descriptive results indicate that the average use of online media is 3.12 on a scale of 1 to 5, inferring a moderate level of usage among respondents. The "people's voice" variable has an average score of 0.32 on a scale of 0 to 1, indicating that it is below the average among the respondents. The "choice" variable has an average score of 0.18 on a scale of 0 to 1, indicating that it is considerably underrepresented among the respondents. Finally, the respondents' average respect for gender equality is 0.41 on a scale of 0 to 1, suggesting that this variable is relatively low among the respondents.</p> <p>Moreover, the factor loadings reveal that the loadings for all variables exceed 0.40, which is regarded as acceptable. The variables' composite reliability is also greater than 0.70, which is within the acceptable range. Finally, the average variance extracted (AVE) for the research variables exceeds 0.60, which is deemed acceptable by Fornell and Larcker (1981) according to their theory. This confirms the convergent validity of the variables employed in the study. The results indicate that the value of t in all structural relationships is greater than 1.96, which serves as evidence of the significance of these relationships. In other words, the utilization of online</p>

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media can directly and substantially enhance the desire of citizens for gender equality in society. In other words, the results indicate that the desire for gender equality in society is indirectly and significantly influenced by online media, as evidenced by the variables of voice and choice.

### Conclusion

This study, as previously stated, was designed to investigate the direct and indirect effects of online media on the attitudes of Iranian citizens toward gender equality. The results indicated that online media has a direct, positive, and substantial impact on gender equality, resulting in a greater propensity for such ideals among Iranian citizens. Given that online media is acknowledged as a potent promotional and informational instrument, it has the potential to significantly influence the attitudes of citizens toward gender equality. This role is not limited to solely increasing awareness and attention to gender issues; it also contributes to the advancement of society and the attainment of gender equality by influencing cultural and social attitudes.

Online media provides an open platform for the exploration and advancement of gender issues, as evidenced by cyberfeminism theories, including those proposed by Isak (2020). It has the potential to influence the perspectives and inclinations of individuals by offering provocative and informative content. For instance, the dissemination of articles, videos, podcasts, and other gender-related materials online can increase awareness and draw attention to these matters. Additionally, the establishment of civic movements and digital activism in support of gender equality is a significant factor in the advancement of social and cultural transformations. Therefore, cyberfeminism allows for the examination of the ways in which online media and the digital sphere contribute to the increased inclination of Iranian citizens toward gender equality and the promotion of positive societal transformations.

Furthermore, the digital space and networked communications are essential for the development of inclinations toward gender equality in Iranian society, as per networked feminism theories, including those proposed by Fotopoulos and Fotopoulos (2016). The digital realm can be a fertile environment for the promotion of gender equality principles, as it provides a platform for the exchange of diverse information, views, and experiences. The promotion of gender equality is considerably improved by the establishment of active social networks, groups, and civic movements on the internet.

Moreover, Anderson and Grace (2015) underscored that the empowerment of individuals to advocate for gender equality, challenges to traditional gender norms, and shifts in social attitudes can be attributed to the increase in feminist consciousness, which is reflected in awareness campaigns, educational content, and advocacy efforts. By promoting a supportive online community, offering resources and information, and promoting discussions on gender issues, this theory plays a pivotal role in reinforcing citizens' inclinations toward gender equality.

Lastly, the study's results are consistent with intersectionality and networked individualism theories, suggesting that online media can indirectly enhance citizens' gender equality aspirations by leveraging the variables of "people's voice" and "choice." Individuals with intersecting identities are able to amplify their voices and share unique perspectives on gender equality issues. By offering a platform for a variety of perspectives, online media can challenge prevailing narratives and foster a more inclusive understanding of gender equality. Additionally, these platforms enable individuals to make informed choices that are consistent with their values and beliefs by providing a diverse array of content, resources, and perspectives that reflect the intricacies of intersecting identities.

Networked individualism theory posits that individuals are becoming more interconnected through digital networks, which promotes distinctive forms of information exchange, collaboration, and communication. By engaging in collective endeavors for social change, online platforms allow individuals to share stories, convey their opinions, and advocate for gender equality. The theory also emphasizes the role of online media in providing a variety of content, resources, and opportunities for individuals to engage with gender equality issues, thereby highlighting the diversity of choices available in their online interactions.

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