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## The Use of Gender Justice Paradigm in the Islamic Republic of Iran (1997-2005) from the Institutional Theory

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Alieh Taheri Ravyzi<sup>1</sup>, Tahereh Ebrahimifar<sup>2\*</sup>, Seyed Abdolamir Nabavi<sup>3</sup>,  
Zohreh Balazadeh<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1, 2, 4</sup> Department of Political Science, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University,  
Tehran, Iran

<sup>3</sup>Institute for Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS), Tehran, Iran

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### Abstract:

Being dealt with now, the need for the presence of a leader and a jurisprudent who is wise and righteous is being felt a lot, and this question has been asked and some scholars have examined the cause of the need for the jurisprudent and the velayat-e faqih. Regarding this, Imam Khomeini's thoughts as the first person who presented the absolute velayat-e faqih has a special place and Ayatollah Javadi Amoli as one of Imam Khomeini's students who continued the views of Imam Khomeini on velayat-e faqih. This research has been conducted in the form of documentary and library reviews and has examined the views and thoughts of these two great Islamic scholars in the field of velayat-e faqih and the need for the presence of the province in society.

**Keywords:** Gender justice, Institutionalism, Government, Government of Reforms.

### Introduction

Considering the place of women in Iran was put at the agenda of the Islamic governments since the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. However, this subject was abandoned in the legislation of Iran from 1979 to 1989 due to different reasons such as the imposed war of Iraq-Iran. For the first time, women were invited to attend the executive tasks of Iran at the time of the government of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani although a few numbers of women took the

responsibility of executive affairs in Iran. Despite the fact that there was no legal limit for the arrival of women into executive fields, their arrival was not practically associated with a positive attitude in terms of the patriarchal attitude of governments. The presidential election of 1997 and modern slogans of Seyyed Muhammad Khatami who was elected as president created hope in changes in gender justice and special attention to women as the political development index. In fact, it can be stated that the government of

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\*Corresponding Author's Email: Tah.Ebrahimifar@iauctb.ac.ir

reforms for the realization of political development cannot be indifferent to the place and status of women in society. The discourse of reforms in the election slogans of Seyyed Muhammad Khatami which was manifested in different forms required a new mechanism for stabilization and execution after the elections. This new mechanism was of great importance for institutionalizing gender justice in all affairs such as legislation, policy-making, and executive affairs. Accordingly, not only gender should enter the development plans, but also it should enter all intellectual and value institutions and systems of the society. Thus, women must be seen along with men in all levels in the process of design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of policies in the country.

The government of reforms could institutionalize gender justice as the base of activity in several areas. One of these areas was the presence of women in executive tasks. Although it had begun since the government of construction, it was more than the previous government in the government of reforms both in terms of quality and quantity of tasks. The other issue was legislation. The government could allocate a special place to women's issues such as education, employment, participation, effectiveness, and paying attention to family as the main pillar of society in development plans through 5-year development plans and its authorities in this area. This study used the institutional theory as a framework in analysis to analyze the policies of the government of reforms in the field of gender justice and explained gender justice in the executive institution of government during 1997-2005.

### **Theoretical Framework** **Institutionalism**

Institutionalism is one of the theoretical schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has been used

during these two centuries in different areas of political sciences, economics, and sociology. According to the researchers of institutionalism, the emergence of this school historically dates to the time between the domestic wars of America and World War I (Dadgar, 2004, p. 425).

This theoretical school had first an economic aspect and emerged after the failures due to the use of capitalism in America. Thorstein Veblen, who was a professor at Chicago University and Stanford University in America, is known as the first prominent theorist of this school. The modern thought based on institutionalism in the economic area of America led to abundant changes in the economic area of the USA. One of the most important issues in the field of institutionalism, unlike the capitalist economy and free market, is the allocation of resources or opportunities and distribution crises. In the free market and economy, the price and distribution of goods is a function of demand and supply while in institutionalism, the demand and supply system is merely dependent on the main institution structure in society, i.e. the power and wealth.

Such institutionalists of whom, Veblen, Kamunz, and Michell were the most important ones, severely criticized the classic economy assumptions and believed that institutions determine the economic behavior of individuals and even the behavior of individuals is formed inside institutional forms (Abniki, 2007, p. 14). Scientists call this group of institutional theorists as old institutionalists who emerged since the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in England, France, and Germany and turned into the dominant pattern of analysis of economics and political sciences in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The prominent book of John Stewart Mill entitled "some thoughts on the elected government" is an example of

this process. John Stewart Mill believed that the destiny of every country is affected by the political institutions of that country (Mill, 1990). This book was written in 1861.

It should be noted why scientists and researchers in that era attempted to have a special look at the role of institution in society. According to Veblen, individuals are affected by a specific behavioral pattern being forced by institutions. Thus, this discipline is an institution that imposes the standards, ideals, and behavioral traditions that construct social orders to individuals (Veblen, 1990, p. 126). March and Olsen believed that political scholars tend to study political institutions especially the government as an independent and important factor in line with the understanding of collective life and ordering it (March and Olsen, 1984, p. 735). Other researchers also believed that institution is the basic problem of political sciences. As Peters' book entitled "institutionalism in political sciences" mentioned that politics is rooted in the study of institutions. The term "institution" is used in sociology which is similar to the organization more than anything else (Peters, 1999, p. 28). This precision in the importance of institution emphasizes the attitude that politics is the science of investigating governments and powers because the government is the most important institution in every society since the political philosophers produced philosophy in the area of politics.

James March et al in 1999 considered institution as a relatively stable set of rules and behaviors defining the appropriate behavior for specific groups of actors under specific conditions. Political society includes the configuration of organized institutional framework and institutions indicating an environment where governance and decision-making occur and these frameworks create the actors,

organize the relationships and interaction among them, guide the behavior, and stabilize the expectations (Abniki, 2007, p. 12). Guy Peters defined the institution as a formal or informal, structural, political, or social phenomenon with its effects on the personal level. It means that institutions affect the personal behaviors of individuals directly and indirectly (Vandenabeele, 2006, p. 4). Regardless of the different definitions of institution, there are several common terms in the definitions of all these researchers. The first and most important term is the norms being imposed on the individuals of the society by the institution? These norms are the same formal rules in any society and they differ from each society to the other one. This group of norms can be explained in the form of formal institutions. Thus, the formal rules of any society and any tradition can be called an institution. Therefore, institution can include religion, gender, race, political affairs, the levels of corruption in society and any similar long term rule (Dadgar, 2005:65). In addition, institutions can have one or several traits depending on the conditions. Whether the institution is often formed and redesigned by political actors or limiting the legislators and law enforcers is undeniable (Capoccia, 2016, p. 6).

### **Modern Institutionalism**

Peters in his work entitled "institutional theory in political sciences" divided institutionalism into two groups of classic (old) and modern. According to Peters, the successes of the two theoretical approaches of behaviorism and rational choice have become a context for the emergence of modern institutionalism. For confirming his claims, Peters cited James March and John Olsen and the revolution which has emerged in science (Peters, 1999, p. 15).

Modern institutionalism emerged in the 1980s. The main shortcoming of classic institutionalism according to recent researchers was that classic institutionalism paid no attention to the role of individual at all. Accordingly, paying attention to political economy, and social actions were considered in modern institutionalism. Modern institutionalism accepted many assumptions and features of old institutionalism while it was not affected by the theories of rational choice and behaviorism. In fact, institutionalism is part of an answer given to the theory of rational choice and behaviorism in political sciences (Amenta and Ramsey, 2010, p. 16).

Gradually in the 1970s and 1980s, the researchers emerged who severely criticized behaviorism due to its special attitude to individuals and the lack of attention to roles and institutions. Such researchers included James March and John Olsen. These two researchers emphasized the role of the individual in political choice and tended to rationalize the individual extensively as an independent actor (Haghighat, 2008, p.142). From this perspective, a set of institutions creates a political discipline being more or less organized in an integrated system. In modern institutionalism, we are faced with the durability of the institutional environment and institutional orders. In the institutional environment, the game rules are specified while in institutional orders, it is discussed how the game is organized and how a decision is made in the framework of the game rule (Abniki, 2007, p. 14). As modern institutionalists pay attention to the role of institutions in political life, historical or classic institutionalists rarely emphasize that institutions are the only effective force in politics (Hall, 1996, p. 10).

In institutionalism, the institutional framework explains the events between politics and society because humans are formed

by the institutional environment in addition to mental talents and the behavioral methods and the habits of thinking, asking opinions, perceptions, and building their behavior are determined by this institutional framework (Samadi, 2005, p. 20). Thus, behavior does not reveal priorities and preferences but is caused by multiple behaviors and methods being used by individuals for overcoming their cognitive limitations (Zarei, 2013, p. 180). Oliver identified three main sources of pressure on institutionalized norms or behaviors including functional, political, and social. Each one of these sources has its own specific use and origin which can be distinguished in institutionalism (Dacin and et al, 2002, p. 46).

In addition to this issue, another term was also used by modern institutionalists called configuration. This term was used by France Keliver for describing the general feature of the processes where individuals use the available elements to configure the institutions (Ibid, 2017:186). Thus, an interdisciplinary approach was considered in modern institutionalism school. In fact, institutionalism combined different sciences including economics, law, political sciences, psychology, and sociology to create a more stable path for understanding the political, economic, and social institutions. This interdisciplinary approach made this school grow quickly in different countries especially America. Modern institutionalists require the increase of the effective presence of the government for forming and supporting the social and economic institutions (Ramezani Baseri, 2014, p. 127). Modern institutionalism has been regarded by researchers and scholars as an intellectual school for analyzing different political, economic, and cultural problems even at the area of international relations.

This method, i.e. institutionalism, which studies political institutions has a main role in the identity of political sciences. Eickstein believed that political science has emerged as a separate and independent field of study from psychology, political economics, and even sociology and has created a kind of tendency to emphasize the study of formal-legal orders (March and Stoker, 2005, p. 85). Formal-legal orders mean the same institutional structure of society. According to most researchers and scholars of political sciences, the government is the most important institution in society. This theory has been used by theorists during different periods, especially in Britain and America. As stated, modern institutionalism emerged as an answer to the absence and lack of attention to the analysis of government or institution at the peak of the governing of behaviorism on politics during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hai, 2006, p. 101). This new approach to institutionalism has changed studies basically and considered how changes in laws, norm systems, and cognitive beliefs change organizational contexts? (Powell, 2007, p. 5).

This scientific method has some features including descriptive-inductive, legal-formal, comparative- historical preferring institution to individual.

### **Institutionalism, a Framework for Analyzing the Politics of Gender Justice**

The discussion on the need to pay attention to women's issues in political and social thoughts emerged in the 1970s and 1980s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the role of women in the development of societies were one of the areas which was considered by researchers in this decade. Development researchers and scientists considered no equal place among men and women in the process of development but the new attitude made the group of

women to be considered as a separate group from the whole society resulting in the necessity of supporting women through special supportive plans.

The new look at the place of women in the 1970s in the past century led to the creation of an attitude entitled institutionalism in this area. According to this attitude, not only gender should enter development plans but also this issue should be institutionalized in all intellectual and value systems of the society. Thus, women should be seen in the process of design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of policies in countries at all levels like men not separate from them. This attitude raised many studies about the consideration of rights and justice on women and gender equality. Gender equality refers to equal opportunities for women and men and includes the ability of participants in the public area. Gender equality is focused on fair participation in education, labor market, health services, and politics while gender justice refers to justice in the results of life for men and women and thinks beyond the equality of opportunities, reminds the change in attitudes, emphasizes the different preferences and needs of men and women, and considers the need to distribution of power and sources essential (Adlipour, 2018, p. 27).

Another reason for distinguishing gender justice from gender equality is considering the different conditions of men and women and undoubtedly, the most important base of reasoning among its advocates is the term gender justice. For example, Rudgar as one of the researchers of gender justice believed that gender justice includes the issues beyond nature and intuition and deals with the humanity of human and his existential origins and values. Natural and juridical characters include the nature and destiny related capitals of human. He believed that discussion on

gender justice depends on our perception on the concepts of gender justice, our perception on women, men, and human, and how we define justice. He used justice in formal and known meanings in classic literature namely balance in development, equality in equal conditions, giving right to anyone deserved, and putting everything on its own place, and then difference in different conditions (Rudgar, 2009, p. 77).

Thus, gender justice can be defined and explained based on institutional theory and stated that women should attend all levels of social life such as development along with men and changing the intellectual and value system of any society building context in this subject is inevitable and necessary. Based on institutional theory, the process of policy-making in formal and informal institutions should be studied. Modern institutionalism provides an analytical network for understanding how policymaking really happens inside the organizations and institutions. Experimental observations consider three basic dimensions or aspects: the goals of different considered units, the access ways to information, opportunities, and supports which are mobilized for happening and selecting the processes of decision-making in practice. It should be made clear that to what extent action has passed the four possible mechanisms: behaviors for avoiding conflicts, processes for reducing uncertainty, as the searcher of solutions and finding innovations and educational dynamisms of the organization through former experiences and the rules of allocating attention (Thoeing, 2011, p. 7). In this theoretical framework, both organization and institutions of a specific subject consider the internal rules of that organization and formal and informal rules governing the political, social, and economic events of society for analysis.

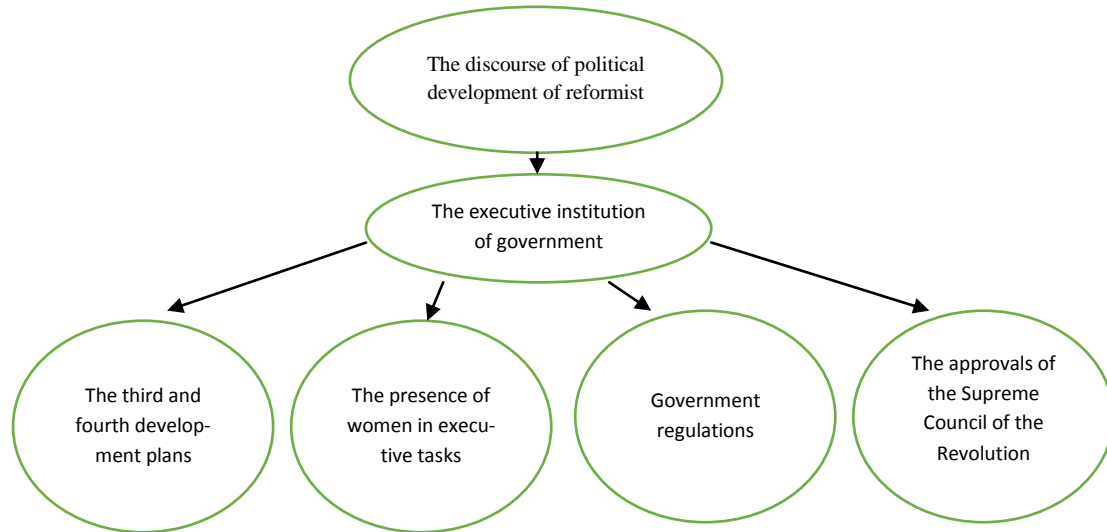
Emphasizing the role of determinants of institutions as an independent variable on the process and results of social-political actions, the role of institutions in the tendency of new actors, the role of mediating roles in forming the political strategies of actors, the role of institutions in power distribution, values and information in social level, empathizing the role of the quality of institutions in the success or failure of policies, the path formed by institutions for the power relations among competitors in society, and especially the emphasis on the process of politics and political decision-making inside institutions are among the innovations being created in the area of modern institutionalism (Kazemi, 2013, p. 7). In fact, public organizations work like political areas and the problems related to power and power game can be seen in their functions and policies.

### **Gender Justice in the Government of Reforms**

The subject of this article is merely gender justice in the executive institution of the government of reforms, i.e. the government of Seyyed Muhammad Khatami during 1997-2005. Based on the institutional theory, it is necessary to investigate the executive institution of the government of reforms to achieve the goal. The discourse approach of the government of reforms which was based on the political development of reforms introduced itself as political development based on the idea of Amartya Sen as the priority of political development to economic development (Abniki, 2007, p. 14). This political development which was the main base of the discourse of the government of reforms had influenced the political and legislative atmosphere of the executive institution of the country, i.e. the government. The studied institutions in this research have emanated from the

executive institution, i.e. government and have affected the general thought of the government in the field of women has affected the executive and legislative process. In the

following mode, the policy of the government of reforms in the area of gender justice is illustrated.



The model of analyzing the politics in the government of reforms in the area of gender justice

### **The Presence of Women in Executive Tasks**

The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran which was approved in 1980 after the Islamic Revolution was reviewed in 1989 and considered women as an important issue in society. At the introduction of this law, the women's issue was considered besides the sensitive and fundamental issues like the style of governance, economics, etc. This issue indicates the importance of the place of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran but the presence of women in governmental positions is still a difficult issue. Since the governmental policies in Iran after the revolution had a male-dominated style, in the 1980s like the previous years, the place of women in the government and executive institutions was missed. At the time of the government of

Hashemi Rafsanjani, the context for the presence of women in the government was provided for the first time. Establishing the women's affairs office at the president institution and giving some tasks to women was considered as the start point of the presence of women in statecraft affairs. Although these new reform policies in the area of women were not satisfactory for the participating demands of women in social and political areas, it was considered as one of the main axes of political development slogans by Khatami. The government of reforms made a lot of efforts to promote the role of women in the decision-making process and these efforts by the government to create new contexts for women's activities led to the new opportunities for their arrival in the middle areas of political management (Agharezaei et al, 2018, p. 152). However, it does not mean that the ascending trend of the arrival of women to the government in the era of reforms was provided easily. The government of reforms

followed constructivism in the issue of women by creating conceptual dualities. Constructivism means that among the dualities such as family and society, tradition and modernity, Islam and modernity, ideological and structured understanding of the concepts lie family, tradition, Islam, etc. are introduced with the words like the subject of women independent from family as well as modernity as constructed concepts (Sadeghi Fasayi, 2016, p. 187). The mental and discourse evolution of the government of reforms has brought institutional evolutions showing special attention to the issue of women in the field of institutionalism. The type of new attitude and contexts provided for the participation of women caused the access of women to more sources of power. By promoting the women's affairs office to the women's participation affairs office, the head of the center participated the third development plan and presented her ideas to solve the problems of women in different levels of life (Agharezayi et al, 2018, p. 152).

Based on the report of the women's participation affairs office, a new wave of efforts by the government of reforms were made for creating the offices or centers for women at government ministries and institutions. Based on this planning, the officials of these centers worked in government ministries and organizations as the counselor of minister and head of the organization (women's participation affairs office, 2001, p. 26). In general, and based on the statistics presented from different centers, it can be stated that the arrival of women to government tasks which had begun at the government of construction, continued at the government of reforms.

### **Third and Fourth Development Plans in the country**

Development plans are very important upstream documents drawing the type of attitude of the country to the development and general movement for five years. The intellectual discourse governing the governments and political-social atmosphere of the country shows itself as operational in its five-year plans. In other words, every government develops five-year plans based on its slogans, thoughts, and attitudes, and according to the social and political conditions of the country. In this case, the discourse atmosphere of the governments can be institutionalized.

The onset of the five-year development plans dates back to 1989. At that time, the main subject in the country was the end of the imposed war and reconstruction of the country. For this purpose, in this plan, the main base was the economic issues and investment while cultural and social aspects were less considered.

Thus, gender and gender gaps as well as paying attention to people especially women in the process of developmental planning failed at monitoring this dimension. In fact, this five-year plan was designed in such a way that every social class can play its role in restoring and achieving the acceptable status in the country (Abbas Zadeh, 108). Thus, the policy of the government of Hashemi Rafsanjani was the policy of construction and restoration of Iran based on the economy. Thus, the only issue which was considered in this plan about women was its economic aspects which led to the policy of birth control in Iran. In the first development plan, the purpose of paying attention to women was the issue of fertility and population control. The reduction of women's general fertility up to four children and a natural growth rate of 2.3% in 2011 were the most important long term goals of birth control policy in Iran. However, regarding women with the goal of



birth control policy did not end only to this item. Increasing the level of public knowledge among the individuals in the society, promoting the status of women through education, increasing the participation fields of women in economic and social affairs in family and society, enhancing the level of public health and reducing the mortality of mothers and children, as well as more participation of women in social, cultural, educational, and economic affairs by observing the excellent values and dignity of the Islamic character of woman were among the programs which were predicted and approved in the first plan (Zaferanchi, 2006, p. 110).

The early years of the government of reforms coincided the two last years of the second development plan in Iran which was developed at the time of the second government of Hashemi Rafsanjani. This plan had content similar to the first plan on the special case of women and for this reason, it did not fit the political atmosphere and intellectual discourse of reforms. The government of reforms promised specific actions in the field of women. This issue and specific attitude at women can be observed in different paragraphs and principles of the third development plan being developed by this government. Paragraph 158 of the third development plan was devoted to women and identifying the educational, cultural, and sport needs, increasing the opportunities of employment and promoting their jobs, facilitating the legal affairs of women, supporting the non-governmental groups of women, and making the educational atmosphere of girls' school appropriate being considered by the legislator in this paragraph. This paragraph states:

“The women’s participation affairs center is required to prepare the context to play an appropriate role by women in developing the country and strengthening family and also is

required to conduct the required studies with the help of relevant organizations through the following actions:

- A. By using Islamic principles and considering the future evolutions of the society, this center should identify the educational, cultural, and sport needs of women, prepare the appropriate plans based on the case through the relevant executive organizations, and give suggestions to the officials for approval.
- B. This center should present the required plans for increasing the opportunities of employment for women and promoting their jobs in the framework of the predicted arrangements in this law guaranteeing the necessary reforms in administrative and legal affairs to the board of ministers for approval.
- C. By organizing the common research activities to the responsible agencies in the judicial system of Iran, the center should prepare the required plans for facilitating the legal affairs of women and follow them through the relevant agencies.
- D. For using the different social services of women in the financial, legal, counseling, educational, and sport services, the center should provide the required plans with prioritizing the female-headed women in undeveloped or less developed areas and deprived groups of society in the field of supporting the formation of non-governmental organizations and reflect to the government or executive agencies depending on the case to run through the relevant agencies after approval.

- E. The center should provide a report on the annual performance of executive agencies in the field of running the provisions of this article to the board of ministers.

Accordingly, although gender neutrality was considered by legislators in the planning based on the idea of woman in development in the third development plan (Safari Shali, 2015, p. 227), it can be claimed that beginning the serious attention to the issue of a women and development in the process of planning and policy-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran began from the third development plan. In other words, women and emphasizing their status, i.e. the half of the active population of the country and regarding their specific needs as well as the role they play in the process of development began from the third development plan (Abbas Zadeh, 2015, p. 105). The reasons why this problem was important included: First, in this plan, the number of policies developed by the country for women was several times more than a similar rate in the first and second plans. The second reason was the different quality of these policies than the previous policies in this case. In other words, the government of reforms in the political atmosphere after the elections 1997 created a new discourse construction based on its intellectual discourse being gradually manifested. This issue, i.e. granting the affairs to new institutions and institutionalism in this field was another important difference between this plan and the last two plans in the field of women and their affairs.

In fact, it can be said that the third development plan was associated with the policy-making attitude based on the more participation of women in social, economic, and cultural fields. It seems that the third development plan is in kind of ambiguity in taking its

first steps towards gender but since Iran was internationally under the pressure about women's issues, the process of the plan in this regard should be considered more seriously. Thus, we can see that the range of topics being discussed in the third development plan was developed more considerably, although these plans were merely at the step of discussion and were not close to implementation. Although their number is low, they provided future planning with more effective and deeper contents (Safari Shali, 2015, p. 228).

The discourse of reforms paid special attention to women and their issues in the fourth development plan. In this plan which was developed for 2005-2009, the size of the plans which were allocated to women was very considerable and its specific approaches about women distinguished this plan from previous development plans. In this plan, regardless of the items related to the promotion of the formal place of the participation affairs center which was created for coordination between different agencies in the field of women's issue in the fourth development plan, some cases which considered special privileges for women were regarded (Abbas Zadeh, 2015, p. 109).

Although the government of reforms considered the attitude to women in the third development plan, it cannot be said that the government looked for gender justice in this plan. However, beginning the specific attitude of the government in relation to gender justice is obvious in the fourth plan. The signs of increasing the opportunities of women's employment and promoting their jobs, considering the gender combination of labor supply, and promoting their job skills indicated the economic justice and the discourse of political development considered it in line with regarding the role of women in devel-

opment (Alipour et al, 2017, p. 129) and looked for the institutional capacity-building of the place of a woman. This attitude can be significantly observed in Article 111 of the fourth development plan where the government referred to the review of laws especially the civil law. Meanwhile, the government is also required to strengthen the role of women in society, develop the opportunities, expand the participation level of women in the country, and present the related bills to the Islamic Consultative Assembly.

The studies indicated that the slope of considering gender justice in the fourth development plan was more than the third development plan and the government attempted to implement its institutionalism and its institutional attitude in this area using the legal capacity. Although this attitude is rooted in the review of social and cultural thoughts as well as the beliefs of society. However, this attitude in the fourth plan corrects the cultural beliefs on the competency of women, the increase of public belief in the abilities of women, and the review of rules and regulations especially civil law with a more radical and challenging attitude. In this way, this discourse attempts to remove the barriers to the presence of women in social, economic, and political areas whether mental or legal barriers and provide the context for the participation of women in the development of the county (Karami Ghahri, 2012, p. 64). Thus, as mentioned by Ahmadi, gradually and since the 1980s onward, the thinking of women in development faced a serious challenge and the term "gender and development" was suggested as an alternative. The emphasis of the fourth plan bill on this type of gender justice made the gender neutrality move towards gender sensitivity and positive discrimination policy (Ahmadi, 2005, p. 144). In fact, it can be said that the institu-

tional attitude of the government of reforms to women issue, which was based on gender neutrality in the third development plan, was turned into gender justice in the fourth plan.

Accordingly, the thinking which governed the reformist attitude at the time of the government of Khatami was turned into an institutional approach in the form of two development plans. In this regard, other plans, i.e. the fifth and sixth plans, followed the principles of gender justice which were included in these two plans. In addition, the institutional capacities which were created by this government, such as the women's participation affairs center and the centers related to women in governmental organization, were strengthened more in the next periods.

### **Governmental Regulations**

Governmental regulations that are approved by the government cabinet should not contradict the general content of the constitution. This regulation is controlled by the judicial system and aims at better enforcement of the rules approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly. The type of attitude of the government of reforms which was obvious in the election discourse was gradually developing by changing its form from discourse to institutionalism. One of the mechanisms of institutionalism was approving governmental regulations. Although approving the governmental regulations specific to women existed in the last governments, these regulations could be distinguished in the government of Khatami in terms of the number and quality of the topics related to gender justice. During all years after the Islamic Revolution of Iran by 1997 and before the government of Khatami, only five governmental approvals were about women in the government. The new government attempted to operate its election slogans by determining the head of the wom-

en's participation affairs center as the social and cultural commission member of the government in 1998 and take the first step. In addition, the government tried to enforce the axial plans on women in the government through the presence of the head of this center (working on the field of women in a specialized way). On the other hand, the government attempted to qualitatively and quantitatively expand the activities of the cultural and social council of women which worked under the supervision of the secretariat of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and the resident himself. In order to achieve this goal, the two regulations of increasing the council credit and allowing employment in the council secretariat (<https://rc.majlis.ir>) in 1999-2000, the council was allowed to play more roles in the activities of the country by increasing its authorities and facilities.

In the area of foreign policy, the government of reforms attempted to use the women's rights development model in other countries in Iran through interaction with different countries. Accordingly, cooperation with international institutions were put on the agenda of the government. The government held different meetings for thinking on different thematic areas of women and the result of all these meetings was more communication of Iranian women with foreigners. In addition, the government announced its agreement with signing an agreement on social collaborations between Iran and Tunisia in the field of women via regulation no. 23485-44379 (Majlis Research Center) and the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of sciences were required to follow this issue. The government of reforms with the international institution of the World Bank agreed to use the sources of that institution and regard the gender considerations in development plans. Approving the regulation no. 29117-25988

of the government in 2006 allowing the use of the grants of the world bank to provide the women's studies center at the University of Tehran indicated the positive attitude and review in the macro attitude of governance and the institution of government to the issue of women entitled as gender justice. Establishing the women's studies center at the University of Tehran entitled as Persian-speaking women's communication network (Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan) in the regulation No. 20112-33180 of the government which was approved working on different subjects like problem-finding of women in Iran, helping the development and deepening of science with regard to gender considerations, explaining the status of Iranian women and future evolutions, performing comparative studies related to women and family, reviewing the religious and legal thoughts, conducting the required activities for developing the education related to women's affairs, research in the area of women and family, creating collaboration and continuous relationship between policy-making centers in the area of women with the higher education system of the country, institutionalizing the culture of research in different areas of women's studies and publishing the results obtained from studies to promote the level of knowledge in society to women's issues in Iran and the world indicate the attention and interest of the government to regionalism in the field of women in addition to international issues.

A look at the approval of governmental regulations at the time of the government of reforms specified its main difference in comparison to the approach of the last government. In the last government, the regulations approved on women focused on social rights and social security of women more than anything else while at the government of re-

forms, the attempt for the arrival of women to political and international areas as well as intellectual exchanges to international institutions and countries were put on the agenda and priority of the government.

### **The Approvals of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution**

This council is the main trustee of cultural and social issues of women in Iran and based on the tasks of this council, preparing the strategic policies of the country in different fields of women, advertising, information, publication, illiteracy, etc. are considered as the tasks of policy-making in this council. Since this council works under the control of the president, the discourse governing every government in this institution can be manifested in developing the cultural rules. In the government of reforms, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution played a special role in institutionalizing this discourse by approving different cultural and social cases of women through the hegemony and governing of the political development discourse and the axial role of women's issue in the executive institution of the government. At the first step, the cultural-social policies of sport for women in Iran were approved by this council under No. 3328 in October 1997 and its aim was providing a context to achieve sport facilities and locations in the country by observing the Islamic rules and supply the physical and mental health of women. Due to the international approach of the government in the field of women, three months later, the council modified this approval by which a competent model of women's sport was added in Islamic societies (Approval No. 3944, Majlis Research Center).

Undoubtedly. The most important challenge of the government of reforms in the field of women was related to the joining of

the Islamic Republic of Iran to the convention of solving any discrimination against women. This convention was an international agreement being accepted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1979, through resolution No. 34/180 of the United Nations General Assembly. Only six countries of Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Nauru, Palau, and Tonga did not join this convention (Ghamat and Saberi Qomi, 2012, p. 181). The main purpose of this convention was observing the full equality of men and women meaning the similarity and equality and removing gender discriminations at different political, economic, social, and cultural levels (Fazelian, 2003, p. 210). Thus, the general spirit governing this convention was the equality of men and women from all cases rejecting any exception and limitation based on gender between men and women. Another important issue is that this convention is contradictory to domestic rules and can cancel the domestic rules. In this case, it questions the civil and criminal rules even the constitution contrary to the above-mentioned agreement and emphasizes the change and correction of all plans in the government as well as the performance and culture of Islamic system in line with guaranteeing the full realization of equality between men and women (Ghamat and Saberi Qomi, 2012, p. 183). In this political atmosphere that the opponents and supporters of this bill disagreed seriously, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution disagreed on the joining of the Islamic Republic of Iran to that convention on February 25, 1997, by approving approval No. 4868.

The special attention of the government to research women is visible in the regulation of the principles of research policies on women which was approved by this council in 2000. The main purpose of the government to ap-

prove the approval No. 5691, solving the cultural and social needs of women and improving their status, identifying the problems of women, encouraging female researchers, determining the cultural-social growth indicators of women, and expanding international collaborations and exchange of scientific information were through the creation of scientific centers and joining the regional and international assemblies in Iran.

In addition to the above-mentioned issues, the attention of the government to the cultural issues of women is also important. The government approved the policies of spending leisure time of women and girls with No. 101089 in February 2002 to increase skill, awareness, wisdom, and personal, family, and social capabilities of women and girls in line with their basic role in different areas and also attempted to direct the different plans of leisure time to supply the mental and physical health of women, reduce anxiety and fatigue, gain happiness, identify and grow talents, strengthen the religious and moral tendencies as well as the religious and national identity of women. Due to this policy, the government developed, equipped, and expanded the facilities of sport and cultural centers for women to spend their leisure time with the prioritization of deprived areas.

The peak of paying attention to women by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution was in 2004 by approving the charter of women's rights and responsibilities with No. 101171 in the Islamic Republic of Iran during the government of reforms. This charter was approved in three sections, five chapters, and 148 paragraphs based on paragraphs 1 and 18 of the tasks of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution as a reference for policy-making the cultural -social affairs. Through this charter, all relevant agencies were required to observe the principles based on

their organizational tasks for policy-making, taking legal measures, decisions and planning about women, rules, and principles included in this chapter. This charter is also the basis for introducing and explaining the status of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran in international assemblies. This chapter includes individual rights, family rights, and social rights (that social rights are divided into health right cultural rights, economic rights, political rights, and legal rights) confirm the principles related to women in the constitution which were approved for enforcement in more details. The government was aware of the fact that only approving regulations and approvals was not enough for promoting the status of women and attempted to provide the scientific and educational context of the better and more presence of women in society. Thus, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution approved the regulation No. 101052 in October 2005 to improve the policies of promoting the participation of women in higher education and make attempt to promote the cultural level, deepen the religious beliefs and growth of chastity culture as well as professional and ethical values, create fair opportunities and facilities, remove unfair discriminations in educating female experts for using their expertise in the development of the country, develop the higher education of women quantitatively and qualitatively in gaining high degrees, develop women's participation at different levels of higher education management in the county, increase empowerment and required skills for women for playing more effective roles in cultural, family, and social responsibilities of women.

### **Conclusion**

Since the 1970s in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term gender justice found its place in political,

social, and development literature and scholars and researchers have emphasized the necessity of paying attention to women as the half of population. Many attempts were made in this regard in developing countries despite all barriers. In Iran after the revolution, women were considered by the government and paying attention to the place of women was tangible and considerable especially in the constitution. Several articles and paragraphs can be regarded in law on women and gender justice. However, operating these rules and ideas was not so welcomed until the government of Muhammad Khatami or the government of reforms in 1997. Khatami raised his political development slogans and created a new discourse in the political atmosphere of the country where women and their issues were highly regarded and the government of reforms showed their commitment to gender justice in the field of enforcement. In the area of legislation and rules, Khatami attempted to enter his discourse atmosphere in form of the third and fourth development plans and provide the required infrastructures and contexts for promoting the level and status of women in society through the law, although these plans might have faced some challenges in the field of enforcement and not all of them were realized. Among these infrastructures and contexts, there was the education of women, employment of women, gender justice in the field of education, emphasis on family, women's insurance, etc. The institutional analysis of the policy of the government showed that the government of reforms attempted to institutionalize policies in this area to avoid the hasty actions to find gender justice in the long term. In the field of enforcement, the government attempted to regard the presence of women in the executive tasks of the country. In addition to promoting the women's participation affairs center both

in terms of structure and plan, the government also attempted to establish a center called women's affairs center in all ministries and governmental organizations to make the relationship with women simply at the highest levels of legislation in the executive institution of the government.

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