Psychological-Cultural Empowerment of Women in the Virtual Space Context within the Framework of "the Third Woman Model": A Phenomenological Research

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was phenomenological analysis of the psychological-cultural empowerment of women in the virtual space context within the framework of the women third model. The statistical population of this research included Iranian women who actively used cyberspace and participated in some way in scientific, social, economic, cultural, and political processes in this space. The sample embraced 30 participants whom were selected via purposive sampling procedure. The research method was phenomenological and qualitative. Data were collected through in-depth and semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The interviews were examined using the Collizer phenomenological analysis method. Then, initial codes were extracted and finally 5 main categories and 16 subcategories were identified. The results of the study indicated that cyberspace had provided a platform for women to access reliable scientific, educational, and religious resources and online courses and gain a deeper understanding of their positions in Islamic society. The results also revealed that cyberspace, if used consciously, could become an effective tool for the psychological, cultural, scientific, social, and economic empowerment of women. Such space could be a suitable platform for the growth of various dimensions of a woman's personality, including spiritual, identity, scientific, cultural, social, and economic growth. In fact, with proper management and promotion of media literacy, threats in cyberspace would be turned into opportunities and women could be guided and supported on the path to realizing the third model of women, which is based on a combination of family commitment and effective social presence.

Extended abstract

Introduction: The emergence of virtual space and new communication technologies had created a tremendous transformation in the social life of humans. This new space had played a prominent role in changing people's attitudes and behaviors by providing unique opportunities in different social, cultural, economic and educational fields. Women, as half of the human population, are among the groups that these changes had affected, especially in the personal and social spheres. Meanwhile, virtual space has provided a special opportunity for women to actively participate in the scientific, cultural, social and economic fields and to display a new model of their social and cultural presence. The present study examined the opportunities of virtual space in promoting the "third model of women" which was raised in the discourse of the Islamic Revolution and especially in the opinion of the Supreme Leader. Accordingly, the purpose of this research was phenomenological analysis of the psychological-cultural empowerment of women in the virtual space context within the framework of the women third model.

Method: The statistical population of this research included Iranian women who actively used cyberspace and participated in some way in scientific, social, economic, cultural, and political processes in this space. The sample embraced 30 participants whom were selected via purposive sampling procedure. The research method was phenomenological and qualitative. Data were collected through in-depth and semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The interviews were examined using the Collizer phenomenological analysis method.

Results: After analyzing the data, totally 5 main categories under the title of: access to education, maintaining and following the Islamic lifestyle, social interactions, transfer of cultural concepts and values, entrepreneurship and 16 subcategories as following: religious and educational education in the context of cyberspace, promotion of access and educational justice with the help of cyberspace, development of educational capabilities and skills with digital tools, religious identification of Muslim women in the context of cyberspace, redefining the roles and functions of Muslim women in the Islamic lifestyle, the balance between tradition and modernity relying on digital experiences, social interactions and women's support in the virtual context, religious-revolutionary networking and cultural activism of women, the expansion of trans-regional and nation-oriented links, the production and promotion of women's Islamic discourse in virtual space, women's social activism and discourse centered on religious values, criticism and demarcation of discourse with a feminine approach, exemplary representation of a faithful woman, women's home entrepreneurship in the context of virtual space, promotion of women's empowerment and economic independence, adaptation of women's family and economic roles were identified. The results of the study indicated that cyberspace had provided a platform for women to access reliable scientific, educational, and religious resources and online courses and gain a deeper understanding of their positions in Islamic society. The results also revealed that cyberspace, if used consciously, could become an effective tool for the psychological, cultural, scientific, social, and economic empowerment of women. Such space could be a suitable platform for the growth of various dimensions of a woman's personality, including spiritual, identity, scientific, cultural, social, and economic growth. In fact, with proper management and promotion of media literacy, threats in cyberspace

would be turned into opportunities and women could be guided and supported on the path to realizing the third model of women, which is based on a combination of family commitment and effective social presence.

Conclusions: The analysis of the data showed that the virtual space played a dual and complex role in the process of women's educational empowerment. By focusing on indicators such as access to education, Islamic lifestyle, social interactions, transfer of values and entrepreneurship, various dimensions of this influence were identified. The findings of the research show that virtual space and social networks as new communication tools have a significant effect on the formation and strengthening of Muslim women's identity in the framework of the third model of women as social capital. Social capital, which is recognized as one of the main needs of any social system, includes a set of concepts such as trust, networks, and norms, through which the participation and communication of members of a community are optimized and ultimately provide mutual benefits to the members of the community. Concepts such as a sense of belonging and interest, trust, confidence, and participation are among the most important components of social capital.

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