

Nonconformity and Resistance in Mahabad with Focusing on Cultural, Social, and Gender Aspects (Culture, Protesting Views and Analysis of Youth)

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Abstract

In the Iranian border regions, the youth population is engaged in more important issues than local and global politics, and they have been suffering from potential and widespread fears and suspicions that the dangerous and forgotten public space of these areas has created. Fears for children's safety, which form the ideas of parents and instead affect the way young people perceive the physical and social environment, is associated with suspicious elements (beggars, dissidents, thieves) in the context of governance-level discourse and lead to potential dangers. This belief in "foreign" and "modern" conspiracy and degenerate influence seems to be directly related to the current atmosphere and discourse of confrontation with the West, especially associated with sanctions or the possible military invasion of Iran by the United States. In the shadow of the recent progress of Iraqi Kurds under US cooperation, the Kurds of Iran are skeptical of this issue, however, they sometimes express solidarity and defense for Iran.

Keywords

Nonconformity and Resistance, Culture, Society, Gender, Mahabad, Protesting Views, Media, Kurdistan

Introduction

The present study is field research which was conducted in May 2006 in the south of West Azerbaijan Province where is located in the northwest of Iran and in the Kurdish town of Mahabad (which geographically extends to the southern regions of the province and the Kurdish provinces adjacent to "Kurdistan or Kurdistanat"). This study was carried out in collaboration with the Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents (Kanoon Parvareh Fekri Koodakan va Nojavana) which is called Kanoon, and during the three months of work with children and adolescents, center staff, parents, and local officials, some photographs, written data, and interviews were collected. The main objective of this study was to investigate some factors among the adolescent and young population of Mahabad as the mentioned factors can create a sense of place in them. One of the objectives of the study was to identify the use of regional, national and multinational media modalities among target groups and to examine how this issue affects the target community's views of local events and spaces and their narration methods. The target group was prompted to take pictures with a theme that seemed to relate to the flow of local events and their location in the process by using reflective photography techniques. Their work was then exhibited in a public exhibition in Mahabad for a week, where more data was collected because the reactions and comments of the exhibition visitors were recorded in a commemorative notebook as they were visiting the exhibition. The works created by adolescent girls and boys showed the complex and sometimes contradictory influences that exist in the lives of Iranian youth.

So the ideal image of the “West” can challenge or enhance their sense of place. Rules of media and “narratives” of popular culture, that is, discourses used to describe current affairs and social conditions on Asian and European satellite television, films, virtual and print media such as newspapers and magazines, as well as local practices, not only were effective in the choice of subjects for young people, but they have also shaped the way they view these issues and related them to their lives.

Concerning gender issues, in particular, a more general discussion was strongly demanded, and at the same time, there seemed to be a question about the role of the positive or negative role of mixed (multiple) effects. We could also recognize the dominant ties of recent global events in which the regional identity and Iran were politically against the Western powers, based on the resistance of the Kurdish of dominant nationalism.

Background of the Study

Kamil Ahmadi has conducted research entitled “From Border to Border, (A Peaceful Study of the Ethnic Identity Challenge in Iran, A GT Study among Iran's Five Ethnic Groups) published in 2021 by Mehri Publication in London. At present, Iran has witnessed the continuation of identity or ethnic diversity, while the development of the globalization process has shown serious ethnic conflicts due to discrimination and inequality in seeking identity, peace, and justice. In this study, considering the aspects of Islamic and Western governments, the influence of Iranian civilization on the pillars (territorial, linguistic, and religious) in five ethnic groups Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and Baluch has been investigated. The Iranian National Identity Committee exclusively removed elements of Persian national identity, lowered the status of Iran's historical identity, and determined the “identity” requirements of other Iranian ethnic groups. This study was done in thirteen provinces by using an integrated qualitative method (GT), survey, in-depth interview tools, library documents, and Open Data questionnaire extracted and categorized in the areas of “religious identity and national identity (interaction or confrontation)”, “inter-ethnic cultural borders”, “closure of ethnic and national movements”, “elimination of cultures”, “peaceful approach to overcoming the crisis” and reached a conceptual model in which the main factors (economic and ideological), intervention factors (media and lifestyle) and underlying factors (legal, cultural, and mismanagement parameters), phenomenon-oriented (demand for justice / social dissociation) and strategic action (peaceful action, acceptance of the status quo and government-nation interaction) and its consequences (stability and decline of social capital)) have been taken into account. Goodarzi (2010) conducted a study entitled “Change in youth values and its related factors” and examined the opposition between cultural values in the west and Islamic values or in other words the opposition of tradition and modernity is the basis of changing values in Iranian society. Reza shah’s treatments opposed the traditional and Islamic values of Iranian and changed the cultural system of the society and it is continuing till now. The central purpose of this research was to examine the change of youth values and its related factors (a case study of youth in Hamadan province) and the factors affecting it. The change of values showed a significant relation with education, sex, marital status, social class, family size, using mass media, fatalism, individualism, family conflict, value pluralism in the society, and performance of authorities as judged by the interviewees (R-square= %47). After multiple regression analyses, sex, individualism, education, family size, family conflict, and social class, were remained. Value change in youth can be modified by intervening in individual- and family-level variables.

Changing youth values is the result of a complex network of psychosocial factors that requires further analytical studies and the strengthening of supportive institutions and raising youth awareness of traditional Iranian and Islamic values. Khamsei (2007) conducted a study entitled “A study on the effects of socio-cultural factors on gender role stereotypes of two ethnic groups of Iranian students” In this study, Bern sex role inventory- Persian form- and a general demographic questionnaire were administered.

Results showed that there were no differences between the two groups of female students in gender role stereotypes. But there were significant differences between two ethnic groups of male students according to femininity ($t=2.5$), and four different gender role stereotypes ($c^2= 7.1$). Data also showed that both ethnic groups evaluated masculine traits more positively than feminine traits. Results had been discussed on different theoretical bases about femininity and masculinity.

Methodology

Methods used in this field study included direct engagement with communities and resources and a Participatory Approach that encouraged participants to identify and express their favorite topics of local identity. Therefore, in this study, data were collected in the workshops and integrated groups as well as through conducting informal interviews and reviewing some brief research papers to coordinate the local research framework with the subject of this study. Moreover, during the exhibition at Mahabad Townhall, detailed notes were prepared along with the researcher's considerations about what was observed and the impact of popular culture on the public space of the town. The workshop specifically offered two courses: 1) photojournalism, and 2) visual narratives (storytelling). To get the permission of the Center (Kanoon) to allow the children to participate in these courses, the researcher was supposed to provide a volunteer education to teach the children the new skills, and the Center could list this course as an activity in their annual report to truly enhance their experience. In this way, the research method also included working with the organization to find work instructions that are beneficial to both parties and had results for all interested parties. Some people think that there is some kind of competition between the Center and the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Education has its specific center. Most school children are taken to daycare daily and are often required to participate in their daily and sometimes weekly activities, such as camping activities.

Field of Study: Mahabad and the Institute of Children and Adolescents Intellectual Development Center (Kanoon)

Mahabad is a city in Northwestern Iran and is located in a narrow valley south of Lake Urmia, at an altitude of 1300 meters above sea level. The name Mahabad (Mah + Abad) is a Persian translation of the Manichaeism name meaning "the place of the moon", which is rooted in the Kurdish word "Mang". The word "Mahabad" in the Persian Dictionary of "Borhan Ghate" is defined as the name of the first prophet who was sent to Ajam and he brought a book called "Desatir". Other sources say:

"Some people also think that Mahabad means the place where the elders settled. This ancient region was the center of the Kurdish regions in ancient times and Ptolemy called it Daroushah and Rawliston after Darius. Manichaeism is a branch of the colorful history of Mahabad that is still remembered today because of its pioneering role in the resistance of Kurdish nationalist movements and its historical and political importance, along with some of the most well-known poets and writers of the Kurdish literary tradition" (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 28).

The Importance of Visual Techniques

As mentioned above, this research aimed to be participatory action research that not only identified the available skills in the community but also understood local interpretations of effective research. The Iranian media have made a little opportunity for independent voices to discuss social issues. This is especially true because young people feel that government infrastructure has little or no voice or adequate investment. Young women in particular are quietly marginalized, somehow excluded from public places. Therefore, in this study, photography, especially the participatory method that the researcher combined with photography, was used to collect data about the children who this study dealt with in a new way that

reflected public spaces that may not have been explained before. It also provided the groups with a new presentation tool that is less intimidating and easier to access than mere interviews where they may not be able to communicate. Especially girls found an opportunity to participate in public spaces and talk about spaces where they felt that they have been excluded. Adolescents were encouraged to develop personal themes that they found relevant to the discussion. This technique was used based on the works of visual filmmaker and anthropologist, Jane Roach (2003), who broadened her research topics through her passion for the world of daily life, thereby, capturing the intricacies, complexities, and shortcomings of people's lives. Her support of visual skills and her very unprofessional approach to filmmaking, in which technical skills are less important than ordinary color and movement, contributed to an understanding of the ethnographic values embedded in viewing amateur photography created by young people.

Since it was the way of working directly with children and adolescents, so it necessitated that the photographs taken during the work in the field had a "clear" intention and meaning to increase their sense of place in the data collection process. Photographs can have different meanings for different visitors, and participatory researchers have these spirits, as Pink (2001, p. 51) said, "The meaning of photography is personal and subjective." The participatory researcher carefully ignored the subjective interpretations and encouraged the group of subjects to use photographs to speak up about their experiences.

However, after the interaction between the researcher and the children, an exhibition was held at Mahabad Town Hall, which breathed new life into these photographs because the public gave them new meanings and interpretations. These photos with the theme of communities and public spaces are now displayed in public spaces, revealing children's views and perceptions of local culture, which were previously unknown to the mainstream public realm.

This issue opened the door to a dialogue between various sections of society that helped visitors see their surroundings from a new angle. They believed that the "ethnographic meaning" of photographs has allowed the researcher as an ethnographer as well as the wider community to gain a new conception of Mahabad's youth culture. Kolar and Kolar (1986, p. 108) referred to this approach as a special field method, called "photo-article": "When a photo article is read by a local person, it has the potential to be a meaningful and credible section in anthropological field notes". The experience of organizing an exhibition was the same. For example, one of the visitors wrote in the exhibition notebook as follow:

It was interesting. It showed me a new way of visiting the city; The streets we walk through every day found a different meaning for me. It is very interesting to see the different views of Mahabad from the perspective of young people. In my opinion, in my town poverty is more prominent than anything else (refer to Photo No. 24).

Lidal and Starker (2006, p. 138) argued visual abilities in ethnography to create "awareness of the perspective of sexism and its application, both in front of the camera and behind it." It was a unique event and a demonstration of brave resistance to the girls who participated in this study, unfairly expressing their views on the problems they experienced in local cultural and social traditions. This is evidenced by some overtly extreme statements made by visitors to the adolescents' photo exhibition:

It was a very interesting exhibition. However, in my opinion, the works related to gender differences were not appropriate. I believe that women should not be given a more public role in society, because they should stay at home and men should work as a breadwinner. I enjoyed the photos that showed the value of family and respect for parents. (Rack: Photo No. 24)

Interestingly, the exhibition notebook took an unexpected form and it even changed to a report notebook on the nature of gender relations in the public area. Young men used this notebook to convey their

romantic and poetic messages to their lovers so not only their messages would be expressed in a public place, but also they would keep behind the accepted boundaries of gender relations (refer to Photo No. 29). After the exhibition ended, I realized that because of these forbidden messages, a new relationship had developed between several couples. The news of the exhibition spread throughout the town and many girls and boys tried to get a chance to mischief with the trainees. In this context, others have found opportunities to continue to criticize the nature of the relationship between men and women, whether it is from the themes represented in the photos or the behavior of young people during the exhibition. For example, two young women wrote in the notebook:

I was very surprised to see these works in Mahabad. The great thing is that they are mainly made by girls and talk about our lives as girls. However, please, please, please do not indulge in your relationship with boys, because this will lead to inappropriate relations with men and sexual behavior for short-term pleasure, which will cause you to be misjudged in the future (Refer to Photo No. 25).

I think there is no problem with the exhibition. All we have is a lack of freedom, and because our lives have too many limitations, people are looking for ways to cheat. If these restrictions did not exist, we would not discuss these issues at all. If you imprison someone for doing something and he wants to do it, he surely will find a way to do it. Regarding the relationship between girls and boys, I think adolescents should be more cautious because they do not have the adults' experience. (Refer to Photo No. 25).

The adolescents' work in this way included twenty-eight photojournalism projects focusing on various topics such as managing and struggling with public space and displaying gender and identity in the space.

Ethnography of Photography Projects for Children and Adolescents

Seven more detailed projects which seemed to reflect the concerns of Mahabadi's adolescent life were then selected and the data analysis continued using them. In these works, the government, the family, and the opposite sex have been directly criticized, and in some cases, clever methods have been used to circumvent censorship restrictions. In the final section, the content of these works has been analyzed more meticulously, and the themes that link these works together have been highlighted to understand what rules of reporting and narration of "current affairs" have had the greatest impact on the target group. For ease of access, the study was divided into three main themes:

1. People who consume;
2. People who have dealt with social welfare and government services;
3. People who have considered gender.

These themes have a lot in common and seem to influence each other, especially concerning family and /or government requirements for youth's behavior and freedom of expression.

The Effect of Ethnic Culture on Consumerism

One girl who was a member of the group decided to make a report on the importance of gold in Kurdish culture and economy, focusing on the gifts exchanged at wedding parties. Traditionally, in the cultures of some ethnic groups, including Kurds, women are considered equal to the amount of gold they have. In Mahabad and similar cities, each family usually owns a fixed jewelry store, regulates their relationship with the store, and goes to the same gold store to replace new models of jewelry and gold pieces with term purchase and loans. For women, hanging jewelry at public events, especially wedding parties, is very important and demonstrating the fundamental role of gold in family life and social prestige. Every

day, the newspapers in Iran publish the price of gold on the market. The media has many discussions on this issue and on the impact of international events on economic stability and inflation in general, including the proposed sanctions imposed on Iran by the United Nations. Socially, when girls and women leave home in the evening, perhaps for normal social interaction, they always stop in front of the Gold shop windows to look at the jewelry without intending to buy it, and their conversations are mostly about jewelry and its new prices.



Photo N.1. Daily Changes in the Price of Gold in the Newspaper Recorded by a Photographer

In photo 1, we see a mother and her daughter who went shopping for gold, and in the large shop window, consumer goods with all their references to feminine ideals and poetic love are seen, like a heart-shaped item. Young women look at the items with a mixed look of respect, which in itself highlights the credit value of the jewelry pieces. One of the interviewees who was a woman said that she likes gold to look fashionable and show others that she has a good social status, especially in social gatherings such as wedding parties, but she also mentioned that gold makes a kind of security and economic independence for her.



Photo N. 2. A Beautiful Bride Necklace Priced around 570,000 Toman

In the next photo (photo number 3), we see a girl in a red dress with no face in the photo, but she puts her hands on the skirt dramatically and conspicuously to show off her many rings and bracelets. On the one hand, the dignified posture and dark identity of this portrait present a traditional image of female behavior. On the other hand, the lively red of the shirt contrasts sharply with the soft style of the public shirt. This is what can be seen in the photos of other adolescents and it can be concluded from this group of photos that gold, just like it established a traditional family role in a wedding, also provides women with a certain degree of independence.



Photo No. 3: The Hidden Identity of the Photographic Subject of Traditional Perspectives on Feminine Behavior

The theme of traditional relationships and their limitations in style and consumer goods was repeated in another girl's photographs. She decided to do her visual project by conducting some interviews with parents, teachers, and some young people, what people would choose to wear, and why. She also tried to understand why the hijab plays a very important role in women's dressing style. Thus, the questions of her work implicitly deal with the disappearance of traditional identities through the emergence of fashion, in contrast to the modern acceptance of Western' clothing models. He took several photos of people wearing traditional Kurdish clothing and then asked them why they chose this dressing style instead of the Western model. The choice of the photograph indicates that you may have a hard time finding people in Kurdish clothes because this way of dressing contains cultural or political expressions.

Social Welfare and Public Services

In the next project, one of the girls decided to study the plight of street beggars and discuss their situation in the country. Like other cities in Iran, Mahabad is also affected by the growing trend and the large presence of street beggars. This problem is mainly due to recent rural-urban migration. These people appear in all the streets, and they usually settle near the center of the city, especially in front of the mosque during prayer to ask for help. In response to this increasingly serious phenomenon, Iranian print and television media have turned their attention to these street beggars in society. The general view of these documentaries (sometimes supported by the public) is that beggars are intruders who should not be

trusted and they are sometimes very wealthy. In some cases, media reports indicate that beggars whose wealth was discovered after their deaths. The prevailing belief is that street beggars should not be trusted because they are lazy and sometimes wealthy people who often abuse their disabilities. In recent years, some comedians have even shown this popular legend in their shows. But a large part of society also sympathizes with the plight of these beggars, especially women and the elderly. The Imam Khomeini Relief Committee aims to help widows and elderly people who have no income by providing small amounts of food and cash to clients. This photography project is certainly inspired by public debates that are being reflected not only in the news media but also in popular culture and a more comprehensive understanding of the maintenance of public spaces and streets.

The young participant who worked in this section conducted several interviews with police officers, Relief Committee staff, Social Security Organization staff, and the common people. However, she decided to take photos of the obvious faces of this phenomenon on the streets of Mahabad instead of photographing the interviewees.



Photo No. 4. A Blind Beggar Couple in front of them (left of the photo) is a Blue Donation Fund of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee. It Is Written in the Photo that “If People Help Beggars without any Intermediaries, What is the Use of these Donation Funds?!”

In photo 4, a blind couple is working together on one of Mahabad's busy streets. They are sitting next to a bank and in front of them (on the left of the photo) there is a Relief Committee's blue donation fund, while people have been asked to donate to these funds. The young news photographer argued that people do not trust these donation funds because they think their donations do not go to the poor and they are given to the government to be spent on other things or spent in other countries. During an interview, she asked the police why, following the law, they do not take any action about this issue by gathering these people from the streets. With an ironic criticism, it seems to imply that the government has not taken enough actions to ensure that this problem is solved, which is why we see poverty in the eyes of the public, which is disliked by middle-class citizens. At the same time, she explained that although the potential donors do not trust the beggars, citizens prefer to help the beggars rather than the government system.



Photo N. 5. An old Woman is Begging Because She is not Able to Make a Living

In photo N. 5, there is an old woman who is looking directly at the camera and wearing a ragged dress. Her gaze and dull face seem to attract the sympathy of pedestrians. On the sidewalk in front of her, she spread a small piece of cloth on which she had collected the money, coins, and notes that were donated to her. It is written in the photo: “The old woman in the photo is begging, and it is clear that this woman in this age is not able to work and earn and thus make living for herself. So she must ask for help from everyone just to make a living”. According to the researcher, in this photo, a direct and almost protesting sympathy is expressed to this woman, regardless of other beggars, and such people find themselves in a difficult and humiliating situation on the street. Culturally, a woman who appeared to the public in such a miserable and impoverished state has accepted all the humiliation. Although the young photographer did not trust all the beggars, governments, and charities, she also gave the reasons why women could not find jobs because of their age and gender and she pointed out the beliefs that led to such consequences.

Gender Differences

Another girl who participated in this project worked on the teen girls’ opinions about boys. She wrote at the beginning of her report as follows: "My goal of doing this news reporting project is to focus that girls and boys should not have a relationship. If they want to, there is nothing wrong with that, but, if they don't want to damage their reputation and their family's reputation, they shouldn't. I do not know why a girl or a boy growing up in a prosperous family does so. Is it just for fun? Or for pleasure? Why not do their homework and respect their family? Aren't they afraid of their parents? I know they are not. Well, at least they should be afraid of God. It is a sin. I beg you to think about my words. If it is for your goodness that is great, if not ..."



Photo No. 6. A girl is Pictured after the “Tragedy” of Breaking up with Her Boyfriend and She is Comforted by Her Friends.

Although this report and writings seem somewhat extremist and may be seen as representative of the conservative and traditional mindset of an urban society that is far removed from modernism, the adolescent reporter has shown strong showmanship in his work that is influenced by popular cultural norms. Her used approach in her report was to ask her audiences some related questions and to provide them limited space for answers. Various questions were asked, some of which were designed according to customary criteria and standards, such as “Do you have a boyfriend?”, “Where and how did you meet him?”, “Does he love you, and how much?” The reporter then asked the girls that why they need the boyfriend, and also what would happen if their parents found out. In almost all cases, she asked, “Why did you break up?” and “Do you want to meet a new person and why?” The message below the photo seems to be a kind of moral anecdote. She ended each interview by asking for advice from other girls who have never had a boyfriend.

Analysis of Photos

Analytical study of projects shows that several cultural factors affect young people and occasionally enter into their lives as contradictory processes. For example, the stereotypes of “Western culture” that prevail in democracy and gender equality are controversial and imitated by various beliefs. It is as if there is genuine doubt about the Western world. The West has emerged as a symbolic tool in the lives of these teenagers and young people who consider it as a sample to evaluate their society, and of course, the west is regarded as the source of liberation and superiority while these views may lead to moral corruption and lack of values. However, this is not just a problem in Iranian society, but due to the increase in drug and alcohol abuse in contemporary Iran and Kurdistan, it seems to be an extremely important problem. As Jones & Wallace pointed out, in recent years there has been a general sense in Western countries to understand the behavior and socialization of young people in terms of “danger” and “pathology”:

There are some views under new “laws” that the rising in adolescent birth rates, delinquency, and violence or alcohol and drug use are indicators of moral decay rooted in the collapse of moral values that are traditionally institutionalized in traditional family life through parental authority.

The logic of this debate has led to policies designed to support traditional family values, prevent family collapse, and preserve parental family authority and commitment (Jones & Wallace, 1992, p. 45).

Regarding the abovementioned, a custom that can be seen as traditional as increasing restrictions on young people and especially women's freedom of action outside the family cannot take the form of

reinforcing traditional family values tradition but a new and emerging response to the perceived danger of modernity to youth's culture. Although in the Kurdish region of Iran, parental control over young people, especially girls, has always been greater and more direct, this type of control is now becoming stronger. During my time in Mahabad, whenever I had the opportunity to chat with the parents accompanying their children in the class, a large part of the discussion was always about the vortex of drug and alcohol abuse in Kurdish society. This is an emerging phenomenon, and many of my interlocutors believe that the policy of the Iranian government is to bring cheap drugs to the Kurdish region to control the influx of young people in the region.

Regardless of political conspiracy, as discussed in Jones and Wallace (1992), adolescent issues except for adolescent pregnancy (including child marriages, as the age of marriage in Iran is nine for girls and fifteen for boys), are emerging in Iran, although in social discourses, these issues are probably still presented as “modern” and “western” moral corruption problems, and in the local news media, programs in the form of debates are dedicated to this issue. These programs often form a “cultural phobia” mentality, pointing to friction with young people themselves, especially young people who have developed self-awareness and critical attitudes toward social issues. This is evident, for example, in the work that addresses women's freedom in public (specifically, photo N.19). In this report, a young girl described what people think is a feeling of insecurity on an empty street, and the boys who spend their time wandering through public places have been described as “nocturnal” animals. In the report which dealt with girls and their boyfriends, most of the interviewees were “abused” and “heard lies” by or from boys. Here it is the opposite sex that makes the greatest threats for the girls, although still in the context of “modern” sex relations, the relationship can be made outside the framework of marriage. As Kaplan (Kaplan, 2000: 201) argued that “the relationship between domination over deprivation of public space and gender rights for women is encoded in ideas of fear and public safety”.

Regarding material consumerism, tensions between the effects of traditional and modern consumerism emerge through the awareness of the identity of a distinct Kurdish minority and the cultural component attributed to it. This is evident in studies that deal with the type of clothing (both traditional Kurdish and Islamic religious) and local celebrities in Mahabad. For example, in one study, the girls favored the use of the hijab, but with the western dressing model, they did not accept the traditional Kurdish way of clothing which may provide a rare opportunity to get free from the restrictions of Islamic dress. The photographs taken in this study were also a critique of the limitations of Islamic dressing and the benevolent behavior of women. But there is also a sense of dissatisfaction with the approach to excessive freedom of boys and men who display modern tools (motorcycles and monster masks). Tohidi (1994) examined the Iranian society and determined how the traditional and preconceived aspects of society, especially with opportunities for women's liberation, have been presented and developed since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. In his view, the goal of resisting western intervention is to familiarize people with the concept of “Westernization” and to focus on the theme that excessive liberalism and the abundance of western values lead to moral degradation. This issue has been presented by some government authorities as part of the political discourse. Since these ideas have only been put forward in recent years and considering the public confrontation between East and West or between tradition and modernity, this issue helps us understand the ambiguous methods adopted in this project and the subject of adolescents' photography. This idea is challenged in the form of an indigenous concept of “satellite girls”, a term that both praise and condemn the depiction of young women. Satellite girls are people whose personal ways seem to be influenced by satellite TV. They are sleek and attractive, but at the same time more intimate and it is easier for them to get into boys' gatherings. In fact, “satellite girls” is a slang term that is sometimes used in people's conversations.

However, Iranian society's belief in gender is inevitably influenced by the "Western" concept of addressing gender issues. In some cases, this concept has become idealistic. In the current context, and even in some cases, these ideas go hand in hand with beliefs in the United States and the United Kingdom, the international media discourse, and the "freedom lovers" who emerged in the war against terrorism. An example of this can be seen in the speech of a young man visiting the exhibition:

In my opinion, in today's Iranian society, women are equal to slaves, thugs, and servants. A society with no democracy is not regarded as a country. In my opinion, Islam should be separated from society so that everyone, men and women, can be seen the same.

We can see alluding to the existence of parallel lines between the idea of democracy in the West, especially in the United States, and the secular government's enjoyment of gender freedom. The background information for this view is undoubtedly obtained from foreign channel news and virtual media which are provided to Iranian adolescents and youth across the border, satellite, and the internet media, especially to Kurdish youth who follow them at home. Adolescents have access to these immigrants and mostly political channels and regarding the recent developments of their Kurdish-speaking counterparts in Iraqi Kurdistan, their parents are less critical of Western or American values in comparison with the majority of society. The study conducted on Mahabad celebrities also showed the multiple effects of various media forms, while Popular Persian music is the most common form of music liked by young people in Iranian society (Shay, 2000, p. 69).

Even in Kurdish regions, the celebration of Kurdish achievements, which are both local and transnational and communicated through satellite media, reflects a combination of regional, national, and international cultures. Regarding the relationship between consumerism and local culture, a space that is the intersection of different collective perspectives has been taken into account, while each perspective imposes different cultural expectations and needs on this space. The mentioned perspectives specifically construct local identity in this process beginning with the application of the same basic knowledge of the local, social, and spatial affairs. They must enrich this knowledge with their common values and use it to create special narratives from that place. According to young people, one of the key sources to facilitate these narratives is popular music and the stylistic mechanisms surrounding it (Bennett, 2000, p. 66).

Table No. 1 Comment of the visitors of the exhibition about the photos

In the name of Allah Greetings There were beautiful photos in this exhibition, but they were not well decorated and most of the works were downloaded from the internet. Regards, Ramin Seraji; Farzin Arabi
First, the exhibition was really interesting, especially the paintings. Second, the most interesting thing about this exhibition was the photos of Mr. Ahmadi, and also the differences in the works of girls and boys, which was interesting. But in my opinion, girls should not have any freedom of speech and mind at all, because it is customary for a man to work out and make a living, and a woman to stay at home and serve her husband and children. Another interesting thing was the photos of serving parents and also poor areas in Mahabad. Himan Yazdani
I am a boy. In my opinion, in present Iranian society, women are equal to slaves, thugs, and servants. A society with no democracy is not regarded as a country. In my opinion, Islam should be separated from society so that everyone, men and women, can be seen the same.

I am a fellow citizen of Mahabad. I am a boy. I live in a poor area. Our life is a mess due to the wrong policies of this government, we are already amid economic sanctions.

Conclusion

Regarding the controversial issues, Kurdish youth and adolescents use a variety of images in various contexts which might be a common action they may share with other youth around the world. One of these cases is the use of fixed gender stereotypes of men and women, which have undoubtedly arisen to the same extent through ideas and centered on Western gender assumptions that exist through gender structures in Kurdish, Iranian, or Islamic contexts. Nader (1989) argued that the relationship between different stereotypes shows their impact on the role of women. According to him, traditional theories of Orientalism should be reconsidered “to include the idea that the West also exists in the Islamic world, and in that analogy, the contradiction that controls and limits women's resistance plays an important role. It describes the structure of gender as a product of the interaction between the two major religious worlds, Western Europe and the Arab East.” This is also very important because it shows how the impact of various cultures and ethnic minorities on people's daily lives has been ignored from a confrontational perspective of East, West, Arab, and Europe. However, gender is a common theme that has been taken into account in almost every youth's project. For example, the same moral axis was seen in the street beggar project, and despite the initial reference to governance mismanagement, it tends to draw a line between the appropriate male and female roles in public and private spaces. This view is certainly not exclusive to the Muslim or Iranian community, but it is similar to what Pesaro cited about the restriction of welfare in American society: “Celebrating the nuclear family and gender ideology converge in a way that exposes the homeless to humiliation rather than sympathy.” This is also the case here, given the tendency to see beggars as fraudsters or even rich people. Woman beggars, on the other hand, were portrayed as the role they should play in Iranian society and the difficulties they suffer from as women. Are these criticisms another social norm that expresses gender behavior, or are there discriminatory government regulations in marginalized areas?

The relationship between young people and powerful institutions, that is, family, society, and government are not established. This may be one of the reasons why they doubt their status and opinions in society. Mead (1964), in her classic work on youth ethnography, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, argued that the transition from childhood to adulthood should not be shown scary or indulged. She believed that this is constituted by cultural norms, that is, in Western society, adulthood does not have a very clear status in terms of social roles and responsibilities. Kurdish teenagers, especially from an early age, have been actively involved in housework, which is in line with Mead's vision of clear responsibilities they face in their youth. Young people in the family are assigned specific tasks related to housework or shopping, and these tasks often vary by gender. For example, girls learn to prepare food or set tables, clean the house, etc., while boys' chores are mainly outside the house, such as standing in line to buy bread, meat, and other necessities. It seems that the established roles of men and women can be seen in Mahabad, while boys have more responsibilities and more freedom, which takes them further away from the family environment, so they have stayed out since childhood. Therefore, it may not be surprising that public spaces and male-dominated themes permeate the works of many young girls. As Labuan has shown, “Quasi-public and personal entertainment settings, such as clubs and bars, have rules that specifically exclude women. These obvious sexist norms have almost disappeared, but public spaces still have a masculine meaning. Even today, public places such as streets and parks are still considered to belong to men, and most of these areas are managed by men as they have more freedom to use such public spaces.”

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