Women’s roles in countering religious extremism through education in Afghanistan

1. What is your topic?

My topic is prevention of violent extremism as it has become a threat to many societies around the world. It has jeopardized people’s security and well-being as well has disrupted peace in both developed and developing worlds. Religious extremism like most social phenomenon has a gendered perspective (Preventing violent, 2017). Although, involvement of women in extremism or radicalism is not a new phenomenon, women are often mistakenly stereotyped as passive victims (Government of Quebec, 2016). Yet, it has been noted that many women play active roles in its promotion as they support the male fighters (Preventing violent, 2017), while sometimes they are the perpetuators of violence themselves.

Women who live in conflict zones have different rights as well as living conditions compared to those who live in peace (Government of Quebec, 2016). Women of the troubled areas face many challenges such as lack of opportunities, poverty, violence etc., compared to those who live in peaceful countries. **Despite all these issues, the role of women in preventing extremism in conflict zones is significant.**

2. What is your research question and methodology?

With this proposed research, I aim to shed light on the roles women play to counter religious extremist ideologies, especially in the Afghan context, where women are often extremely marginalized in the male-dominated society. To this end, the question that drives my research is: **What are women’s roles in countering religious extremism through education in Afghanistan?**

My research will be guided by an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm” (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). I will take a qualitative research approach and will use case studies as my methodology. The participants will be (n:4) Afghan women. The participants will be recruited through my own network. I’m a researcher from the same community in which I’m studying. The data will be composed of semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants.

3. What theories inform your research? What are your core references?

For philosophical paradigm, I believe transformative fits well. This is because the transformative paradigm, looks into the political agenda (Creswell, 2003, p.9). I will use this framework to analyze my data since, unlike other frameworks, it allows for marginalized groups and issues to be explored (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In order to look into Afghan women’s roles, it is important to align it with a framework that fits appropriately with this social group. Afghan women are marginalized, firstly because they are women and secondly because they are racialized and are a part of society which is extremely male dominated.

4. How is this research innovating the field of religious education?

This research has an exploratory approach (Chen, 2012, p. 6), as it seeks to find answers to the roles of women in prevention of extremism through education. While previous research has
shown some indication on how some women become radicalized in conflict zones, this research is innovating in the field of religious education since it aims to look at woman’s perspectives, in the context of Afghanistan, in order to examine the challenges for resisting dangerous religious ideologies. It is important to explore questions like: Are women joining radical groups out of necessity? Are they influenced or coerced because of patriarchy? How much agency do they have? How can their situations be improved? How are they positively resisting/counteracting these groups and ideologies? and how are they influencing their colleagues, students, families and children (if applicable)?

5. What is the status of the research at the time of the proposal (e.g. finished ethnographic research, at beginning of reading)?

My research is at its very preliminary stage, as I’m a first year Masters student. Currently, I am in the process of submitting my ethics application.
References:


