



Practical Challenge of Muslim Feminists

Case study: Iran's the Campaign of One Million Signatures for the Repeal of
Discriminatory laws (Change for Equality)

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AVH5035: Thesis for Master in Religion, Society, and Global Issues 60 ECTS, 2020, Spring

Word count: [33691]



Acknowledgment

I am appreciative of the opportunity to take a master's program in Religion, Society, and Global Issues at the Norwegian School of Theology (Det Teologiske Menighetsfakultet). I would like to extend my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Lars Åsmund Laird Iversen, who contributed valuable guidance during the writing process.

Deepest thanks to my husband and son, who were patient and provided their love and encouraged me to do this thesis while I was grieving the loss of my mother.

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to further understand the practical challenges Muslim feminists face in Iran and how they deal with the challenges in the political field of Iran. This qualitative research project is a case study of the Campaign of One Million Signatures for the Repeal of Discriminatory Laws (OMSCE). The aim of the campaign and the two rallies leading up to it was to petition for changing the inequality law against Iranian women in the Constitution. A focus on discourse and themes that emerged were applied to analyze published statements from the first rally in 2005, second rally in 2006 and finally the Campaign itself. I propose that Muslim feminists have reproduced the social structures over the years based on their relationship to the power's ideology. To examine this, I used the theoretical framework applying Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Power and Practice and Michel de Certeau's theory of The Practice of Everyday Life. Thematic analysis method to answer the following questions:

- 1- *What tactics do the women of the OMSCE apply to escape power?*
- 2- *To what extent do these tactics indicate power relations in social structure and everyday practice?*
- 3- *What does OMSCE see as the strategies of domination to regulate and control feminist Muslims?*

The findings show that the political field of Iran does not provide opportunities for Muslim feminists to insist on their demands for changing the discriminatory laws. Iranian Muslim feminists revealed an inconstancy on their demands during the time of the rallies and campaign to enable them to remain in the political field. Regardless of the tactic adopted by the Muslim feminists, the nature of political Islam does not tolerate any opponent even if their objections are situated within Islamic discourse. The campaigners adopted different tactics in everyday life to overcome the government's strategies. Although they succeeded at some points, such as facilitating acts of solidarity or training women in grassroots tactics, overall, they did not reach their goals to collect one million signatures to repeal discriminatory laws in Iran's constitution.

Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
LEF	Law Enforcement Force (of Iran)
OMSCE	One Million Signatures Campaign for Repeal of Discriminatory Laws (Change for Equality)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Political and religious figures

Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud (1956-)

“Iranian politician who served as the sixth President of Iran from 2005 to 2013. He was also the main political leader of the Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran, a coalition of conservative political groups in the country”.(*Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Wikipedia*, n.d.).

Khatami, Mohammad (1943-)

“The fifth President of Iran from 3 August 1997 to 3 August 2005. Khatami attracted attention during his first election to the presidency when he received almost 70% of the vote.^[11] Khatami had run on a platform of liberalization and reform. During his two terms as president, Khatami advocated freedom of expression, tolerance and civil society, constructive diplomatic relations with other states including those in Asia and the European Union, and an economic policy that supported a free market and foreign investment” (*Mohammad Khatami in Wikipedia*, n.d.).

Saanei, Yousef (1937-)

A high ranked clergy who was chairman of Guardian Council 1980-1983 and well known Marja. His progressive interpretations of the Quran, especially about the role of women, led to the government-sponsored religious association to dismiss him as a Marja. He lives in Qom and works as a religious scholar and teacher. Although he was stripped of the title Marja, he has many followers among the youth and reformists who still consider him their Marja(*Yousef Saanei in Wikipedia*, n.d.).

Terms and Concepts

Fatwa

“In Islam, a formal ruling or interpretation on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified legal scholar. Fatwas are usually issued in response to questions from individuals or Islamic courts. Though considered authoritative, fatwas are generally not treated as binding judgments; a requester who finds a fatwa unconvincing is permitted to seek another opinion” (Britannica, 2011).

Fiqh

“(Arabic: understanding) Muslim jurisprudence—i.e., the science of ascertaining the precise terms of the Shari‘ah, or Islamic law. The collective sources of Muslim jurisprudence are known as *uṣūl al-fiqh*. While Shari‘ah is considered to be divine and immutable, *fiqh*, the human effort to know the Shari‘ah, is imperfect and changeable”(Britannica, 2011).

Ijtihad

“Islamic legal term meaning “independent reasoning,” as opposed to *taqlid* (imitation). One of four sources of Sunni law. Utilized where the *Quran* and *Sunnah* (the first two sources) are silent. It requires a thorough knowledge of theology, revealed texts, and legal theory (*Usul al-fiqh*); a sophisticated capacity for legal reasoning; and a thorough knowledge of Arabic. It is considered a required religious duty for those qualified to perform it. It should be practiced using analogical or syllogistic reasoning (*qiyas*). Its results may not contradict the *Quran*, and it may not be used in cases where consensus (*ijma*) has been reached, according to many scholars. Sunnis believe *ijtihad* is fallible since more than one interpretation of a legal issue is possible. Islamic reformers call for a revitalization of *ijtihad* in the modern world”(Esposito, 2020a).

Marja al-Taqlid

“Authority to be followed. Highest-ranking authorities of Twelver Shia community, who execute shariah. The term is usually applied to between four and eight high-ranking jurists (*ayatollahs*) locally or nationally; on the world scale.... The position is informally acquired and depends on patterns of loyalty and allegiance and the perceived conduct of the jurist.”(Esposito, 2020b).

Sharia

“God's eternal and immutable will for humanity, as expressed in the *Quran* and Muhammad 's example (Sunnah), considered binding for all believers; ideal Islamic law. The *Quran* contains only about ninety verses directly and specifically addressing questions of law. Islamic legal discourse refers to these verses as God's law and incorporates them into legal codes. The remainder of Islamic law is the result of jurisprudence (fiqh), human efforts to codify Islamic norms in practical terms and legislate for cases not specifically dealt with in the *Quran* and Sunnah. Although human-generated legislation is considered fallible and open to revision, the term shariah is sometimes applied to all Islamic legislation. This was supported by formal structures of juristic literature and many specific statements from the tenth through the nineteenth centuries. Modern scholars have challenged this claim, distinguishing between shariah and fiqh and calling for reform of fiqh codes in light of modern conditions”(Esposito,2020c).

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1 Overview of the Study

1.1 Introduction

The issue of women in Islamic society has been an extremely challenging topic in the field of religion and sociology. This study examines the challenges of Muslim women in a community ruled by an Islamic government (Theocratic system). I focus on the complexity of which practical actions could be taken to address gender inequality and discuss the struggles OMSCE endure in their attempt to change the discriminatory laws that have been under the control of domination order. How do disputes with authority shape the practices of the oppressed? How does the authority of a theocratic system exercise their power to control the independence activists' requests? Symbolic violence is a phenomenon not limited to any gender, but for a long time, it has been used within the patriarchal and theocratic societies to dominate women. Moreover, Muslim women(OMSCE) tried to remain in the political field by trying to work with the dominant Islamic discourse supported by the ruling government.

In this thesis, I study how a group of women, Muslim feminists, struggle to find a solution to equal legal opportunities, and I analyze the difficulties they have encountered in practice. I also investigate how the dominant powers drive them to change their desires unconsciously or consciously. In so doing, the study presents novel information for other academics examining the techniques Muslim feminists use to overcome limitations and the impact of power in practice to change women's demands in the context of a theocratic society.

This social research applies a qualitative method for data collection and text-based analysis. I explored a campaign that was co-founded and sponsored by educated Shia Muslim women in Iran: One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality (OMSCE). I analyze data collected from the campaign's website, from three different periods. The findings show that the political field of Iran does not provide Muslim feminists the opportunity to insist on their demands. Muslim feminists revealed an inconstancy on their demands during the time to enable them to remain in the political field. The result shows the nature of political Islam does not tolerate any opponent even inside of Islamic discourse. The campaigners adopted different tactics in everyday life to overcome the government's strategies. Although they succeed at some points such as making solidarity with other women or training women to engage in face to face tactics,

overall, they did not reach their goals to collect exactly one million signatures to repeal discriminatory laws. It is not clear how many signatures they collected at the end, but the movement was stopped by extensive arrests. This study seeks to understand in what ways the Muslim feminists' campaign could be considered a success and a failure and what lessons can be learned from their attempts to challenge an openly oppressive regime.

This chapter provided a brief overview of the research subject examined and its scholarly connection, as well as a summary of the methodology, theories, and findings. In the next chapter, I will discuss the background and historic context for the One Million Signature Campaign.

1.2 Background

The growth of conflicts and contradictions within religious standpoints in semi-modernized atmosphere of developing countries has influenced the forms of social exchange. "Disenchantment from tradition" as the main feature in this process challenges the old forms of religiosity (Giddens, 1991). Identity-making factors such as language, religion, ethnicity severely resist any change and assimilation. This conflict between religious change and the rigidity of identity-making factors has caused tensions that have led to the formation of identity problems in developing societies.

Changes in how one navigates their sense of self and their identity can also be the result of access to new communication channels and globalization which has increased awareness about other cultural values. Exposure to new communication has influenced people's understanding of identity concepts concerning other societies. In this context, Muslim women experience a more complicated and inexplicable situation. On one hand, they are faced with global changes, and on the other hand, they are involved in the traditional patriarchal society. This situation has increased debates surrounding the role of religion in gender inequality.

Traditionally, Islam introduces certain ritual conditions to women. The ideologies of traditional Islam have been questioned by believers, the religious intellectuals and the West. According to Edward Said, there is an inclination of Western media toward the exoticization of aspects of Muslims and the Islamic world (Said, 2003). This phenomenon of overgeneralization and incomplete portrayal has perpetuated stereotyping of Muslim women as oppressed veiled

Muslim women who do not have freedom, the women who are controlled by their religion, and women who are dominated by men (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

This is often the stereotypical image of Muslim women publicized in Western media. It would make sense that a group of Muslim women would be aware of this type of stereotyping and react against it. For instance, Liala Ahmad (1992) and Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2004) claim feminism came to Islamic societies by colonizers. Al-Hakim notes that “Feminism has long been a favorite weapon in the arsenal of colonialist power to win local support for Europeanisation, and to provide moral justification for imperialism” (Al-Hakim, 2013, p.65). This has affected how feminism is viewed and how Islamic feminism is seen as controversial. For example, in Iran, feminism has been accused to be a western and American ideology, since many feel that Islam already provided equal rights for women from the beginning (Al-Hakim, 2013, p. 52).

However, based on my experiences as an Iranian woman, I can recognize three schools of thought among Muslim women in Iran concerning questions of how they relate to modernism. First, I would label “Believers”- those who are not inclined to critique religion or interpret it in a new way. They rigorously insist on the enforcement of religious laws or canons and accept the status quo; the example can be fundamentalist Muslims.

The second group would be “Reformists”: those women who approach religion critically, though they do not consider religion as the source of sexual inequalities. They emphasize religiosity and observing religious rituals with a new approach. Though they have been influenced by western feminism, they prefer appropriate interpretation adapted to Islamic societies. Muslim feminists or those who believe in Islamic feminism can be included in this group.

Moreover, the third group would be “Unbelievers”: those women who reject religion and consider it as the source of women's miseries and sufferings. They maintain that sexual inequalities have been derived from Islam. Secular feminists could be included in this group.

During the revolutionary battles in Iran, secular women played an essential role. After the revolution, the first governmental orders were made to limit women's freedom and to enforce control over their bodies. Two weeks after the revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the

Iranian revolutionary leader, decided to abolish the law of family protection and to promote the compulsory Islamic hijab. On the eighth of March 1979, women and men held protests in Tehran and other cities in Iran against the compulsory veil. Some researchers believe that this was the start of the women's movement, which has continued (Matin & Mohajer, 2013). However, discrimination against women's rights expanded when the republic turned to an Islamic government or a theocratic state. The rise of the Islamic State led to the marginalization of secular feminists on charges of being anti-Islam and promoting western ideologies. However, the government never succeeded to remove women entirely from the public discourse. Barlow (2012) argues that because Khomeini emphasized the social power of women in his revolution, women developed a new concept of womanhood that went beyond the traditional role of mother, wife, daughter, which led Muslim Feminists to demand their rights by applying an Islamic context to their demands so the state should not have any choice other than to recognize their rights (Barlow, 2012, pp. 93-94). As a result of this, Iranian women learned to adopt new tactics to demand their rights, which led to OMSCE.

Until the emergence of the One Million Signature Campaign in 2006, women's activities were scattered, temporary, and in small communities.

1.3 Focus Area and Research Objectives

In this study, I try to understand how power which can be concealed inside symbolic violence, expands domination in a non - physical way. In other words, how social order controls women through symbolic violence. I explore and try to identify the rudimentary complexities that Muslim feminists face in practice navigating theocratic societies, to obtain legal privilege. The strategies that the power used to dominate women and the tactics that women employ to get out of this domination are the central interest of this thesis. Bourdieu believed that economic, cultural, and social capital through the accumulation of symbolic power legitimizes individuals and groups (Pierre Bourdieu, 1986). Women as a submissive group with the lower social, economic and cultural capital in Iran, often are in positions that obligate them to hold to the dominant order or to adjust their demands to work concerning the dominant order. The purpose of focusing on the Campaign of One Million Signatures for the Repeal of Discriminatory Laws is the realization that the power order not only has strategies to suppress opposing women, it also controls women's tactics indirectly. I will try to set the foundation for further examination by investigating the following research questions:

- 1- *What tactics do the women of the OMSCE apply to escape power?*
- 2- To what extent do these tactics indicate power relations in social structure and everyday practice?
- 3- What does OMSCE see as the strategies of domination to regulate and control feminist Muslims?

As briefly mentioned above, I explore questions of what strategies the dominant power uses to control women and how women are under the control of the power to such a degree that their tactics are a reaction to the actions of the dominant order. To answer the above research questions, I will look at the challenges of Muslim women in practice, ie. how they adopted ways to confront obstacles with some degree of success. One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality, which from this time forth I will abbreviate OMSCE, will serve as a case study.

The power and practice theory and strategy-tactics concepts were employed in analyzing the data for this research. I chose Bourdieu's theory because it explains the techniques dominant powers and women utilize in practice to empower themselves in the political field. The theory of power and practice is a useful tool to monitor how symbolic capital holders have influenced and infiltrated social infrastructures. The strategy - tactics concepts applied in the analysis section of this thesis were influenced by the book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (De Certeau 1984) is another concept which supports power and practice. The concepts in De Certeau's book reveal aspects of power relations based on Bourdieu's theory. I used these theories because Muslim feminists have had to select tactics to avoid being eliminated from the political field while the theocratic governments have specific strategies to confront them. That being said, OMSCE will serve as an example of the relationship between power and subordinate people. This campaign was a significant and comprehensive women's movement after the revolution, which united women activists from various ideologies together. In this regard, both theories will be utilized to analyze the data.

To have a comprehensive view, I will look at the questions mentioned above from two different aspects. First, the theoretical aspect will be presented so they can be applied to ground them in practice. The second aspect focuses on the real challenges that these feminists have faced to

remain in the political field, and how they have encountered and responded to these difficulties. In the next section, I will present my discourse analysis methodology to present Muslim women's approaches and tactics to solve these problems in connection with the theories mentioned herein.

1.4 Overview of Method and Materials

The method of research in this study is qualitative. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, which I will mention in the ethical concerns, I chose not to interview the campaign activists. Instead, I decided to conduct a textual analysis of the following three materials: the statements of rally 2005, second rally on 12 June 2006 and the OMSCE's statements in August 2006. A large amount of data about these events resulted in the need to conduct purposive sampling. Consequently, the sample was chosen based on predefined criteria which then underwent thematic analysis. I will present a more in-depth explanation of the chosen methodology in Chapter Four.

1.5 The Structure of Chapters

This dissertation is separated into seven chapters, including the opening chapter. The second chapter presents a background illustrating the definition of Muslim feminism, the history of Iranian women's movements, the resources of Islamic feminism in Iran, and ends with a description of OMSCE. The third chapter presents the theoretical framework that was used in the analysis of the data. Chapter four presents the research methods that were implemented and justification for using them. Chapter five presents key findings and data which were obtained through thematic analysis. Chapter six discusses the findings concerning applied theory. The final chapter presents the conclusion, summing up the findings and directly answering the research questions.

2 Research background: Understanding Feminism in Islam

The subject of this thesis is the Muslim feminists' challenges in practice. The term "Muslim feminist" itself is relatively new and builds on the idea of Islamic Feminism. To have a clear understanding of Muslim feminism, in this section, I will present a brief discussion of the discourse surrounding the topic.

2.1 Introduction to Islamic Feminism

Towards the end of the last century, the dominant Western worldview that regarded the world uniform and consequently assumed the same solution for all phenomena was severely criticized by non-western views. Feminism, which was mostly constructed by American-European white women were suddenly confronted with epistemic gaps based on the distinct demands of women in other societies or even inside of Western countries with different local roots. Liberal feminism provided "a reflexivity that gave way to forms of feminism in the 1990s that were more responsive to difference" (Seedat, 2013,p.28). Black feminism, LGBT and feminism view, Third World feminism, and Islamic feminism, were previously silenced voices that rose in the late decades of the twentieth century under the "shadow of diversity politics." Islamic feminism is a set of epistemological alternatives to rethinking women's issues in Islamic societies. However, this new approach was polarizing and was criticized both from within Islamic communities and from outside Islamic communities(Hidayatullah, 2011,p.119).

In this brief introduction below, I will focus on the internal challenges in the context of Islam and feminism. It is undeniable that Iran has been Shia for more than 400 years¹. As a result, Islam and Shia have influenced the culture of Iranian deeply. Women's movements in Iran can, therefore, be considered as Muslim feminist actions. In this context, before looking at One Million Signatures Campaign, it would be useful to have an overview of Islamic feminism roots as well as the theoretical framework of Islamic feminism in Iran specifically. Moreover, this presentation of concept and theory is related to the thematic analyses applied in this study. Based on the methodological approach, I will use these theories as to the historical background of OMSCE in chapter six. In the next section, I will review the various strategies of Islamic feminism, and then I discuss Islamic feminism and its growth platforms in Iran. At the end of

¹ - In 15th century, during Safavid dynasty Shia became the official state religion. For more information see the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Şafavid dynasty.

this chapter, I concentrate further on the One Million Signatures Campaign as an in-depth response to the demands of Muslim women in the Islamic context of political Islam.

2.2 Islamic Feminism: Approaches and Challenges

The decision was taken to emphasize this section as it is the rudimentary element of the dissertation “*feminist Muslim challenges in practice.*” Islamic feminists and feminist Muslims are relatively recent additions to feminist discourse. I intend to provide an overview of Islamic feminism and draw a picture of the theoretical challenge identified in Muslim Feminism and to clarify the definition of the term. I assume that the readers may or may not be familiar with Islamic feminism, therefore, a short introduction is needed before we delve into the main context of this thesis which will be further clarified in the research's findings. Regarding this, first, I present different approaches and challenges of Islamic feminism. Then, I give a short discussion surrounding the terms “Islamic feminism” and “Muslim feminists.”

A new trajectory of feminism has concentrated on local and Islamic re-interpretation of gender equality developed in the 1990s (Mojab, 2001,p.2001; Seedat, 2013,p.26 Seedat; Badran, 2002). Nayereh Tohidi (2003) explains that Islamic feminism (faith-based feminism) is a response of particular strata of Muslim women in their negotiation with three factors that she identifies. These factors are: response to traditional patriarchy has been approved by the religious authorities, response to the recent surge of patriarchal Islamism and finally Islamic feminism is resistance to modernity, modernization, and globalization (Tohidi, 2003,p.140).

Ziba-Mir Hosseini is one of the pioneers to use the term “Islamic Feminism” in the Teheran women’s journal *Zanan* in 1992 (Tønnessen, 2014,p.2). While the term “Islamic Feminism” has been more widely used, some scholars and women researchers have been skeptical about it. Tohidi (2003) argues that when Elizabeth Caty Stanton and friends wrote the *Women’s Bible* in 1895, nobody called her a Christian feminist. “But today, because of the currency of feminist discourse, Amina Wadud’s *Quran and Women: Rereading Sacred Text from a Women’s Perspective* is naturally seen as an example of Islamic/Muslim feminism” (Tohidi, 2003, p.141). Tohidi who is an Iranian American scholar believes that such naming can be harmless if “it does not imply a deliberate or unwitting otherizing or essentializing of Muslim women” and “if it does not limit the diverse spectrum of women movement” (Tohidi, 2003, p.141). On the other hand, Seedat (2013) argues that Islamic feminism challenges Islam concerning

feminism. The colonization of the East brought with it calls for gender equality and criticism of Islamic patriarchy. In this way, negotiation between Islam and feminism as “two intellectual traditions” has produced a new trajectory in feminism(Seedat, 2013, p.44).

The various versions of Islamic feminism raised new theoretical challenges among scholars. Margot Badran (2010) prefers to maintain one unique form of Islamic feminist by focusing on the heartfelt message of this trajectory. In point of her view, the core message is “full human equality inclusive of gender equality and social justice” (Badran, 2010). Therefore, from her universalist perspective, there is no differentiation between Islamic feminists and feminist overall. In contrast, Tønnessen claims that Islamic feminism “is characterized by great diversity across contexts”(2014,p.5) Some scholars like Amina Wadud and Omaira Abou-Bakr focus on reinterpretation of the Quran. Asma Barlas, Rifaat Hasan, and Kecia Ali concentrate on Fiqh. Some, like Leila Ahmad, tries to show that the historical roots of discrimination to illustrate that Islam is not against women. Instead, she believes that gender inequality in Islam dates back to the first century of Mohammad’s death thus the reasons for gender discrimination may be influenced by a Muslim countries’ background rather than Islam itself (Tønnessen, 2014,p.5). Sa’diyya Shaikh looks at the diversity of feminism based on cultural background. “Realities of gender dynamics of women” is complex and one needs to acknowledge, for example, that “realities from Indonesian or Senegalese Muslim women” are very different from each other (Shaikh, 2003,p.147).

To sum up, one can argue that although Islamic feminism has included a variety of theoretical approaches, these views have two things in common. First, Islam has intrinsically presented gender equality. Secondly, patriarchy or masculine interpretation of Islam has influenced the development of discrimination upon women.

2.2.1 The Convergence of Islam and Feminism: Islamic Feminist or Feminist Muslims

One of the most exceptional arguments about OMSCE is its feminist and Islamic nature. While some of the campaign's founders and supporters were secular feminists, the ultimate statement of the Campaign presented an Islamic character. Consequently, the discussion around the convergence of Islam and Feminism was flamed, and some scholars pointed out the need to

make a sharp distinction between Muslim feminists and Islamic feminism. I will look briefly into this topic and refer to it more directly in the analysis and conclusion chapters.

The convergence of Islam and feminism has sparked much debate. According to Seedat (2013), the endeavors calling for gender equality in Muslim society has been accompanied by Western feministic methods, analysis, and strategies. She calls this convergent atmosphere “transgressive gender politics” accusing some Muslim women of having taken “Islam for granted”(Seedat, 2013,p.37). However, the fact is that feminism entered into a majority of Muslim countries during the colonial and post-colonial era while the new state-nations as a new government system was emerging in these traditional communities ((Mir-Hossini, 2006,p.46; Mernissi, 1985,p.7).

Shaikh looks at the historical relationship between Islam and Christianity and views the gender issue from a historical perspective. She mentions that debates around gender “are prefigured by the political conflict between Islam and Christianity” in the colonial period as a “nationalist response by colonized people” who viewed Islam as violent, medieval, and “misogynist religion” (Shaikh, 2003,pp.148-149). These orientalism stereotypes provoked different responses in Muslim countries: modification and rejection. According to Seedat, some respond that women have been marginalized and oppressed in the name of Islam, not because of Islam. If this is true, then a return to real Islam will modify women's place since Islam has provided egalitarianism even before the western movement for gender equality (Seedat, 2013). Seedat says that by viewing Islam as a source of gender equality, Islamic feminism creates a space for the “pejorative narrative” of Muslim women as victims of “Muslim patriarchy” (Seedat, 2013,p.36). In other words, they decline the orientalist illustrations which claim Islam is a source of discrimination and try to modify the Islamic feature by attributing the problem to other reasons. Seedat (2013) explains that Ali and Mir-Hosseini, take a conservative stance and argue that gender equality in the historical context of Islam is not provable. “equality is potentially available within the spiritual parameters of the faith” (Seedat, 2013,p.40). The above-mentioned approach justifies all sorts of modifications in favor of gender equality, although it refuses the orientalist view.

Some Muslim scholars reject all types of connections between Islam and feminism. They can be categorized into two groups: secular feminists and fundamental Muslims. The secular

feminists distinguish between Islamic feminism and Muslim feminism and believe that Islam and feminism cannot be combined. While we can recognize some Muslim activists as Muslim feminists, we could not say that feminism can be Islamic (Al-Hakim, 2013, p.67). For example, Moghisi claims feminism is “virtually inconceivable within the legal, political, and moral framework of Islamic fundamentalism” (Moghissi, 1999, p.142). The separation between religion and the state might be what is needed and in that way, Islamic feminism is a practical challenge in Islamic society and maybe an unreachable goal as long as religion and the state are intertwined (Moghissi, 1999, p.142). While Moghissi emphasizes the patriarchal nature of Islam, Barden (1999) suggests that in the 21st century Islam, new radical feminism in Islamic societies will be Islamic feminism. Her reasons for her claim include Growth of Islam politically and culturally around the world, increase of highly educated Muslim women reading religious texts, and women who are part of the Muslim diaspora who want practice in Islam needs a “decentred and denationalized feminism” (Badran, 1999, p.164). The type of feminism that she proposes would be in response to the belief that “the majority of Muslims can associate only with a feminism that is explicitly Islamic” (Badran, 1999, p.164).

In contrast to Badran’s view, fundamental Muslims consider feminism’s roots as a humanist and materialistic. They believe that it is not possible that Islam, as a spiritual religion, can coexist with the “materialistic” nature of feminism (Seedat, 2013, p.31-32). Feminism is seen as a western project to interfere with Islamic societies to eradicate Islam by touting western slogans like equality, human rights, freedom, and so on (Smalley, 2016, p.87). Addressing Kausar, Seedat points out that the combination of Islam and feminism is not possible. She considers feminism to be in opposition to Islam because “feminism cannot or has not developed over time to manifest in a host of both secular and religious trajectories embraced by colonized, colonizing, and anticolonial communities” (Seedat, 2013, p.31).

The distinction between Islamic Feminism and Muslim Feminists is also considerable. Tohidi (2005) assumes that Islamic Feminism is not possible, theoretically, and practically. Tohidi (2005) believes that the term Muslim Feminists such as Christian Feminists or Jewish Feminists is more natural. Muslim women, while they may be feminists, tend to be excluded from the monopoly and masculine interpretation of the clergy, therefore this view provides the opportunity for women to engage in feminist activities without involving in theoretical debates about Islamic feminism. Ahmadi (2006), by citing Badran, claims that Islamic feminism

expresses within the “Islamic paradigm” which includes all women activists inside Islamic societies; even if they do not identify themselves as Muslim feminists (Ahmadi, 2006,p.35). This study assumes that all women’s activities in Iran could be considered expressions of Muslim feminists regardless of inhering the theoretical framework or not.

2.3 Women’s Movements in Iran

The goal of this research is to analyze Iranian women's movements through the lens of Muslim Feminism in practice. To attain this, it would be useful to look into the background of Iranian women's movements regardless of their theoretical base. This is necessary for the study because it would help the reader understand the context of Muslim feminists practice. This section will provide a brief overview of three subjects: First, a brief history of Iranian women's struggles; Second, the emergence of Muslim Feminists in Iran, and finally, the theoretical foundation of Islamic feminists in Iran.

2.3.1 A Brief History of Iranian Women Struggles

The following subsections will include some of the key features in Iran and women topics that may be unknown to an outsider and provide information about the situation of Muslim women in an Iranian context. I present this brief review because I believe that the historical background is useful in the sociocultural understanding of the texts. As mentioned before, the method of analysis in this research is concerning this socio-cultural background.

Even before the formation of feminist waves, Muslim women have always exposed their demands in numerous configurations in other titles. Badran addresses that before the emergence of the feminist movement in the West, the women's appeals for gender equality embedded in the national and local objections in the Middle East (Badran, 2008,p.52). The women's situation in Iran was the same as others in Muslim societies. Accordingly, the history of women's movements backed over 120 years ago and to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution through 1905-1911(Afary, 1996). Women’s demands for equal rights were ignored after revolutionaries succeed in establishing a democratic parliament. While educated and enlightened women remained in their struggles for women's rights, ordinary women departed the politic scene(Whitcher, 2005,p.53).

After 10 years in 1921, Reza Shah established the Pahlavi dynasty and modernized Iran. As a part of the modernization plan, he prohibited the use of the veil in public in 1936. He provided

more facilities for women's education in public schools. Reza Shah's changes met with religious opposition.

After Reza Shah, during his son's reign, women joined protests in favor of Khomeini. Feminism, combined with nationalist movements such as liberation, equality, and democracy (Atarzadeh, 2008). Then Iranian women did not present their demands for equality in an independent movement. And it occurred due to women's problems did not identify as a serious issue because there were so many social and political problems that no one could prioritize women's demands. Regarding this, Shahidian states that women's position in the family and society attracted less attention during disputes on the 1979 revolutionary desires of both women and men. For protesters, the issue of women considered as a subordinate part of the culture's infrastructure, that would be solved spontaneously in the liberated community after the revolution (Shahidian, 1998, p.611). In other words, the protesters realized that the deprivation of women and the discrimination against them is the outcome of political-social situations, not the consequence of the patriarchal culture or the misogynist religion.

The Islamic Revolution swiftly intensified women's movements. Women who stayed in the same ranks of struggling with men to change and reform was unexpectedly confronted with a resentful Islamic reality (Whitcher, 2005, p.61). Following Khomeini's speech against unveiled women delivered on March 7, 1979 (two weeks after the revolution), women protested about the compulsory veil and the cancellation of the Family Protection Act that occurred on the 8th of March. The protesters called the hijab as grave clothes of freedom (Shahidian, 1998, p.625). Moghissi describes these demonstrations as the first step toward the formulation of a women's movement (Moghissi, 1996, p.84). Soon, the revolution made women's bodies and rights in the first area of debate. The war with Iraq helped push away women from the public sphere efficiently. In the militarized term, women's rights were marginalized (Tohidi, 2003, p.95).

2.3.2 The emergence of Muslim Feminists in Iran

As mentioned above, the war between Iran and Iraq gave the opportunity of consolidation power in the hands of radical Islamists and the exclusion of opponents' forces and homogenized Iran's society. Tohidi claims that on one hand populism and nationalism and the other hand the growth of Islamism discourse -fundamentalism- distorted revolutionary slangs such as equality, freedom, independence, and so on (Tohidi, 2003, p.92). Secular feminists, mostly engaged in leftist political groups, were excluded from the scene or marginalized, or some of them left Iran

(Afshar, 2000,p.189). According to Ahmadi, one of the reasons of secular feminism failed was because “fundamentalists hold absolute power over certain state institutions” (Ahmadi, 2006,p.34). In such a space, Muslim women appeared to interpret Islam and built a proper atmosphere to turn back to the politic field. The Islamic approach to women's issues seemed to give the women the final chance of participating in the unjust dispute. However, all do not agree with this. Mir-Hosseini argues that the emergence of Islamic feminism is a “paradox of Islamism” or as “unwanted child” of political Islam(Tønnessen, 2014,p.3).

“With the introduction of Islamism, women’s rights within Islamic law became open for negotiation in a public debate. As the Islamic Republic of Iran evolved, Mir-Hosseini argues, Muslim women activists came to believe that patriarchal laws entrenched within state Sharia law were Islamically discriminatory. Iranian women began to question the legitimacy of the state’s monopoly on the interpretation and application of Sharia in public and private spheres. Islamic feminists in Iran do not support the state, on the contrary, they try to extract rights from it by using the same Quran that the state itself invokes”(Tønnessen, 2014,p.3).

Then some scholars started to distinguish between Islam and Islamic rules. Monireh Gorgi, who was the first and only woman in the Majlish Khobregan, published the book *The Quran's Attitude to the Presence of Women in the Prophets History* in 1994 described women's rights in Islam according to Quran and prophet Mohamad’s era. Shahidian explains that in Iran, two leading groups of Muslim feminists are recognizable. The first group consists of people who believe in the Islamic republic and solicit to a new interpretation of women's rights inside of Islam, such as authors of Farzaneh and Payam Hajar’s women journals. The second group does not necessarily believe in Islam, but they publish their opinions in the media outlets that focus on Islamic values and laws, such as Zanan’s journal(Shahidian, 1998,p.612). Despite Shahidian, Whitcher claims that due to the disappointment of Muslim revolutionary women and limitations placed on secular women; both realized that they should work collectively. This cooperative approach arose in two well-known Islamic women magazines, Farzaneh², and Zanan³ (Whitcher, 2005,p.65).

² - In Persian means wise and it is the girl's name also.

³ -In Persian means women.

According to Shahidian, Islamic feminism in Iran includes various movements. The first group includes women in the high level of politics or in political families that confirm the current gender order with some changes. The second group critically attempts to release Islam from the men's misunderstandings. The third group includes secular or nonreligious scholars which have to explain themselves in Islamic discourse to avoiding censorship by the government or because of avoiding an accusation of a non-Islamic approach (Shahidian, 1998,p.612).

However, most of the scholars agree that Islamic feminism or at least a group of Muslim Iranian women are trying to change Sharia law in favor of Muslim women. Therefore, it is undeniable that Islamic feminism discourse exists in Iran.

2.3.3 Theoretical Foundation of Islamic Feminist in Iran

Islamic feminism in Iran is a unique sort of feminism. This section will attempt to make a trustworthy and knowledgeable summary of the distinction between Iranian scholars and other Muslim scholars which I mentioned early. As indicated earlier, OMSCE's statements and tactics enable us to recognize it as an Islamic feminist movement. Although without this, as it has been discussed before, Iranian women's activities could be identified as Islamic feminism as well. Regarding this, I will present the fundamental of this discourse. This section is the most relevant part of data analytics in the case of Muslim women. Therefore, it needs to clarify deeply, otherwise understanding the finding would encounter with complexity. The campaign's demands for changing the sharia laws are all based on the likewise theoretical cornerstone, which is showing in the following paragraphs.

In the context of fundamental Islam in Iran, new sounds get created, and some religious intellectuals divided themselves from dominant Islamic contemporary schools. Abdolkarim Soroush, one of the most notable reformist Muslim scholars, can be considered as the father of Islamic feminism in Iran. To understand the theoretical source of Muslim feminist theories, we need to review Soroush's Accidental of History Theory. In the book *Expansion of Prophetic Experience*, he claims that religion has two different parts, Essentials (Zati) and Accidentals (Arazi). "The essentials of Islam are that Islam is not without it, and its transformation will cause another religion"(Soroush, 2006,p.23). In other words, Islam could not identify as Islam without essential components such as monotheism (Tohid) and prophecy (Nabouvat), while accidentals are the changeable component of Islam because they connect to a particular time

and place during Prophet Mohammad's life. Islam's accidentals are the Arabic language, Arabic culture, historical circumstance, inquiries of supporters and opponents and their responses, jurisprudential laws, and religious order, Hadises, and audience perceptions. The outcome of those accidentals was the Quran and the history of Islam (Soroush, 2006,p.20). Mohammad, as a human being, was Arab and used to think in that cultural context. If he was born in another country, the Quranic precepts on the social issue might alter. The Quran is a product of a determined time and place, so except essentials, there is not the full truth. Everything is doubtful, if not, it will convert to an ideology, and it is not any more religion (Ahmadi, 2006,pp.38-41).

According to Soroush, Islam is the spiritual and social experience of the Prophet. The Qur'an also gradually revealed by the social conditions. Events and states have contributed to the formation of Islam. Many situations did not happen at the time of the Prophet, so there is no response to them. In this view, the doors are open to Ijtihad to involve new situations because being Muslim need to be obligated only to essentials (Soroush, 2006,p.13-22).

Although Soroush's main concern was not women's rights, his doctrine in *Expansion of Prophetic Experience, and Essential -Accidental* in religion can be extended to gender issues. Iranian feminist Muslim theory is based on these theories. Soroush's followers published two separate intellectual journals: *Kian* and *Zanan*. In *Kian*, Soroush and other thinkers dissect their philosophical, while in the *Zanan*, Muslim feminists investigate gender paradigms in Islam. Shahla Sherkat, the editor of the monthly journal of *Zanan*, quotes the "Accidental of History" theory of Soroush. Sherkat explains that religious views about women should reform. Because some of "versus antagonistic to women in the Quran are accidental, written in a certain place (Arabia) and time (more than thirteen centuries ago, during the life of Mohammad). Therefore, they are inappropriate today"(Ahmadi, 2006,p.42).

In the first volume of the *Zanan*, Sherkat, without referring to Soroush and his theory, writes: "it is the time that religious compassionate scholars and thinkers should pursuit Ijtihad about women issues" (Sherkat, 1992, p.3). They can show the tolerant the face of Islam by redesigning Figh and Sharia. Some of the problems which surround women come from the weakness of law that has been interpreted based on a particular time and place (Sherkat, 1992,p.3).

Soroush's explanation and theories have provided more ground for Muslim feminists in Iran than other Islamic feminist theories. While Muslim feminists challenge to accuses other factors, some of the Muslim feminists in Iran criticize the Quran undeviatingly. In other words, Soroush opened and closed the doors of criticizing the Quran at the same time. Women can criticize the misogynist verses and at the same time could respect it because those had been revolutionary in the context of time and place of Arabia. The problem that Amina Wadud wants to solve by re-interpretation of the Quran. Or Rafat Hassan by *Hadith and Prophet's life* or Leila Ahmad by historical roots of patriarchy which has influenced Islam has removed without so much negotiation. Although this trend of criticizing Islam appears sufficient, it has faced a lot of confrontation inside Iran by fundamental Muslims.

However, in the findings section⁴, I will discuss how the OMSCE has used Soroush's theory to justify its demands. This also would serve to understand how Islamic feminism in Iran is different than other approaches and to identify the rudimentary challenges of Muslim women in practice. This different theoretical background of Iranian women will also serve to analyze the data. The theory will be used in Chapter 6 to investigate how the arguments in OMSCEs materials can be used to explain the socio-cultural background. To understand the relationship between power and its effects on controlling Muslim feminist demands in Iran, the “*Accidental of History*” theory will be helpful.

2.4 One Million Signature Campaign for Equality

In this thesis, I focus on furthering understanding of Muslim women's attempts and problems in a theocratic society. To achieve this goal, I chose the One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality OMSCE as a case study. Some knowledge about the campaign is necessary before I proceed to analyze the case therefore, in this section, I will introduce the campaign in detail. It would be helpful to understand the context of where this thesis's data comes from and how OMSCE is related to Islamic Feminism.

In 2003, Shirin Ebadi, one of the most famous Iranian lawyers and women's activists, obtained the Nobel Peace Prize “for her significant efforts for democracy and human rights, especially women's, children's, and refugee rights”(Present case in Iran- Shirin Ebadi women's rights in

⁴ -See chapter 6

Iran, n.d.). Following that, a series of assemblages held with the cooperation of Ebadi and other women activists, including various intellectual tendencies, known as *Women's Rights Seminars*. In 2005, activists held a peaceful protest in front of Tehran University on June 12. They published a statement, *The Contravention of Women's Rights in the Constitution*, which emphasized that the current constitution has provided the ground for discriminatory laws against women. It was supported by about 6,000 women, associations, organizations, and human rights activists from various cities in Iran. Also, the proclamation was signed by 350 domestic women activists, 90 NGOs, 114 Tehran University students, 60 Tahkim Vahdat⁵, 14 independent student journals, 128 bloggers, 150 women's rights advocates, 1,000 women's rights activists abroad, 5 Nobel Peace Prize winners. Congregating feminists and women's activists from a diversity of intellectual frameworks (secular, Muslim, communist, etc.) was a milestone in the history of Iranian women's movements. On the anniversary of the assembly, women activists decided to hold another gathering in Haft Tir Square in Tehran. Before the event, a notebook entitled "The Law's Impact on Women's Life" which emphasized the role of discriminatory laws on women's lives was distributed in many cities. Shortly after the peaceful protest, Law Enforcement Force (LEF) violently beat women and arrest seventy of them. Consequently, women activists decided to form a campaign to follow up on the declaration demands for the repeal of discriminatory laws, known as the One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality (Aguste,2006).

Security pressure has caused women to come up with more creative tactics to boost the campaign. Campaigners created and shared websites and blogs in different cities of Iran and other countries. After the government censored webs and blogs belong to OMSCE, they established a new method of mailing to sign the campaign's letter. They published pamphlets that instructed women about how to promote OMSCE, which called Face-to-Face and Group training booklet. Voluntary campaigners traveled to other cities and rural areas for meeting women and talking with them. And also these voluntary activists explained the campaign's purpose in parks, metro, buses, cafés, or even inside of family gatherings are some examples of innovative methods that campaigners used.

⁵ "An Iranian student organization created in 1979, and has been described as "the country's most well-known student organization," and "Iran's leading pro-democracy student group"(Wikipedia).

All these tactics did not keep them safe from the government's accusation, at the end. There are no trustworthy statistics about exactly how many activists were arrested, but one of the few websites that remain of OMSCE reports that over the time of 14 months, around 60 activists have been imprisoned.⁶ Campaigners continued their efforts until 2009, but after the nationwide protests about the election outcomes, the government increased pressure on political activists. A significant number of campaign members were arrested or migrated to other countries.

2.4.1 Rules the OMSCE Object to Repeal

From the beginning, the most significant demand of the campaign was to change discriminatory laws against women. Although in the first and second formal statements, it was not clear which articles they demanded to change, after founding the campaign officially, they clarified which articles needed to be modified. It was also the first time in the OMSCE's statements that claims campaign's demands are not in contradiction with Islam. Therefore it is important to know which laws they wanted to be changed.

1) Marriage

- a) Article 1041 of the Civil Code: According to this, the marriage of a girl younger than 13 and a son younger than 15 years old are allowed under two conditions: father's consent and court's permission.
- b) Article 1043 of the Civil Code: The virgin girl's marriage depends on her father or grandfather(from father side) consent. In some cases, by court permission.
- c) Article 1060 of the Civil Code: The marriage of an Iranian woman with a foreigner is subject to special permission from the government.
- d) Article 1105 of the Civil Code: In the couple's relationship, the man is head of the family.
- e) Article 1117 of the Civil Code: The husband may prohibit his wife from a profession that is contrary to the family's prestige.

⁶ - "Report on the Arrest and Summon of Equality Campaigners" Available at: <http://www.campaignforequality.info/>

f) Article 1114 & 1005 of the Civil Code: The wife is subordinate to her husband in the place of residence.

g) Article 18 & 11 of the Passport Act: A married woman must obtain the official consent of her husband to obtain a foreign passport and travel abroad.

2) Polygamy

a) Article 900,901,942,1048,1049, 1075, 1076 of the Civil Code: According to these articles, a man could possess four permanent wives at the same time and an unlimited number of temporary wives (Siqehi).

3) Divorce

a) Article 1133 of the Civil Code gives divorce right to men whenever he wishes. In contrast, women might provide legal reasons to court(Articles 1119,1129,1130).

4) Guardianship and custody of children

a) Article 1133 of the Civil Code: Children(-18) are under the guardianship of the father and paternal grandfather.

b) Article 1183 of the Civil Code: In all matters relating to the property and financial father and grandfather have legal superiority.

c) Article 1169 of the Civil Code: In the case of divorce, custody of children is with mother until seven years old.

d) According to article 220 of the Islamic Penal Code, if a father or paternal grandfather kills a child will not punish by retribution(Qesas).

5) Criminal responsibility age

a) Article 1210 of the Civil Code: according to this article, the age of criminal responsibility for girls is nine years, and for boys 15 years old.

6) Atonement and blood money

- a) Articles 300 of the Islamic Penal Code: The blood money for killing a Muslim woman, whether intentional or unintentional, is half of the blood-money of a Muslim man.
- b) Articles 209 of the Islamic Penal Code: When a Muslim man intentionally kills a Muslim woman, he must be punished by retribution. But the woman's family must pay half the man's blood money before execution.

2.4.2 OMSCE's Followers and Awards

I will give a summary of the campaign's supporters. It is important to understand the diversity of followers of OMSCE. As I could recognize, two groups can be categorized. First famous secular feminists or activists such as Shirin Ebadi, Simin Behbahani, Shahla Ezazi, Khadijeh Moghadam, and so on. The second group is the well-known Muslim feminists like Shahla Sherkat, Farideh Modirshanegi, Fatemeh Rakebi, and others.

The biggest success of OMSCE was not gathering secular and Muslim feminists in the same line. It was an extension activity that went over the capital. The campaign provided a huge amount of followers from different social backgrounds including people from small cities or villages.

OMSCE received some international prizes and recognition including Special prize of *Reporters Without Borders* (2008), *Simon de Beauvoir Award* (2009), *The Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) Award* (2009), *Anna Politkovskaya Award* (2009), and *Netizen prize of Reporters Without Borders* (2010). And also, Parvin Ardalan, one of the main founders of OMSCE, got the prize of *Olof Palme* in 2007.

Remarkably, these prizes looked like proof of communication with alien agents in the view of Iranian governments.

2.5 Summery

In this chapter, I presented a necessary summary of the social context of OMSCE. I presented a basic overview of Muslim Feminism's definition and approaches. I also presented a brief background of Iranian women's movements through the last century. After introducing the baseline theoretical roots of Muslim women in Iran, I presented how OMSCE was a product of the mobilization of Muslim feminists in Iran.

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter examines the significant theories that will be applied in the analytical framework. Two theories are featured in this dissertation. First, Bourdieu's theory of power and practice was used to understand how women's activities have engaged in the public sphere (political field). This theory can also be used to understand the reasoning behind why tactics were chosen (role of habitus and symbolic violence) and the power relation in the context of a religious society (symbolic power). The second theory, Michel de Certeau's concepts of tactics and strategy from his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, was used to better understand what motivates and drives women activists in everyday life to overcome limitations and offer a solution. In this study, I looked closely at the field of power distribution to understand what strategies have been used by the government to limit Muslim women activists and what tactics women used to overcome it. I will present a discussion of both theories and I will review the relation of these theories with this study's aims.

3.1 Bourdieu's Theory of Power and Practice

This study investigates how Pierre Bourdieu's theory of power and practice relates to Muslim women's movements. I characterize OMSCE to be a social movement, therefore this thesis aims to create a theoretical view of women's movement as a social movement that draws upon Bourdieu's terms of field, capital, habitus, symbolic power and violence. Bourdieu's theory does not deal with social movements directly, but it has been referred to concerning how it can be applied to social movements by various researchers. For example, according to Crossley, "the central concepts of Bourdieu's theory of practice can be used to provide an effective and interesting basis for the analysis of social movements, protest, and contention"(Crossley, 2003,p.43). Crossley studies the connection between social movement fields and radical habitus. Dave Horton investigates the term "*habitus*" in environmental movements (2003). Also, Nepstad and Bob(2006), in the article "*When Do Leaders Matter? Hypotheses on Leadership Dynamics in Social Movements*" builds on Bourdieu and Putnam's theory and explains that leaders possessed leadership capital having cultural, social, and symbolic components. Bourdieu's framework describes the interrelationship between power and subordinates. Moreover, it explains the resources and cultural competence behind the practices.

Bourdieu called his “theoretical orientation praxiological” because of his interest in the dialectical relationship between the structure and the way that actors construct social realities. “The theory of the mode of generation of practices, which is the precondition for establishing an experimental science of the dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality, or, more simply, of incorporation and objectification”(Bourdieu, 1977,p.72). Therefore, individuals play a central role in Bourdieu's theory of practice:

“Practice is what humans do (and, for Bourdieu, should not be confused with voluntarist notions of “action”). It is improvisatory rather than rule-governed. It is embodied. It takes time and is situated in space; it is strategic, in that it goes somewhere, producing outcomes. Bourdieu’s emphasis on practice betrays the influence of Marx’s early writings, on the one hand, and Goffman, on the other. Epistemologically, it is important to attend to what people do because of the gulf between official cultural accounts and everyday realities” (Jenkins, 2005,p.68).

Unlike the Marxists, Bourdieu disregarded the model of production and emphasized the style of consumption in social relations. He believed that in a social, cultural, political field, a group with a high level of economic, social, symbolic capital has the opportunity and possibility to dominate. In this sense, capital draws power through the social field and it reproduces power relations in society. On the other hand, Bourdieu "attempts to transcend the objective/subjective antinomy" to clarify social life(Swartz, 1997,p.65). Therefore, Bourdieu examines the symbolic dimensions of political and social life. Considering the economic benefits of non-economic goods, he highlights the symbolic power and political activity beyond Marxism.

In the following subsection, I will go into a deeper discussion of Bourdieu’s terms and concepts that I chose to use in the data analysis.

3.1.1 The Field

According to Swartz, the field is the most important concept that Bourdieu used to develop his philosophy which “calls attention to the institutional aspects of individual and group action,” although he saw it more “institutional analysis” (1997,p.120). Bourdieu used the term *field* and *market* interchangeably, but it is not assimilated with the concept of neo-market. It “reflects a hierarchical set of power relations among the competing individuals, groups and organizations”(Swartz, 1997,p.120).

Bourdieu defines the field as:

“Network or configuration or objective relations between position. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in there the determinations they impose upon occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situations (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by objective relation two other positions (domination, subordination homology, etc)”(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992,p.97).

In other words, the conflict in the field causes some to be in a dominant position, in contrast to some being in a lower position. Conflict over the position on the field confronts those who possess some degree of monopoly power (producing and distributing capital) against those who endeavor to obtain that privilege. There are plenty of fields because there are simply many forms of capital.

In this study, I have utilized the political field. There are several reasons for this. The women's movements in Iran have been considered as a political action for a long time (even during the first days after the revolution). The government condemned OMSCE as political activists who got support from abroad (Barlow, 2012,p.124). Finally, most of the main founders of the campaign were famous political opposition leaders. I will elaborate on the political field in the following paragraph.

Bourdieu (1991) claims that “the political field, understood both as a field of force and as a field of struggles aimed at transforming the relationship of forces which confers on this field its structure at any given moment is not imperium in Imperio”(Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991,p.171). Therefore, there is a competition between the agents' including ordinary citizens and the "monopoly of professionals." (Bourdieu, 1986,p.3). Although he believes that “the concentration of political capital is in the hand of the small group,”(Bourdieu, 1986) which makes it more difficult, the strength to construct a political view or political judgment’s tools are distributed in the form of inequality. Consumers do not have equal access to political products in the marketplace. Citizens have to choose between different types of political products, programs, analyses, concepts and events and the like. Citizens' inequality in the political field is emphasized in gender-based differences. The symbolic violence mentioned in Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination* (1998) indicates that male domination is legitimized through habitus in the political field.

I believe that women activists (OMSCE) in Iran had to operate on the ground of the political field. In this field, the symbolic capital has presented the main role of controlling women's requests. The following sections will explain related concepts integral to the data analysis in this study.

3.1.2 Capital

The main function of the field is to preserve and reproduce capital. Activists need capital to enter the field or try to get different types of capital in the social arena. Obtaining this capital demands time and is not just the result of the exchange or acquisition of economic resources. Bourdieu believed capital is generated by actors and can be accumulated, traded or even inherited exclusively (Jenkins, 2005,p.140). According to Bourdieu (1989), four types of capital can be defined: economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Economic capital is the result of access to finance and ownership of a variety of goods. Social capital comes through the social community in a long-lasting communication network that supports and credits the individual. Cultural capital can be obtained through education and the acquisition of scientific or cultural products(Bourdieu, 1989,p.17). The symbolic capital is the main source of power. It gives holders the legitimacy of using power. "The form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (Bourdieu, 1989,p.17).

Symbolic capital involves other forms of capital, including social, economic, and cultural capital. The concept proposes a viewpoint on how social actors endeavor to locate themselves in various circumstances. Social capital and political capital both function as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986,p.257; Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991,p.192). According to Swartz (1997), the symbolic power is meaningful when it is accepted by others or in other words, legitimate. The dominant person derives his power from the indisputable recognition of someone who has legitimately accepted his dominion (Swartz, 1997,p.30).

3.1.3 Habitus

Bourdieu (1992) describes *habitus* as a system of permanent capabilities interchangeable through education, socialization process, imitation, or influences. It internalizes the external structures in individuals so, powerful structures can be reproduced by their actions. In other words, it is a mechanism that produces approaches for actors to associate with the social world.

The habitus is built on all conditions in which characters are created and that individual encounters during their social life (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

According to Bourdieu (1977) *habitus* can define "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations"(Bourdieu, 1977,p.72). It can regenerate actions through historical and social conditions. This makes the logic of social actions consistent with the field. It also compels actors to restrict their preferences. Habits internalize social conditions, possibilities, and limitations. In this way, it controls an individual's actions or reshapes them. So, on the one hand, it is constructive, and on the other hand, it mediates between past trading and current stimuli (Bourdieu, 1977).

In this study, social and political habitus is used to analyze the women activists in the political field. The impact of habitus will be discussed more deeply in the analysis chapter. I will address which actions or decisions of Muslim feminists can be recognized as a result of political and social habitus.

3.1.4 Symbolic power and violence

Bourdieu, like Marx, recognizes the concept of power behind all social phenomena, but he investigates it as a symbolic form. In his point of view, the most important power that provides domination and legitimacy is symbolic power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992,p.142). He generates the concept of symbolic power based on domineering conflicts inside society. This power conceals symbolic violence and creates non-physical domination. It obliges the submissive to accept power internally. However, it is only a legitimate connection (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992,p.142).

Bourdieu believes that symbolic power is the result of objective structures and subjective construction. Power and domination reproduce in symbolic form. The dominant classes have the power of their symbols and promote their elements, such as value, knowledge, and manifest naturally. Therefore a government with monopoly power obliges the citizens to obey indirectly. In this way, they can legitimize their durability. Then, the function of symbolic power is legitimate contradictions in society without opposition. The symbolic power boosts the power to consolidate and legitimize authority.

Bourdieu claims that the state has monopoly power over society, so in the field, he constructs belief and ideas in the way that people accept it without violence. Bourdieu uses the term, *symbolic violence*, to discuss the violence that imposes obedience which is not only understood as obedience, but also understood based on collective expectations or social beliefs (Bourdieu, 1998,p.103).

The function of this violence in all societies is to produce social order and prohibition, which is exercised by indirect cultural mechanisms rather than by direct physical control. In other words, symbolic violence means imposing systems of symbols on groups and giving it legitimate power. As Bourdieu (1998) explains, “ the construction of the state monopoly over physical and symbolic violence is inseparable from the construction of the field of struggles for the monopoly over the advantages attached to this monopoly” (Bourdieu, 1998,pp.58-59).

Therefore the structure of symbolic violence in the political field is more visible. Base on this, I argue symbolic violence is a useful theoretical concept to illustrate how some women unwittingly settle into the commands of authority and act in the field in a way that the powers that be want them to behave. Although OMSCE was an independent opposition, I will draw how dominant powers shaped it to their advantage.

3.2 Michel de Cereatu’s Practice of Everyday Life

The concept of social phenomena in everyday life has been discussed by many sociologists including George Simmel, Gyorgy Lukacs, Walter Benjamin, and others. Michel de Certeau’s perspective on the concept of resistance in everyday life in this study was used because the mechanism of resistance between social groups (ordinary people) is intrinsic to the essence and daily life rather than its elitist aspects. Michel de Cereatu (1984) views everyday life practices as "tactics" applied by consumers within the formal "strategies" of powerful institutions. Tactics and strategies are kinds of actions seeking to occupy time and space. Strategy and tactics reflect the clash in everyday life, power, and resistance. Resistance could be understood through the interpretation of daily cultural practices. It is not opposition to power, but it crushes the current of power and pushes it back. In this way, it prevents the accumulation of power and creates the concept of resistance against monopoly power. According to de Certeau, the strategy as a system of power-based relationships emerges when the subject of desire and power (the owner, an institution, a city, a scientific institution) can separate itself from the environment (de

Certeau, 1984,pp.35-36). The strategy assumes a place that can be defined while tactics impose itself on the ground of others without usurping the totality of the place and without being able to maintain its distance (Certeau, 1984, p.35-36). It has no basis to maintain its independence in the light of circumstances. Since tactics have no place, it relies on time and waits for an opportunity to seize it. Tactics must continually manipulate events to turn them into opportunities (de Certeau,1984,p.104). Therefore, the culture is not a one-way flow that is associated with subjugation and loss of will.

De Certeau views the creation of meaning in the products of the media and cultural industries as a two-way process. Producers and consumers both influence the process of productions. To sum up, the most important achievements of de Certeau's theory was how he distinguished the concepts of *strategy* and *tactics*. "Strategy" presents the institutions and structures of power, while a "tactic" is a solution to go in through the power or get over it. Strategy defines its existence with authority. In contrast, the tactic describes individuals and groups that are isolated in space and have no headquarters. The power of tactic lies in its instability which can be manifested through the unconscious. That is, how people make things "habitable" in their minds (de Certeau, 1984,p127). In this thesis, I will use two concepts of *tactic* and *strategy* to show how women and government confront together. I will explain it more in the analysis data.

4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the research design and employed methods to approach the research question. I will explain the processes of selecting research material, data analysis, sampling method, and I will justify my preferences and the validity of the study. Moreover, I will present the ethics and validity of the applied methods. To summarize, the purpose of the chapter includes the connections between the research questions, the data, and the selected strategies for analyzing the data to address the research questions of the study.

4.2 Research Design

The purpose of this study is to examine the practical challenges of Muslim feminists in the field. Furthermore, it emphasizes the case of OMSCE to understand how power and hegemony could expend their domination in a non-physical way which will achieve by responding to research questions:

- 1- *What tactics do the women of the OMSCE apply to escape power?*
- 2- *To what extent do these tactics indicate power relations in social structure and everyday practice?*
- 3- *What does OMSCE see as the strategies of domination to regulate and control feminist Muslims?*

The empirical data I used to examine how feminist Muslims challenge the political field provides a viewpoint for the theoretical reviews in chapter three. Although it was possible to employ both quantitative and qualitative strategies in this research, a qualitative method is more applicable to this study since qualitative research refers to “the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things” (Lune & Berg, 2017,p.12). The

thesis's questions show that the primary goal of the research is to examine themes, meanings, and concepts.

Moreover, the qualitative method could provide a more in-depth understanding of how Iranian Muslim feminists have altered their attitudes from the first statement until the last one to catch or keep the opportunity to continue participating in the political and social field and what tactics they have chosen to confront obstacles. These processes and decisions are possible to investigate via OMSCE's official website and publications. The purpose of qualitative research is "to answer (research questions) by examining various social settings." (Lune & Berg, 2017,p.15) This research is focused on "how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles and so forth" (Lune & Berg, 2017,p.15)/A case study could provide "more context, history, and meaning than just about any other approach" (Lune & Berg, 2017,p.180). According to Bryman (2008), it "entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case."(Bryman, 2008,p.52). Therefore, the result of a case study could not generalize. Berg and Lune have answered this concern with the assumption "that human behavior is fairly consistent" (2017,p.178).

By examining how Muslim feminists face challenges in the field, I proposed the application of two theories, Bourdieu's Power and Practice and de Certeau's Practice of Everyday Life. Notwithstanding the limitations of case studies, I believe that the particular setting systematized in Iran's theocratic culture influence on OMSCE's actions and decisions. It opens the ground for all women activists in Iran regardless of which approach they adhere to. On the other hand, OMSCE consolidated women activists from various approaches under the Islamic feminism umbrella. In this way, it can be a valid example or case study to investigate how power in practice manipulates women's requests by using the concept of symbolic violence.

4.3 Sampling Procedure

As previously mentioned, I chose the OMSCE as a case study to investigate Muslim women's challenges in the field. The campaign is a key example of the Muslim feminist movement in Iran. I decided to investigate the written materials of the campaign. In the following, I will present these documents and reasons for choosing them, as well as my method of data sampling.

Group 1-The statements of the campaign during 2005-2006.

OMSCE established as a campaign in August 2006 officially, but the founders arranged two peaceful rallies in 2005 and 2006. During this time, they published booklets, including the statements, final resolution and reports of participants in these protests. Overall, they declared three different statements; the last one is the manifesto of the campaign. In my research, I discovered that there is an apparent difference between the first and second statements with the campaign manifesto. So, all these three documents are the central part of data collection in this study to answer the research questions. They could present in which way campaigners have changed their requests- a concept that research question 2 attempts to answer.

Group 2- The latest official unblocked campaign's website (www.feministschool.com).

This unblocked website includes campaigner reports, interviews, and articles. Campaigners and their supporters inside Iran and around the world established many websites and personal blogs. From the beginning, the Iranian government blocked and arrested online activists of OMSCE. The first official website of the campaign called “Change for Equality” is currently unavailable. A report shows, in one month, almost 20 sites have been filtered or blocked. (<https://www.refworld.org/docid/4836928cc.html>).

However, in this study, I used the latest developed version of OMSCE's official website, which is still available: *www.Feministschool.com*. The last update happened in February 2016. It includes a full text of the campaign's documents from the start of the campaign through 2008. I classified all documents into four categories:

- 1- Essential documents present the official statements and requests of OMSCE.
- 2- Organizational reports include financial reports and women activists’ reports. Practical reports relating to finance have no place in this research. Women activists reports indicate women's experience in practice and which types of problems and obstacles they have faced and how they got through them. These reports open the doors to facts not only in the political field but also in the social sphere.
- 3- Articles and interviews could provide an interpretation and explanation of the campaigners' aims and decisions. Campaign founders and theorists have written most of these articles. Therefore, they are indicators of the campaign's ideology.
- 4- Practical solutions and training, which shows how campaigners have designed their tactics.

I chose the data to have a comprehensive view of the campaign to serve as a means to explore the research questions. In this way, data can reveal strategies of power dominant that the campaigners have recognized and how they have faced them, to get out of them. In other words, strategies and tactics can be seen in the feminist school website.

Group 3-The third data resource grouping involves excerpts from the book called *One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality: The Inside Story*, by Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani. The book is vital due to answering all the questions and challenges about the campaign. Also, Ahmadi is one of the principal founders of OMSCE. The importance of the book came from this fact that I could compare the statements and degree of changes based on it.

4.3.1 Purposive Sampling

The aforementioned documents have provided a large amount of information. A master thesis scope is restricted, so it is not possible to analyze them from all perspectives. To make an accurate representative sample, I used purposive sampling. I chose this because:

“When developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population. In some instances, purposive samples are selected after field investigations on some group. In order to ensure that certain types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes are included in the study” (Lune & Berg, 2017,p.39).

As a women activist and researcher in Iran, the field is entirely familiar to me. I have never participated directly in the campaign, but I followed every single report and document they have published, especially in the two years of the campaign’s beginning. Moreover, I have profoundly studied most of the posted materials of OMSCE- not only on their website but also on some semi-active blogs and unblocked websites. All the mentioned reasons contribute to a high level of knowledge of the campaign.

However, except for three statements of OMSCE, I have selected some units that have been more relevant in connection with the purpose of this study. These include two organizational reports after peaceful protests of 2005 and 2006, three official statements, one practical solution and training, three articles, and three chapters of the book mentioned before. Overall, 14 units that have been analyzed are listed in the table below.

Table 3-1 Data Resource

Document	Source
1) <i>Call for protest against discrimination law in the constitution (Gathering in Tehran university, 2005)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad84-asnad.pdf
2) <i>Statement number one (Gathering in Tehran university, 2005)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad84-asnad.pdf
3) <i>Statement number two (Gathering in Tehran university, 2005)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad84-asnad.pdf
4) <i>Final resolution(Gathering in Tehran university, 2005)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad84-asnad.pdf
5) <i>Women's Protest Rally Report(Gathering in Tehran university, 2005)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad84-asnad.pdf
6) <i>Call for protest against discrimination law in the constitution (Gathering in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad85-asnad.pdf
7) <i>Statement number one(Gathering in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad85-asnad.pdf
8) <i>Statement number two(Gathering in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006)</i>	http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad85-asnad.pdf

- 9) *Final Resolution (Gathering in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006)*
- 10) *Women's Protest Gathering Report(Gathering in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006)* <http://www.feministschool.com/IMG/pdf/22khordad85-asnad.pdf>
- 11) *Official Statement of OMSCE (2006)* <http://www.feministschool.com/campaign/spip.php?article17>
<http://www.feministschool.com/>
- 12) *The plan of campaign*
- 13) *Face-to-face educational Pamphlet* <http://www.feministschool.com/campaign/IMG/pdf/jozveveamouzeshi.pdf>
<http://www.feministschool.com/>
- 14) *The article: The seven years passed (Report of Campaign's attempts, 2013)*

4.4 Analysis Method

This research is conducted using a thematic analysis method in which I examined the data to understand the core themes of the selected texts. In the following, I will describe the method in detail and my justification for using it to conduct data analytics.

Using text as data is often more difficult when it involves distinguishing patterns than it is to identify patterns in quantitative research. Thematic analysis is a data analysis approach that is well-known across qualitative research. According to Bryman (2008), to explain human behavior using the interpretivism approach, “requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action”(2008,p.15). The purpose of this study is to understand power relations in practice, tactics and strategies that campaigners have used, and the challenges that they have faced. It will reveal how the dominant power structures manipulate the OMSCE's requests indirectly. Texts of OMSCE are the primary data in the thesis, so I adopted the interpretivism approach to understanding the cultural dynamics beneath layers and their impacts on social and political practice. To approach this goal, I applied the thematic analysis method. In thematic analysis, researchers examine the data to set the same themes or ideas or even meaning patterns that have occurred frequently in the corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here are six steps that in the thematic analysis is required to proceed based on Braun and Clarke's article.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the analysis process begins when the researcher recognizes meaningful potential patterns, even in the process of data collection. The analysis process begins when the researcher recognizes meaningful potential patterns, even in the process of data collection. They suggest a systematic process that can “move back and forward between the entire data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006,p15). In this process, the first step is familiarization with data. At this phase, the analyst might immerse themselves deeply in the data to get familiar with “the depth and breadth of the content” (Braun & Clarke, 2006,p.16). It needs a repeated reading of the corpus actively. The aim of this phase is not to make codes right away but to closely read through the text to try to identify code possible codes and meaning of concepts.

From the beginning of the research, I read texts frequently to get familiar with all aspects of my data to decide which theory I will utilize for the analysis. It was a time-consuming process, but it provided a foundation for this thesis to determine which theories are more relevant to the questions and aim of the research. In this phase, I took some notes and marked some initial codes. Obviously, I did not use all those ideas and codes that I had initially considered, but they adequately ensured that I had a general overview of the study in subsequent phases.

The second step is the generalization of initial codes. After familiarization with the text, some phrases or sentences or concepts seem to be more related to the content of questions or applied theory. This step is the process of “production of initial codes from the data.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006,p.18). They draw a “feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst,” and can drive from theory or data (Braun & Clarke, 2006,p.18). There is a meaningful distinction between codes and themes. Codes are not as broad as themes. While codes point out to micro-units of text, themes are in connection to the main arguments of the study(Braun & Clarke, 2006,p.18). Practically, it is possible to coding by the software program or manually.

This study was done manually, so I attempt to give equal attention to all data in the process of making codes. So, I highlighted concepts that were more in connection with the study. Most of the codes are derived from theories (power and practice, and the practice of everyday life) and few from the data set.

At first, I had a lot of codes as potentially repeated patterns, some were relevant to questions, and some were interesting underlying concepts. I realized to have a bright outlook of symbolic power and violence; I need to discover some unwritten ideas. It seems Muslim women did not use some demands such as freedom in the veil to avoid challengeable consequences. These codes derived from the semantic content of the data set. I developed these codes based on the social context of phenomena and theoretical framework of Islamic feminism in Iran (in chapter 2.2 and 2.3.3).

The third step involved searching for themes. The purpose was to sort codes into potential themes. Different codes may be combined to support one theme. It means categorizing themes in likely patterns or themes. Braun and Clarke suggest a "visual representation" method for this phase "where the researcher might use tables, mind-maps, or you might write the name of each code (and a brief description) on a separate piece of paper and play around with organizing them into theme-piles" (2006,p.19).

From the start of this analysis, I collected codes into a notecard system. Each code had a different title in the separate card; then, they were organized easily. However, after creating codes, I had a long list. To organize them, I had to find the relationship between the codes and the research questions. It seemed necessary to surmise the internal relation between codes on one hand and recognize the connection of themes, on the other hand. The theoretical framework also helped me explore the relationship of themes in different levels. Therefore, I discarded the vague or irrelevant codes to focus on themes that were more in connection with the theory and purposes of the study. As well, I selected theme and sub-themes in this level. Finally, I set eleven themes to draw an initial thematic map. These themes were: Discrimination in-laws, Backward rules, Diversity of campaign's followers, Political and social demands, Patriarchal order, No conflict with Islam, Interference of foreigners, Information practices, The political perception of women's desires, Peaceful movement, Changes in laws in favor of women.

In step four, analysts have to make sure that themes make sense. This phase clarifies that themes represent the data accurately. Some themes do not have enough data to support, or some may be overlapped with others. Some themes may need to break down into two or more themes or sub-themes. Aim of reviewing themes is to grasp "internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity" (Braun & Clarke, 2006,p.20). Therefore, the researcher needs to reread the

collected codes and think about the coherent pattern of each candidate theme. Some themes will need to be revised, and some removed or combined or even some new themes may be created in this process.

In this study, the refinement process led to some new categories of themes to emerge. The validity of themes concerning the data set was the primary concern in this step to generate some new themes.

Phase five was about defining and naming themes. After drawing a thematic map, at this point, “define and refine” of themes is an essential goal. It means “identifying the essence of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.22). Going back to collated data, examining the coherence of themes by reorganizing, paraphrasing the content of each theme and evaluating consistent data are main strategies to define and refine the themes in this step. Moreover, in this phase, sub-themes can be identified. Some large and complex themes need to break down, or it is useful “for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data.” “One test for this is to see whether you can describe the scope and content of each theme in a couple of sentences” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.22).

In this phase, I refined the new set of themes for the final analysis. All the themes were named to give a sense to the reader what is the content of themes. These themes were: The discourse of power and law, Incompatibility, Diversity in Solidarity.

The last phase of thematic analysis included writing up a report. Arguments, descriptions, and analytic of the themes will provide a comprehensive view of the research and its aims. This step has been described in chapter five of this study.

4.5 Research Validity

It would be rash to fixate on research validity in qualitative research. There is an ongoing debate “over the legitimacy of the qualitative researches” (Maxwell, 1992, p.279). Despite quantitative analysis, there is no precise method to reach the same means of validation in qualitative methods. To show the validity of this research, I will base my discussion on Maxwell’s four aspects of estimating validity in qualitative research. These aspects are descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, and generalizability.

Descriptive validity refers to “the factual accuracy of accounts” (Maxwell, 1992,p.285). It means the researcher has reported a particular statement correctly. Descriptive validity is essential to avoid misreporting in the processes of gathering data. No matter which sort of data we have been collected, the researcher needs to approve minimal personal inference.

Cross-checking is the possible solution that Maxwell has suggested. Minimizing the researcher's misreporting by increasing the number of observers or data recorders. For this reason, in this study, documents of OMSCE have been selected by certain criteria. As it has been noted in 4.2, I collected data from announcements on the official website and a published book⁷ of the leading campaigners. I did not refer to any invalid reports or relevant topics that have been posted on other websites. Even if the principal founders have written these materials about OMSCE, this criterion provides a clear line to grasp data. Using purposive sampling help me to categorize documents into two groups: statements and reports. I then classified the reports into three categories: practice, tactics, and strategies. I chose some materials that hold more frequency to pertain to the study question. At all, this strategy helped me to be accurate in reporting data.

Interpretive validity concerns the meaning of events, objects, and behavior. Meaning includes “ intention, cognition, affect, belief, evaluation and anything else that could be encompassed by what is broadly termed the participants perspective, as well as communicative meaning in the narrower sense” (Maxwell, 1992,p.288). To be specific, interpretive validity indicates whether the researcher has appropriately understood the feeling and attitudes of participants. This sort of knowledge is possible to drive from an *emic* perspective. Although, being an outsider draws out a greater sense of validity but researching as an insider exposes a broader window. It is undeniable that the researcher must be neutral. The point is insider knowledge get in touch to understand the real reason of social acts, which is related to data. Misinterpretation of meaning will lead to false results and analysis. This ties to the thematic method that I have applied in this study.

⁷ - The pdf version of the book is accessible in the official website of the campaign.

Moreover, interpretive validity is “grounded in the language of the people studied and relied on as much as possible on their own words and concepts” (Maxwell, 1992,p.289). The research texts are in Persian and easy to understand not only in the case of syntactic order but also in understanding the hidden concepts, metaphors, phrases meaning of words in a social and political context, and so on. My Persian skills were valuable in the project since much of the texts were in that language.

Theoretical validity is the third concept in evaluating qualitative research. Theoretical understanding is going over the pure describing documents perspective, which is the aim of descriptive and interpretive validity. “Theoretical understanding refers to an account's function as an explanation.” So theoretical validity “refers to an account's validity as a theory of some phenomenon” (Maxwell, 1992,p.291). Two primary components of any theory are concepts and postulated relationships among concepts. Accurate use of these provides tools to evaluate the validity of the research.

As mentioned in chapter three, I chose to reach out to the relation of power and to control Muslim feminists by two theories of Power and Practice and Practice of Everyday Life. In the first theory, the main concepts are the field, capital, habitus, and symbolic power and violence. To set the study in the logical structure, these concepts pertain to questions of the research. In this way, the block of study is designed to collect a relatively content of data concerning the ideas. Moreover, the methodological framework is also well connected with applied theories. The thematic analysis would help to reveal the relationship between power and suppress groups. Therefore, the finding of the research can be validated because there is a postulated relationship among concepts and questions and also theories and methodology in the setting of study processes.

Finally, generalizability refers to the ability to develop the result of research on other populations. Qualitative studies are not designed to extend to the broader community systematically. Quote by Becker, Maxwell says that qualitative studies “take place through the development of a theory that not only makes sense of the particular persons or situations studied, but also shows how the same process, in different situations, can lead to different results” (1992,p.293). To strengthen the accounts, Maxwell suggests that applying different methods will draw a complete picture of the study subject. Unfortunately, in a master thesis is

hard to use a different way of approaching. The scope and size of the study merely provide ground for a wilder approach.

In qualitative research, the sampling is unimportant for presenting representativeness and generalizability. But “purposeful or theoretical sampling rather than random sampling” (Maxwell, 1992,p.293).In this way, I used purposeful sampling in this research that helps to take different texts. This diversity of documents helps that same questions and concepts during data collection, complement each other. Therefore, it presents a broad view of the power relationship in the political field of Iran concerning the role of power in Muslim feminist movements.

To sum up, the validity pertains to how data is selected, collected, and analyzed. And all of these processes must hinge on addressing the research questions. Picking the correct and accurate logics will lead to the validity of the study. In this study, it has been attempted to keep a connection among all parts to the research questions. Theory of power and practice and the practice of everyday life provide concepts that include research questions. Strategies of domination order to regulate and control Muslim feminists pertain to concepts such as capital and political field in the earlier theory. The tactics of escaping of hegemony can consider by symbolic power and violence. The method of analysis also concerns to investigate the power relation in the socio-cultural context of the issue. I believe the mentioned issues will serve to strengthen research validity.

4.6 Positionality, Ethical Concerns, and research limitations

In the social and political field of Iran, I can be considered an insider. In addition to spending almost the whole of my life in Iran, I have been a social activist since starting university at 18-year-old. Moreover, I have been a social researcher for a long time, and my first article was published in 2007 in the field of women’s studies utilizing an anthropological approach⁸. I have been tracking the OMSCE from the beginning in 2005. I attend the first peaceful protest in front of Tehran University on June 12, 2005, although I have never been the OMSCE’s direct activists, I followed their publications and websites. I have participated in several academic discussions around the campaigns. This background provides advantages and disadvantages at the same time. Although I tried to make a balance as an insider researcher, I will discuss its

⁸ - *Iranian women mythological identity*, Shiraz University, Iran.

downsides in the following title: Ethical Concerns. In the case of interpretive validity, I believe, mentioned reasons would help me to understand not only “the conscious concepts of participants” but also, “the unconscious intentions, belief, concepts and value” of them (Maxwell, 1992, p.290). My fluency in the Persian language was also an asset in this project since I was able to understand the nuances of the Persian texts and translate them when needed.

For a long time, the Iranian government has pursued followers and scholars in the field of feminism, and women study with high sensitivity. “Women’s political participation in post-revolutionary Iran shows that gender issues are always political issues and need to be understood politically and politicized” (Sadeghi, 2010, p.209). The case of OMSCE produced more debates and challenges in this sense. The campaigners were charged with: an offense against public order, offenses against the national security, and sacrilege. Bryman emphasizes ensuring the research does not harm participants (Bryman, 2008, p.135). I had to choose the texts instead of the interview with the campaigner to avoid harming the activists. It made the process of study more complicated than I expect at first. I should mention that I did a preliminary survey which included interviewing with two principal founders of the campaign, but I never quoted them directly in any part of this research.

Another ethical concern associated with this study is the insider view of the researcher. Despite the advantages, it has some downsides as well. I was required to balance being an Iranian woman and a researcher. I needed to take the ethical approach in the case of interpretation and explanation. My supervisor was helpful in this area by pointing out times where my writing may have appeared biased and instead suggesting neutral words or sentences. Chapters Five and Six of the data analysis required the most attention to bias and word choice. As a solution, I decided to check their accuracy and impartiality through the help of other scholars. The mentioned chapters were revised after I received feedback from my supervisor and one of my non-Iranian classmates.

5 Presenting Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to review and categorize the research findings. These findings are categorized based on the research data and the six stages of thematic analysis described in Chapter 4.4. The goal is to understand the practical challenges of Muslim feminists in Iranian society, through selected cases. Discussion of data in the light of research theory and semantic framework of findings will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the themes of power and domination in the political and social fields. Also, I have tried to demonstrate the strategies adopted by political capital holders (government) in contrast to the tactics used by Iranian Muslim feminists.

Two things are worth mentioning to aid in understanding how this chapter works: First, fourteen texts have been examined as research data. These texts are arranged in the order in which they were published. In this way, the first five documents relating to the first rally in 2005 which took place in front Tehran University, the other five refer to the second rally in 2006 which took place at Haft Tir- Square, and the last four refer to the statements and the pamphlet of the One Million Signatures Campaign in 2006. The fourteen texts cited in Table 3.1 are mentioned in this thesis, respectively. For example, (Doc. 8) is related to Statement number two, rally in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006.

Second, in this study, the rallies of 2005 and 2006, and the One Million Signatures Campaign are considered as a single stream of protest against gender discrimination in Iran's law. I consider them one stream of protest since the 2006 rally was formed to follow up on the unfulfilled demands of the 2005 rally, and because of the suppression and arrest of a large number of participants in 2005 led the establishment of the OMSCE campaign. Campaigners have always acknowledged the lack of leadership in the movement, but many of the same names of activists are listed in relation to the two rallies and the founders of the campaign. In this research, the term *founders* are used to refer to the authors of statements and calls from both rallies and campaigns unless I specifically refer to only one of these three categories of document.

5.1 The Discourse of Power and Law

The discourse of power and law is an essential theme in this research that encompasses most of the findings. This theme reveals the hidden aspects of domination power and the legal arteries that control society. This research examines these relations and the strategies of the domination system to control or thwart tactics are also adapted from the texts written by the founders. Thus, both sides of the discourse of power and law are examined through the founders' point of view. On one hand, this discourse involves the demands of the founders and, on the other hand, the reaction of the domination system to it. The following topics are therefore discussed: Discriminatory laws, Peaceful action, Authoritative reaction.

5.1.1 Discriminatory Laws and Violation of Women's Rights

In all the documents reviewed in this thesis, the most frequently repeated keywords are "discriminatory laws" and "violation against women's rights." Unequal laws and discriminatory laws have also been assumed to be alternately equivalent.

The following documents use "violation of women's rights" as part of its title:

"Violation of Women's Rights" (Doc. 1); Violation of Women's Rights in the Constitution (Doc. 2); Citizenship and Human Rights (Doc. 3)"

The founders' reference to women's rights violations points specifically to the definitions provided in law about women. Although the Iranian constitution requires the legal protection of all citizens, according to the founders, the law provides a specific interpretation of women that opens the ground for this unequal analysis.

"The attitude of women in the current constitution is discriminatory and does not see women except in the family and as a mother who has no rights" (Doc. 4).

The background of this discriminatory attitude, according to the documents of the first rally, is related to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The 2006 Declaration suddenly extends the scope and history of discrimination to the Constitutional Revolution in 1906. Constitutional Revolution changed the monarchy system to the constitution and the first constitution was established after a long process of struggles. Women participated in the

constitution movement actively, but their demands were ignored because they did not have any independent organizations to pursue women's desires (Afary, 1996).

"Since the formulation of laws in the Constitutional Revolution, over the past hundred years, the struggle of Iranian women has always sought to achieve equal humanitarian rights. "(Doc. 6).

Although the campaign statement does not mention the historical background of inequality laws, it insists on the result of these discriminatory laws. For example, high dowry⁹ rates are the result of unfair laws that have led to unbalanced male and female relationships (Doc. 11).

Discrimination in laws has also made women vulnerable. For example, it has increased home escape, honor killings, self-immolation, etc. (Doc. 9). The question that needs to be raised is: why are laws discriminatory while the constitution guarantees legal equality? How can the law be the source of discrimination? The following is the answer to this question and the founders' arguments.

5.1.1.1 The source of legal discrimination

One of the founder's claims from the outset is the promotion of gender inequality through legislation. Statement 1 (Tehran University's rally) notes that Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees to protect all citizens, both men, and women, equally. It also mentioned that all have human, political, economic, social and cultural rights with the observance of Islamic standards. In following it has indicated that:

"It should be noted that in this article, all people of the nation, both men and women, are not treated the same equal legal rights they are in equal protection. It means believing in the balance of powers between men and women, not equality between men and women. It explains why gender discrimination between men and women can be seen in the current constitution "(Doc. 2).

Although formal law regarded as protecting everyone's rights, it has provided holes for the outlet:

⁹ -Dowry is money or properties that groom legally pays to the bride especially in the case of divorce. Women ask for high amount to protect themselves.

"The constitutional impasse and the civil and criminal law governing society are one of the most important barriers to legal equality" (Doc. 1).

These impasses arise from:

"Laws do not originate in themselves but are interpretable and depend on existing powers in the field of political structure and powerful institutions of official religion" (Doc. 2).

In other words, the interpretability of the law has been introduced by founders as the most critical source of legal inequality. The above quote shows that the founders believed that women do not have access to power and more importantly, that the power holders are associated with religious institutions. Interpretations emanating from influential religious institutions have the potential to have a real impact on law enforcement contrary to the demands of equality, except it has been mentioned that in Iran, "appointed institutions¹⁰ with superior powers" have made "relationship between citizens and government in a vertical and pyramid way" (Doc.2). As a result, women are more likely to be discriminated against as vulnerable groups.

"Women have been trying for years to change these interpretations and to influence civil law, but they have faced legal impasses by appointed institutions that interpret the law in the constitution. As long as the law is subject to the interpretations of the appointed authorities that women are short on to influence it, and they will never achieve equality and human rights in this way" (Doc. 4).

Observing Islamic standards opens the way for a specific interpretation of the law. Accordingly, in the preamble of Iran's Constitution, women are defined solely in the context of the Islamic family.

"The Constitution does not conceive a woman in any position other than being a mother. Therefore, when it comes to managing society at its highest levels, the critical assumption in the legal formulation of managers is men. As in the presidency, they are only referring to the term "political Rijal"¹¹," and it is interpreted as "men" (Doc. 2).

¹⁰ - Politically, Iran has a democratic-parliamentary system, but government-supervised institutions such as the Guardian Council, which oversees parliamentary approvals, are an appointed institute. According to Article 91 this council consists of 6 religious experts (Foghaha), and 6 jurists. Foghaha is directly elected by the Supreme Leader, but jurists elected by nominating the head of the judiciary and parliament's vote of confidence. The head of the judiciary is also appointed by the leader for five years. Therefore, all of them have been approved by the supreme leader of Iran.

¹¹ - Arabic word referring to gentlemen.

As a result, the lack of access to high levels of management deprives women of legislative power or interpretation. On the other hand, the interpretations of authority holders are not necessarily in the interests of those who are dominated or powerless:

"Another problem with the existing constitution is that all its articles are subject to dominant interpretations in society. And always those who have power can build dominant interpretations. So, women who are among the most deprived sections of society can never offer a dominant and effective interpretation"(Doc. 2).

The dominant interpretations have been referred to from another perspective as the result of the "patriarchal order" (Doc. 3). However, the founders see the current constitution as a significant factor in gender inequality, despite its historical decline (especially in the 2006 rally). Observing religious standards is the most crucial factor in fostering these gender inequalities. One should not ignore that Islam is the resource of interpretation by Foghaha (theological experts).

5.1.2 Peaceful Action

The democratic and peaceful way is the practical tactic that women have chosen to pursue their demands. In all the texts reviewed, this egalitarian approach repeatedly and directly has been mentioned. This approach is apparent in the way that founders chose to oppose the discriminatory laws. Also, the women's approach to collecting signatures, especially on the information practices they have adopted, demonstrates this peaceful action.

"We, women to reach equal rights, seek all peaceful ways to unite and express our protest against the existing laws" (Doc. 1).

The peaceful way adopted at the 2005 rally, in front of Tehran University (street protest) with the placard, was for one hour without clashes with security forces.

"Our outdoor civil protest in front of the public represents a symbolic move and a declaration of trampling on the rights of citizens who have suffered gender inequality, both men and women, at least a few times in their personal lives. The protest is also a symbolic warning to the authorities that their power came from the people and the protect human rights of their citizens is their duty and responsibility" (Doc. 3).

The first rally place was planned in front of the main door of the University of Tehran. The University of Tehran is located in the center of Tehran and its main entrance is the traffic

location of different strata. It seems that the aim of choosing this place is wholly related to the goal of the founders in having a wide range of people to inform. Alongside this, the emphasis on being symbolic of the protest is a reflective point. It again emphasizes on another sign of confirming the founder's peaceful action.

The 2006 statement again referred to this symbolic presence as a wake-up call for lawmakers (Doc. 8). In 2006, rally calls expressed that women's right has been unanswered “for this reason this year also women come together to pursue the last year's resolution” (Doc. 6).

"On that day, we announced that we would use all peaceful means to achieve equal human rights and to voice our protest against the most humiliating laws" (Doc. 9).

It is imperative to keep track of the demands due to the ignorance of women's demands in the past year. It represents an approach to change slowly and peacefully by women. At the Haft -e-Tir rally also, demonstrators were only asked to attend Haft -e-Tir Square Park and to protest calmly and quietly against discriminatory laws (Doc. 8).

It should be noted that the political environment of the 2005 and 2006 rallies were quite different. In 2005, Iran's political environment was utterly open due to its proximity to the presidential election. It is the general policy of the Islamic Republic to deal with the opposition more openly during the polls. After the elections, the situation back to the past or depended on new government politics stay a little open than before. The 2005 election came after eight years of being at the forefront of reformists, and in particular, of popular Iranian president Mohammad Khatami. In Iran, two groups of politicization have been recognized Osol-grayan (or Principlists) and Eslah-Taleban (or Reformists). Although both believe in the revolutionary state, Principlists are more conservative and are close to Iran's Leader. They advocate returning to Islamic revolutionary ideology in the early days while Reformists try to change Iran's political system by promoting civil rights based on freedom and democracy.

In the 2005 election, a conservative candidate (Osol-gra), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, won the election, which meant more closure of the political field. As a result, the 2006 rally was severely suppressed, and many women were condemned with heavy sentences. It led the founders to change the social sphere from an open urban space to a closed space. And so, the One Million Signatures Campaign was born. In the plan of campaign, it was mentioned that after the 2006

rally, women decided to collect one million signatures to pursue the goals of its resolution: to amend discriminatory laws (Doc. 12).

One of the main goals of OMSCE is a collection of one million signatures. Other purposes include expanding ground to women's participation in society to "Learning about collective and democratic activities, from the bottom up, within civil society," "Giving voice to women silent," informing and face-to-face dialogue with vulnerable groups (Doc.12) Finally, the successful implementation of the campaign is a message to the authorities that these demands are not a small group of women requests but a collective demand (Doc. 12).

The campaign, therefore, does not set a limited time for signature rally and focused primarily on information and education. In their rally methods, the face-to-face procedure was the most important way of collecting signatures, while the use of the Internet or other means was not prohibited. The project's emphasis was on educating volunteers and holding campaign meetings in cities, if possible. The minimum age required in order to sign was 18 years of age (Doc. 12).

The methods, as mentioned above, reveal that the founders have democratically founded their movements. Having collective demands and the effort to inform and change from the bottom up, are the peaceful and democratic methods that the OMSCE has adopted. In addition to these, founders have sought to establish a direct link between democracy and women's rights. While they emphasize the peaceful movement of women, they insist that equality between men and women is one of the basic tenets of democracy.

"Democracy will not be realized without freedom and equal rights for women" (Doc. 4)

At the same time, the founders have warned in both resolutions that:

"We declare that we will continue our civil and peaceful protest if the statesmen ignore our righteous and just demands after 26 years" (Doc. 4).

The emphasis on this warning tone is to show the social support and popularity of this demand and contrast it to what the ruling system has tried to attribute as demands of a small group of women who have westernized patterns. On the other hand, the founders have attempted to emphasize the peaceful and safe approach to their struggle by situating the women's efforts in a historical background.

"Our efforts have been both in the method and in the context of peaceful civil society, and we have avoided violent practices and emotional and non-guild slogans"(Doc.8).

Founders believe that a critical proof of their peaceful action is Tehran University's rally that "With a quiet, symbolic presence and the reading of peaceful and feminine songs" have been exhibited (Doc. 8).

To illustrate this democratic and peaceful endeavor, the founders and demonstrators distributed pamphlets before the rally at Haft-Tir Square to inform the public about the impact of laws on women's lives, in the subway and the streets around the square. Through the rally, the protesters also had no opportunity to chant slogans. They only seized their placards in silence, which were also collected by police crackdowns.

To sum up, the peaceful action of Muslim women as a tactic did not help them to stay in the political field. Although the founders emphasized the peacefulness of the rally in the call, the police suppressed the rally by resorting to violence. So, women's efforts to continue working in the political sphere have been challenged. Following their previous strategy, they changed the tactic of peaceful protest to establishing a campaign without any demonstration. This tactic was a smart solution to remain in the political field of Iran.

5.1.3 Authoritative Reaction

Numerous reports have been published by participants in the 2005 and 2006 rally rallies on external or internal sites, blogs, and publications. In this study, only three credible reports (Documents 5, 10, and 14) of two rallies and events after the campaign were selected. All of these reports point to the violence that occurred between LEF and demonstrators. Tehran University rally's report states that as women entered the campus in front of University, they sat on the ground and formed a human ring. Police Force initially tried to kick the women out and remove the placards from their hands. Demonstrators without posters began to chant to take the attention of pedestrians on themselves. Police disrupted them by loudly insults words and curses. Two large busses were placed between women and pedestrians to avoid pedestrians from joining protesters. The rally continued with the poetry of the famous poet Simin Behbahani, the statement of several participated groups and, finally, the reading of the final resolution by Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani, one of the main founders of the rallies and campaign.

The protesters left the area at the designated time to nearby streets were filled with LEF (Summary of Doc. 5).

The above-mentioned report shows that the police force has been ready to react to this rally. Except verbal assaulting other sorts of violence such as physical violence or arresting is not reported. In some of the other reports, women claimed that police hurt them by the baton.

The second rally statement from 2006, points out the difference in police tactics between the first and this rally.

“Since the announcement of the June 22 rally, there have been attempts by some authorities to politicize it. While our wishes for women in this call is primary and we have been talking about for many years... The authorities know better than us that demanding to change these discriminatory laws has nothing to do with this or that government or that sovereignty or that dominance. That means women have been following their rights for over a hundred years... So it is better for some authorities instead of unrealistic labels, listen to women's suffering and take serious action” (Doc. 7).

The government's response to the second women's rally, in addition to the political label, began with an attempt to arrest Parvin Ardalan and Noushin Ahmadi on the morning of the rally. Police forces evacuated people, especially women, under the pretext of combating addiction in the park near Haft-e Tir Square at 5 pm (start of the rally). In this way, the demonstrators inevitably gathered in Haft- Tir Square. From the very first moments, the police try to disperse the people using batons. On the other hand, the police responded to questions and curiosities of pedestrians by humiliating, threatening, or addressing protesters as addicts or non-religious people. For the first time, the police forces used women police as a new strategy to suppress the rally. The severity of these women's reactions was far stricter than their male counterparts as some took off their chadors¹² and forcibly beat the women, they pushed them into police cars. The women police colored the people's clothing with spray so they could quickly identify and arrest protesters. The report of the second rally shows that police dragged some women on the ground by their hair or sprayed pepper spray on their faces. Some people without police suits filmed and photographed protesters, yet if ordinary people wanted to take a picture, the police banned them or even captured their phone or camera. The exact number of detainees is

¹² - A black veil which covers women body completely except her face.

unknown, but more than seventy people were probably arrested at the rally, some of them were quickly released on bail (Doc.10).

According to Document 14, (Report of Campaign's attempts, 2013), after the establishment of OMSCE, the first arrests of campaigners occurred in the subway exactly in the few months of its inception. Police also attacked the campaign's training workshop in Khorramabad. Women who had given campaigners access to their homes to promote the cause were threatened with arrest. Campaign activity was accompanied by security threats and the arrest of some prominent women or even unknown activists. Even Parvin Paidar, one of the principal founders, was denied permission to leave the country, so her sister had to travel to Sweden to get the prize of *Olof Palme* in 2007. After the 2009¹³ presidential election, the pressure on campaign activists increased as the security environment intensified. Many campaign activists were forced to leave the country and immigrate permanently. Some of them were arrested and sentenced for threatening national security. Sameh says that the lack of success of the campaigns to collect the signature comes from a couple of factors such as "campaign members suffered constant harassment and arrest... additionally the election debacle has funneled most political activities into a Green Movement shutting down space for previously tolerated efforts like the campaign" (Sameh, 2010, p.457). This was practically the end of the OMSCE.

5.2 Incompatibility

One of the most prevalent themes within the data is incompatibility. The writers of statements and reports have always emphasized that women's legal status was not compatible with the current realities of Iranian women's lives. This incompatibility does not mean the inherent inconsistency of laws with their situation; rather, it indicates a contradiction that the founders of the movement have identified to justify the need for changes in the law. Concerning the data content, incompatibility in this study means inconsistency of Iranian laws with women's rights at both national and international levels. In other words, two subthemes were considered to

¹³ - In June 2009 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Principlist representative, won the election against Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the reformist candidate. Mousavi had public support. Iranians believed that the result was fraudulent so they protested across every city. This movement which continued around one year is part of the Green Movement.

describe incompatibility: Iranian laws' disagreement with the social status of Iranian women; and their incompatibility with international laws.

5.2.1 Incompatibility of Laws with the Social Status of Iranian Women

As stated earlier, Iranian laws were considered by the founders to be the source of gender discrimination. This is because of the incompatibility of these laws with the current status of women in modern Iran. The initial documents have focused on the humiliation of women and their violated citizenship rights. In a call for protest against the Constitution's violation of women's rights in front of the University of Tehran, the protestors emphasized that they would hold a protest rally against the abuses of their rights, which means the laws humiliated women (Doc. 1). Using the term "humiliation in law," the founder intended to state that the Iranian constitution considered them second sex. This concept was repeated in Statement 1 of the protest rally, but it was described in the second statement as:

"common pain of citizen humiliation, ranging from women's deprivation from the presidential nomination to the Constitution's abolition of women's human rights." (Doc. 2).

In the above sentence, women's deprivation of their right to be candidates in the presidential election and the incompatibility of Iranian laws with human rights are considered to be the lowest and highest levels of gender discrimination, respectively. However, the three documents of two rallies and OMSCE have emphasized women's humiliation by the law, whether by adopting anti-woman laws or by depriving women of equal legal benefits to men. One of the slogans of the rally states this legal humiliation quite explicitly:

"Man-centered law, his superior position, is women's humiliation" (Do.8).

The second rally also emphasized the humiliation of women. The rally organizers attributed the reasons for the rally to non-achievement of their last year's demands and the current humiliating laws:

"We women have been harassed by the current humiliating laws and their consequences in our lives; we want to say that we are women, citizens with rights, and we want our (Doc. 7)."

In addition to the humiliating repetition of the laws, document 7 emphasizes that women's right to citizenship has also been ignored. The concept of "women as second-class citizens" has humiliated them for their lack of equal rights. The document emphasizes that these laws have cast an auspicious shadow over women's lives. It highlights the consequences of these laws on women's lives, which has resulted in their contempt and humiliation.

"Ignoring the basic rights of women in the family and society is not only beyond Iranian women's dignity, but it also endangers the foundation of families and creates thousands of problems in society" (Doc. 7).

As noted above, the Iranian Constitution is not compatible with the status of Iranian women. However, the current state of Iranian women is not clear. Nor is it clear whether anti-woman laws, (which founders named some laws), can be considered and enforced in another society. The campaign documents have meticulously described the mismatch of these laws with the current status of women, beginning with:

"The current set of laws in Iran regards women as second-class citizens and discriminates against them, in a society where women make up more than 60 percent of university students. In many societies, the law is believed to be one step higher than culture so that it can enhance the culture of society, but Iranian law is far behind the culture and status of women" (Doc. 11).

The above-noted sentences explicitly state the reason for the incompatibility of Iranian laws with the status of women. Although the sixty percent acceptance of women in universities may not be an accurate indicator of their social status, it reflects the structural changes that will come about due to the entry of these educated women into the labor market and social relationships. The mismatch of law and culture has led to the humiliation of women as the second sex. The exact instances of this disparity of law and culture will be described in the "discussion" section.

5.2.2 Incompatibility with international laws

Another point regarded by the founders as a cause of the incompatibility of Iranian laws is the mismatch between domestic laws with international regulations. Iran did not sign the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but it did not withdraw from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) after the Islamic Revolution. On this basis, the founders assert that Iranian laws have ignored the obligations

under these international treaties, which are a subset of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and are incompatible with these obligations. The final resolution of the 2005 Haft-e-Tir rally calls for this compatibility:

"The Constitution and other domestic laws shall be made compatible with international conventions, including the UDHR, the CEDAW, etc. so that women's equality and human rights can be recognized at least legally" (Doc. 4).

The founders' demands reflect the incompatibility of Iranian law with international covenants to which Iran has or has not acceded to. It also indirectly calls for Iran to join the CEDAW. By adding the term "at least," it wants to show that even joining these conventions does not mean the complete elimination of discrimination against women.

The documents relating to the 2006 rally include no calls for compatibility of Iranian laws with international treaties, which has not been addressed in the discussion section. However, this incompatibility and the need to enforce these covenants were stated in the official statement of the campaign as follows:

"The Iranian government has acceded to the international covenants on human rights and is committed to enforcing their laws. The most important norm in human rights is non-discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, religion, etc. on this basis, we signers of this statement, call for the elimination of discrimination against women in all laws and urge lawmakers to review and amend the current laws based on international obligations of the government"(Doc. 11).

It is also mentioned in the generalities of the campaign program:

"Iran has acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the first step in these conventions is to prohibit any discrimination. Therefore, discrimination must be eliminated because it complies with the international obligations of the Iranian government" (Doc. 12).

A reminder of Iran's legal obligations to the international covenants it has entered shows the incompatibility of its domestic laws with the international ones. The founders' conclusion for the abolition of laws in this section is documented in the Iranian treaties, not merely in the women's demands. In this way, the founders strove to present a clear and objective framework of their needs to identify the domestic laws which conflicted with these international laws.

5.3 Diversity in Solidarity

After the first rally in front of the University of Tehran 2005, the founders named June 22nd as “Women's Solidarity Day.” As a result, this rally and the rally that took place on its anniversary on June 22, 2006, were linked directly to women’s solidarity. The term has been used frequently in articles. In this research, the theme of solidarity does not only refer to this naming of the rally days. The diversity of themes under the umbrella of solidarity is vast and I specify three key issues in this thesis: theoretical diversity, breadth of demands, and shared pain, source of solidarity.

5.3.1 Theoretical Diversity

The history of Iranian women's struggle is briefly mentioned in Chapter 2.3. This history shows that the phenomenon of Islamic feminism in Iran is the result of a political Islam that formed after 1979 as a result of the frustration and repression of secular feminists (Afshar, 2000, p.189; & Ahmadi, 2006, p.36). Secular feminists were labeled anti-revolutionary, anti-Islam, and hypocrites by the Islamic republic government. After the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, a new type of feminist labeled Islamic feminism emerged, which some like Shahidiyan (1998) and Fazeli (2017) call “state feminism.” The emergence of Islamic feminism has increasingly raised the issue of gender equality among women. The rise of Islamic feminism again reinvigorated the practical context for the resumption of women's rights activists. OMSCE as a feminist movement owes its success to the design of a supra-theoric ideology: focusing on repealing discriminatory law in the constitution- an issue that all women, whether secular or Muslim could find relatively agreement. However, for secular feminists, some of the legal provisions that underlie gender discrimination in Iranian law has not been criticized by the campaign. “Recognizing the theocratic control over discourses of violence against women, campaign organizers made a conscious decision to bridge the secular-religious ideological divide was a tactical decision to promote solidarity with the campaign's cause and was the key to its successful mass-mobilization of signatories” (Smalley, 2016, p.62).

The content of the documents reviewed never directly addressed different theoretical approaches. Through the lens of Iranian cultural and social context, the relevant codes are examined below. For example, in the first statement of the 2005 rally, it is mentioned that:

"Some of us consider the violations of our rights in laws, some in anti-woman commentary, and some in existing customs and traditions or hierarchical and hegemonic structures in Iran and the world ..." (Doc. 2).

Although the founders did not specify precisely which theoretical approach “*some of us*” belong to, the three groups can be recognized. “*Anti-woman commentary*” means that unjust laws are the result of misinterpretations of the Qur'an, Sire, and Sunnah¹⁴ (see 2.2). *Law violations*, considering Iran’s custom and traditions, refers to an inter-governmental approach. The women who align more closely with the idea that the government tries to purify Islam may choose to highlight the role of Iranian customs and culture in promoting gender discrimination. According to Fazaeli (2016), these women can be considered Islamic state feminists who are close to the body of power in Iran (2016,p.64).

A group that views *hierarchical and hegemonic structures in Iran and the world* as a cause of gender discrimination can be considered leftist feminists (Fazaeli, 2016,p.64). These secular groups believe that class inequality and capital have long been the source of all sorts of inequality. These political activists in Iran have a long history of working background, and after revolution still, exit underground or are active in exile. The group is also the largest body of secular feminists in Iran. Elsewhere in the second statement of the 2005 rally, theoretical plurality is again mentioned:

"The high number of human and political rights supporters of our protest against the violation of women's rights in the constitution means the success of the women's movement in interacting with other groups while respecting their political diversity and adhering to the rights and feminist ideas and core value of the Iranian women's movement" (Doc.3).

Or mentioned elsewhere:

"The women's solidarity movement in the present situation is centered around legal changes at the macro level, and it is certainly not enough for us to work in different groups to achieve other demands" (Doc. 4).

Most of all, the plurality of the campaigners and their solidarity in diversity are manifested in the diverse spectrum of signatories of both the rally's statement as well as in the signatories of the campaign statement. A large part of the campaign’s members was made up of the generation of youth who had entered the field of social activity after the revolution. The group mainly

¹⁴ -Islamic traditions especially during the prophet’s life.

consisted of journalists, researchers or students, and social events. In this category, can hardly trace the proponents of Islamic feminism or state Islamic feminism or even secular feminism. They belong to the body of the Iranian women's movement. Although some call themselves feminist Muslims, and some are vehemently opposed to Islam, they may not necessarily be secular or pro Islamic feminism including people like: Asieh Amini (Journalist), Shadi Sadr (Lawyer), Jila Bani Yaqoub (Reformist journalist), Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani (Campaign founder), Parvin Ardalan (Campaign founder) and so on.

The second category of supporters can be seen as a precise example of state feminists. They are people who have supported the campaign and the 2005 and 2006 rally despite having political positions or official position in power. They include people like Masoumeh Abtekar (Vice President of Women and Family Affairs in the Reform Period) Elaheh Kola'i (Reformist and member of Parliament), Fakhrahsadat Mohtashimpour (Office of the Ministry of Women's Affairs), Zahra Eshraghi (Reformer and Ayatollah Khomeini's granddaughter) and so on.

The third group includes people who formally identify as an Islamist or Muslim feminist. They include people like Shahla Sherkat (Reformer and Editor-in-chief of Women Monthly), Jila Movahed Shariatpanahi (Quran researcher and author of a book on "women's rights from Quran perspective"), Ziba Mir Hosseini (professor of Islamic feminism university and theorist), Fariba Davoodi Mohajer (reformist writer and pro-Ayatollah Montazeri), Nahid Tavassoli (National-Religious Activist) and so on.

The last category includes individuals and organizations that may conduct secular activities with a left or secular tendency. Shirin Ebadi (lawyers and Nobel Peace Prize laureates), Mehrangiz Kar (lawyers and journalists), Iranian National Alliance (based in Sweden), Association of Political Prisoners in Exile (consisting of left and communist political prisoners), Women's March 8 (all its founders are prominent Iranian and Afghan Communists), and so on.

The extent of the general attitudes of supporters of rallies and campaign indicates that the goals of the founders are to achieve women's solidarity. In fact, with a linear approach, all of the above-mentioned women's movement activists came together even though they had ideological and theoretical differences about a specific goal: change in discriminatory laws. This unifying of these groups behind this common cause can be considered a turning point in the Iranian women's movement after 26 years under political Islam.

5.3.2 Breadth of Demands

Solidarity for the elimination of legal inequalities for all Iranian women is one of the demands that has been emphasized without exception in all the reviewed documents. According to Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution, besides the Sunnis and the Twelve Shiites, followers of Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism have been recognized as a legal religion. Along with this, ethnic groups such as Kurds, Azeri, Baluch, Lor, Turkmen, and Arabs, enjoy equal rights as Iranian citizens under Article 19 of the Constitution. Although the law recognizes some religious minorities, the law has wholly ignored many most of them, such as the Baha'is, the Yazidis, the Ali Allahyan, the Yarsans, and others. As for ethnic groups, the majority of Kurds, Baluchis, and Turkmen are Sunnis. In Iran, the official language is Persian, which is taught in Iranian schools regardless of ethnicity. One of the main requests of ethnic groups for a long time has been to allow teaching in their mother tongue. Besides this, some religious minority ethnic groups have claimed that they do not have enough freedom in their religious practice. Religious, ethnic conflicts that have long since ensued have led founders to mention this twofold discrimination as an important factor:

"We find that the situation of women in ethnic and religious minorities is much more complex and difficult than those that the constitution has legally recognized their religion and ethnic group. As a result, they are suffering from multiple discrimination and more pressure" (Doc. 2).

Therefore, in all of their statements, the founders have tried to defend the rights of minorities women and even women who the constitution has not recognized their legal rights:

"Our objection to the violation of women's rights in the constitution also includes the protection of minority women and other groups of women whose rights are ignored in the constitution" (Doc. 3).

The 2006 rally's resolution refers explicitly to ethnic groups, not religious minorities, while the 2005 rally's statements are broader:

2005: *"We know that if the desires and demands of different groups of women which come from different ethnicities, religions, and classes, to be fulfilled, they will undoubtedly benefit all sections of society "(Doc. 4).*

2006: *"Initial demands that have failed to reach has described the lives of women from Fars, Kurds, Balochs, Turks, Arabs, etc. seriously. "(Doc. 9)*

Campaign layout: *"The geographical scope of this campaign will not be limited to Tehran; active women's groups in all cities can also take part in this great project..... It can also be done by collecting signatures from compatriots abroad (either by post or commuter and finally via the Internet) "(Doc. 12).*

It seems that the founders' have been reluctant to discuss religious minorities specifically, while in the first rally they seem to consider women's religious minorities' situation with more complexity (Doc.2). In any case, the declaration of protection of minority rights has provided the founders with greater geographical solidarity and more extensive geographic diversity. Reports of the 2005 and 2006 rally highlight the presence of Kurdish and Turkish women activists and their statements in support of the campaign. Therefore in this way, the movement has tried to give the voices to " silent women " (Doc. 12).

5.3.3 Common Pain, Source of Solidarity

Having a common pain in the name of discrimination and opposition to discriminatory laws was a concept that the founders used to urge others to join them.

"In the current situation, there are many barriers and obstacles to women's rights. And we women have no tools to pursue our rights, but we could try to make our voices loud to hear. We need to help each other and to be together to get our problems heard more formally in society" (Doc. 2).

"We women's movement activists who include a wide range of NGOs, professors, researchers, journalists, lawyers, artists, and other social activists, from different minorities, majorities groups in villages, and cities: We protest against the violation of women's rights in the laws governing on society and the constitution as a matter of common concern and pain "(Doc. 3).

In the above texts, in addition to asking for solidarity of diverse social groups, founders had tried to define a primary collective demand. Class and social plurality are precisely mentioned in the 2005 rally's call (Doc.6). The defenders included members of rural groups from villages as well as urban participants. A wide range of foreign and domestic university professor supporters included: Nayereh Tohidi, Firouz Shamisa; Artists: Simin Behbahani, Pouran Farahzad; a high number of prominent journalists and lawyers such as Nasrin Sotoudeh, Narges Mohammadi, and others. Also, the names of Kurdish, Turkish, Lur and Baluch activists are included on the rally's supporters list (Doc.1, 5, 14). According to the founders, this diversity and multiplicity have solidified the body of the women's movement:

"Achieving equal and human rights is a pivotal moment that has brought us together to shape the Iranian women's solidarity movement." (Doc. 4)

Increasing emphasis on the presence of different social layers, according to the founders, is not just to show the high quantity of supporters. In the Official Statement of OMSCE, they identify the reasons for these emphases which seems to be a practical tactic that the founders have used to counter the allegations of those in power that the women were elitists who lacked majority support. The government accused that the protesters are a small group of high social class women with high education in Tehran(Khorasani Ahmadi, 2008,p.57). By listing its supporters, the campaign was trying to contradict this claim that this is an exclusive and elitist movement by emphasizing the solidarity of women from different strata.

"Successful implementation of this campaign will show that the right to change discriminatory laws is not limited to 4000-5000 women, and it is a common demand. And many Iranian men and women suffer from inequalities in Iranian law" (Doc. 12).

"Another goal of this campaign is to point out that the results of this collective action will show that the desire to change the law is not the desire of a specific range of women. The label is often given to equal rights defenders and women activists such as being from an upscale residential neighborhood, impassible affluent people, flaunt,.... is not correct. Because these unjust laws affect the lives of all women, whether literate or illiterate, above and below urban area, single and married, rural and urban "(Doc. 12).

In the face-to-face educational pamphlet for collecting signatures, while emphasizing the common pain, the founders try to prioritize practical solutions to inform women. For example, due to the cultural context of Iranian women, it is recommended that collectors of signatures visit places where women are more likely to gather, such as hairdressers, religious tablecloths¹⁵ and mourning rallies¹⁶, workshops; sports centers, universities, etc. The emphasis on education and information is also one of the highlight points that the founders have taken to reach women from different backgrounds. Finally, it was decided that there was a strong need to submit the one million signatures to Iran's parliament to reveal a strong social demand for changing the laws.

¹⁵ - Women often open a cloth (called in Iranian culture Sofreh) in the name of Imams or their children in their home. The goal is asking God or these people to meeting their demands. In the Sofreh, they serve food, drinks, fruits and also they pray.

¹⁶ -It is a Shia tradition to mourn for Imam Hossein who was killed in Karbala. At the micro-level, women do this in the home. All participants are women except a clergy for a short time. It is a sort of women rally called Rozekhani.

6 Discussion

The previous findings chapter presented the ways that Muslim feminist has adapted their practice in society to reach their goal or modification it and to avoid accusations of being elitist or anti-Islam. In this Discussion chapter, I will first summarise the changes that they have made in their requests or the documents based on findings obtained in Chapter Five and I will present the practical challenges of Muslim feminists in the political field. This part is structurally organized to present a dialogue between two theories of power and practice, and the practice of everyday life in relation to the findings. I initially presented both these theories in Chapter Four.

The One Million Signatures campaign which demanded gender equality and demanded a change in the discriminatory laws was the last phase of the Muslim feminists movement. As mentioned in the context and the background of the study earlier, Muslim women used diverse approaches to organize and advocate for changing discriminatory laws, in 2005. Their first protest received a lot of internal and international attention. They re-demonstrated the next year (2006) to celebrate the Women's Solidarity Day. Some months later, after a harsh suppression by Iranian police, they established the OMSCE. Their publications from the first protest rally until the OMSCE's official statements and articles are the subjects of this study. During the time, Muslim feminists have modified tactically, which obviously had been in reaction to the modification in the government's strategies. Although I claim that there was inconstancy, there are some missed parts which I will discuss below. The justification or the reasons behind both inconstancy and missing parts will provide a comprehensive overview of the above-mentioned theories.

It is worth noting that I will return to the term of Muslim feminists and Abdolkarim Soroush's theory in this chapter. I will present the practical challenges that Muslim feminists have faced in the political field in this case study. I will also discuss how OMSCE has utilized Soroush's "Accidental of History" theory to justify its demands. This theoretical background will draw a picture of the rudimentary challenges of Iranian Muslim feminists in practice and theory.

What is crucial to bear in the mind here is, I have used the word "discussion" as to the title of this chapter but, in fact, it means a deeper applied analysis of the results. "Quantitative methodologists often use the terms findings and results synonymously, although, in fact, there is a slight distinction between them. Findings quite literally refer to what the data says, whereas

results offer interpretations of the meaning of the data. In short, results offer an analysis of the data”(Lune & Berg, 2017,p.209). To be clear, here the discussion means “analysis of the data”.

6.1 Inconstancy

The relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in Bourdieu's theory is one of the key concepts for understanding power. In his point of view, power is symbolically behind all social phenomena. Bourdieu's praxeological and relational perspective on the social structure has provided the ground for understanding the changeability relationship between power and social actors. The “dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity” leads to the “reproduction of social structures” (Jenkins, 1982,). Humans as social agents generate social practice. This dynamic of social practice produces a new sort of practice, or as Bourdieu stated "reproduction." His approach is structural constructivism (Bourdieu, 1989,p.14). In this regard, praxis or the dynamic of social practices refer to dialectical structures or human activity in the ever-changing context. Uncovering the different principles which have made the social structures is the main goal of research by regarding Bourdieu’s social practice theory.

Introducing this brief overview, I claim that the Muslim feminists have reproduced the social structures over the years based on their relationship to the power's ideology. The foothold of women in the politic field did not provide them the opportunity to insist on their demands or their interactions. This section aims to investigate the changes in the context of the campaigner’s social practices. I have used the term inconstancy to trace these changes or shifts. Inconstancy refers to unstable idea or demand or any sort of change between first, second rallies and the OMSCE’s documents which are mentioned in Table 4-1 (Data Resource).

In the following, I will look more closely at the three period’s documents, what specifically the Muslim women published, and how their requests and demands shifted according to the strategies that dominant power utilized. To address them, the emerged themes from findings have been categorized in these subcategories: Shifts in the religious realm, political status, location, supportive circle, and time horizon.

6.1.1 Shifts in the Religious Realm

There is a stark contrast among the first, second rally’s statements and the OMSCs statements about the role of religion. In the first rally’s statement, they directly accuse Islam as a source of

discriminatory laws in Iran's constitution. In this sense, they have emphasized two traces of the negative effects of Islam on the law. For example, they objected to the term *Islamic standards* in Article 21 of the Constitution. Iran's Constitution guarantees women's rights in accordance with Islamic standards. In this regard, they claim that the state's interpretation of Islamic standards means recognizing women as no more than a mother with no other social roles considered for them in society. Moreover, these religious standards have provided a wide range of discriminatory laws in the current constitution (Doc.2).

The second reason for the misogynist laws is related to religious institutions. Founders argue that every single change in the discriminatory laws has been faced with legal impasses by appointed institutions¹⁷, where women do not have any legal position inside of these institutions. "*Influential institutions of the official religion*" interpret laws (Doc.4). In other words, they refer to the potentiality of the interpretability of laws in the constitution by the religious authorities-the Guardian Council as an example of the most influential appointed institutions which includes religious experts. This means that the founders refer to clergies' monolithic interpretational power as the dominant framework in Iran's constitutional laws.

The second rally's statements barely offer any religious view at all. They mention the effects of laws on women's everyday life and also challenge the rumor that this rally was a political event.

Finally, OMSCE's statement stipulates that women's requests are in conformity with Islamic criteria. The founders name some clergy (Mujtahid) who have the right of interpretation (Ijtihad). All of these clergy do not have any official position in the government and obviously, they have been considered as opposition.

This inconstancy view about Islam and its effect on laws is a matter of particular importance. While the expression in the first rally of 2005 seems to be against Islam, the OMSCE's documents eventually show Muslim feminists' shifts to proposing the implicit support of Muslim clerics and the adaptability between Islam and the laws. What caused the founders to modify their opinion about Islam? While in the first statements they saw the interpretability of

¹⁷ - on p. 43 has been referenced .

law as a threat to women's rights, why did they eventually return to the religious interpretation for confirmation and correctness?

To gain a better understanding of this shift, I return to the concepts of field and capital in Bourdieu's theory. He defines the field as:

“Network or a configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc)”.(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992,p.97).

In this view, the field is a structured social space where the individuals and institutions possess different positions based on the capital they have. Moreover, these positions determine the structural relation among agents, and these relations reproduce a variety of social interactions.

The structure of the field in Iran after the 1979 Revolution completely changed to the religious-political situation. While before revolution women's subordinate positions mostly derived from the religious-patriarchal structure which Pahlavi's kings combated (de la Camara, 2012,pp.3-4). The revolution built the structure of the distribution of power based on religion. “Ayatollah Khomeini's vision for Iran was to return to conservative Islamic values and purge Western influences. This vision led to the repeal of the Family Protection Laws, the outlawing of Western styles of dress, and strict enforcement of the Islamic dress code” (de la Camara, 2012,p.6). In this context, women occupy a subordinate status to men and their issues are considered as a political matter. Sadeghi (2010) states that “women's political participation in post-revolutionary Iran shows that gender issues are always political issues and need to be understood politically and politicized”(2010,p.209).

The revolutionary rulers turned religion from a purely individual and social matter into a political one. In international relations, Islam defines the Islamic republic's manifesto and at the domestic level, Islam makes the boundary between revolutionary and anti-revolutionary groups. In this way, Islam became an important capital in the hand of power. Possession of this capital not only is important in the social field but also it was necessary to remain in the political field. On the other hand, this capital gives the holders a sort of legitimacy. In this regard, it is

easy to understand why the founder's critical language in the first statement changed in the second rally and finally, they concluded in OMSCE to have Islamic support for their demands. The potential situation of aligning with Islam could provide them specific profits. It could provide two advantages: first, conformity with Islam could stop all sorts of accusations related to anti-Islamic and anti-revolutionary actions; Second, referring to religious experts (Mujtahids) as a bankroll could provide more supporters from the grassroots. Each Mujtahid has a lot of followers that give him legitimacy even if he does not have any official power.

A wide gap among these three rally statements shows that the founders adjusted their message to reflect a new form of how they viewed religion to obtain more advantages which can be described as, capital in the political field. However, creating a balance in the worthwhile capital challenged those “whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992,p.97). Powerful Islamic institutions were placed in critical situations by the same religious discourse that they have used to enshrine the discriminatory laws. OMSCE “represented a threat to the state monopoly on knowledge production, memory-making and ideological construction of citizenship. This contestation provided dangerous to the Islamic republic’s exclusive control over the meaning of legal rights” (Smalley, 2016,p.87).

If the campaign wanted to criticize Islam, as seen in the first rally statement, it would have been easily removed from the field. Instead, they went inside of religious discourse and reproduced a new view to reinforce their capital in the eyes of ordinary people on the inside and front of dominant power from the other side. Therefore, this inconstancy has been beneficial for Muslim feminist’s ongoing work.

6.1.2 Shifts in the Supportive Circle

Muslims feminist demonstrated a highly tolerant and respectful approach toward their supporters and towards who they support. In the first rally, the founder spoke on behalf of this wide circle included women from diverse religious and ethnic groups. In all four documents of the first rally, they emphasize on the fact that women in the religious minority and ethnic groups suffered two-fold discrimination. As mentioned in 5.3.1, the founders mentioned the diversity of rally's supporters in their theoretical background as well (Doc.1, 2, 3, 4). Although they did not name their supporters, in the Iranian context, these distinct advocates were unquestionably

recognizable. The documents from the next rally (2006) and the OMSCE did not mention this support from diverse political segments. However, the circle of women who were the matter of their support has changed in the second rally, too. They reiterated that the ethnic groups of women need more attention in the case of discriminatory laws and the rally 2006 and OMSCE reflects the wishes of these women, as well. While in both the rally of 2006 and OMSCE's documents, the religious minorities were not mentioned specifically as the group of women that the founders would support (Doc.9). The reason for not referring to specific religious groups and excluding mention of specific political supporters is an important point that will be discussed below. It is noteworthy that in OMSCE's statements founders again mention that the issue of discriminatory law for ethnic groups was still their concern (Doc.11).

Previously, it was explained that the history of feminist activity in Iran goes back to the Persian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911). Moreover, it is undeniable that women have played a pivotal roll in the Islamic revolution (1979) and it was not possible to ignore them completely from the political field after the revolution (Al-Hakim, 2013, p.46 & Barlow, 2012, p.93-94). A considerable number of these women took part in leftist politics which comprised the main stance of secular feminists after the revolution.

As mentioned above, the Islamic Republic had introduced Islam to Iran's political market as a worthy good to the trade. According to Bourdieu, the hierarchical set of power relationships exists in the field which is mostly controlled by the state. It was clear that there was no room for secular feminists to gain religious capital in this market, so they were easily excluded from the competition scene and their ground was replaced by Islamic feminists (Badran, 1999, Mirhosseini, 1996, Shahidian, 1998, Ahmadi, 2006, Afshar, 2000, Barlow, 2012, Sadeghi, 2010). Some of the Muslim feminists who adhered to the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran or were from prominent families of political figures took the political positions. Since they were from inside the power field, they had enough legitimization to follow women's rights in the context of political field Iran. Although valuable solidarity was developed to change the discriminatory laws between Muslim and secular women, eventually founders realized that emphasizing their secular backers would lead to them lose religious capital. As Bourdieu (1990) mentioned, the dialectical relationship between structure and the way that actors construct social realities is a system that is constantly reproducing social realities, relying on the dialectic of internalizing externalities and internalizing externalities (p.72). This process ultimately

determines how capital is consumed. The external reality is the existence of women from all different political and intellectual groups with the same goal- to change the unfair laws in Iran's constitution, but the social reality of the Iranian political market does not allow the opposition to present this product. Although, at first glance, having a huge number of supporters could be considered a potential accumulation of capital it was a drawback for OMSCE in the political field.

This unequally distributed capital based on religious values was visible in the case of religious minorities and ethnic groups who were the matter of support by the founder. Iran's Constitution, Article 13, officially recognizes four religions, Islam, Zoroastrian, Christian, and Jewish. While other religious minorities are neither recognized nor have citizenship rights in the Constitution. Some of them like the Baha'is have been consistently accused of getting support from Israel and the USA. They do not have the right to free study or work in governmental organizations. Also, from the perspective of the Islamic Republic Daravishs, Sufi fraternities, have been accused of deviating from true Islam, therefore the followers of Dravish Ghaderi, Gonabandi, Khaksarieh, Naghshbandieh, and so on, even though they claim that they practice in Islam, are not considered as Muslim. This narrow definition of Islam has closed the doors for many religious minorities in Iran.

As mentioned before, in the second rally, the founder did not name religious groups. In contrast to the first rally, we see minimal mention of women's rights of the ethnic groups, not more. It seems in the second rally, founders had been under more pressure. They mentioned in all four documents of 2006 that " some people, especially from the government, have tried to accuse this rally as a political protest" (Doc.7). In this regard, by excluding religious minorities they took a conservative action to remain in the capital market and fit themselves with the definition of Islamic values. Although, ultimately, they decided to mention both ethnic and religious groups in the statements of OMSCE, at least once.

6.1.3 Shifts in Location

The first rally took place at Tehran University's entrance, the main campus in the central part of Tehran. The university has notably played key roles in Iran's politics since its establishment. Moreover, after the Revolution of 1979, this main gate and surrounding streets have been used for Friday Prayers, which is a political rally of conservatism revolutionaries. Besides this,

Tehran University is located in Enghelab Street, one of the central and crowded spots in Tehran. By choosing this place for their rally, the founders gained the attention of the intelligence community and students on one side, and also to people passing by.

The report called “Women's Protest Rally Report” (Rally at Tehran University, 2005) says that women were faced with violent police reactions when they avoided dispersing and sat in front of the university 's gate. The police forces parked several big public busses between them and the pedestrians to reduce the women’s ability to garner attention. Creating a physical boundary between the women and the public has been called " sitting in the Harem¹⁸" by one of the female participants (Doc. 5).

The call for a second rally invited supporters to gather for the anniversary of women's solidarity in a park on Haft -Tir Square square on Farahani street for a peaceful and civil protest. The place is located in a central section and the business center of Tehran. The streets around the square are well known for women's fashion shops. The founder mentioned that “none of the participants in the rally intend to disrupt the cities order by traffic or causing problems for citizens.” (Doc.7).

The Women's Protest Rally Report (Rally in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006) illustrated that before starting the rally, police dispersed people who were in the park. They claimed that police were conducting an anti-addiction maneuver in public parks and the only way forward was through Haft-e- Tir square. The women police forces violently suppressed the participants. Some were physically beaten, some were arrested, and some were verbally insulted (Doc.10).

Three months after this unfortunate presentation, the founders shifted from the sit-in street rallies to the non-location situation. The founders launched the OMSCE to follow the request to repeal the discriminatory laws. They adopted a peaceful method to collect the signatures from different sections of society instead of conducting street demonstrations or rally. There was no existing physical address for the campaign. In the OMSCE’s documents, there is no definite post address listed. They practice in the everyday life of their supporters. In the document called “The Plan of the Campaign”, the implementation of the campaign consisted of four key

¹⁸ -The private space of a building or a house in the past, where women spent most of their time with other female family members, especially in the royal palaces.

methods: By visiting women in their residence, in public areas with the high possibility of women rally, in seminars and conferences, and through the Internet (Doc. 12). They even suggest volunteers collect signatures by participating in the old-fashioned religious gatherings of women (Doc. 13). This shift in methodology can be seen as a type of resistance to power.

To understand the resistance, it is useful to provide a framework of the resistance subject and the ways that agents take to exhibit it by using Certeau's perspective about the resistance to regimes in everyday life.

“While highlighting their necessity of analyzing ordinary people’s daily lives as forms of resistance within the framework of strategies and tactics, de Certeau’s concepts correspond with the studies of Bourdieu and Foucault. For de Certeau, Foucault also intended to entitle and classify general rules, ways of *operations*, *techniques*, *mechanisms*, *principles*, and elements of *the microphysics of power*”(Yilmaz, 2013,p.68).

In this view, modern techniques of discipline and punishment were exercised through psychological control over citizens in all parts of society. Then, the power is visible in all levels of micro-relations between powerless and powerful agents in everyday practice. If people understand the subject of power, they could form a resistance against the power as well. The micro-dynamics of power as a modern technique of control over individuals involves the daily action and reaction of ordinary peoples(De Certeau, 1984,pp.45-50).

De Certeau's view is also in accordance with Bourdieu's arguments about power. In Bourdieu’s view, understanding all aspects of society requires one to consider the social practices, at the micro-level. For example, dwellings are the source of social discourses, such as lifestyle or production and teach the ways to consume the products or reproduce new products. Habitus is considerably placed in the dwellings, so in this view, the micro-level of everyday practice has a significant role in social practice. The habitus generates tactics which people take into their everyday life (De Certeau, 1984,pp.50-52).

Through this brief review, I want to extend these perspectives in Muslim feminist activities, by using the concepts of tactics and strategies. The flow of women's struggles in the field has led them to choose solutions that may not seem so important at first sight. For example, the shift in rally location from Tehran University to a local park near Haft-e- Tir square indicates a tactic to get out of the impasse or somehow adapt to the situation of the political field. The

founders tried to avoid the accusations that the rally has a political aspect, so the shift from Tehran University which was a notably political place in a high traffic center was a tactic to keep the rally safe. The ruling power also adopted its strategies against the women protesting: arresting some women in the early morning of the rally, utilizing women police, evacuating the park before women's rally, and brutally dispersing the women. Following police aggression, women founded a campaign to pursue the change in discriminatory laws. The government excluded women from the public sphere while the founder defined a new sphere to practice. In fact, by shifting to the private sphere, the social order created by the system of authority was broken and a new space of action was created by Muslim feminists. The Muslim feminists may not have intended to overthrow the political system by resistance in their everyday practice, but they wanted to open new doors. Certeau argues that resistance or tactics develop to proceed beyond the power's strategies. Tactics are valuable practices that interfere with the mechanism of power. De Certeau (1984) explains:

“It is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized on the wing. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities. The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements” (De Certeau, 1984, p.xix).

The mobility of tactics against organized strategies could be traced to the campaign's activities. Based on the ability to change in blocked situations, Ahmadi Khorasani (2008), one of the main OMSCE activists from the first, and Sedighi (2009) name the campaign “situational feminism.” Regarding the campaign's tactics, Rafizadeh (2014) explains “ordinary activities of day to day life, challenge the sovereignty of the state and bring about sociopolitical changes to religion and government” (2014, p.60).

Every action in the political field is considerable. In the first rally, founders showed that their civil protest in the urban outdoor was a symbolic action to demonstrate women's violated rights, and on the other hand as a symbolic awareness to authorities who had responsibility for citizens' rights (Doc.3). Regarding this, the chosen tactics of the campaigners were meaningful. The tactics adopted by women to shift places had been a peaceful effort to get free of the restraint of power and open the way in everyday life to practice and rescue the campaign's initial goals and requests. The experiences derived from the lived experience of Muslim women in the theocratic society. By shifting their protests from being more overt in the public sphere and

moving their tactics to the private sphere and internet, women tried to conquer a space that was not as clearly under the control of the state's power. In public rallies, the founders could easily be accused of engaging in political activity on the street, this was not possible in private homes. Creating websites and blogs on the internet also allowed them to get free of the tight circle of time and place. Their tactics were a solution to capture and reproduce the new grounds for struggle on the battlefield. In this regard, they have transformed and shifted the formal structure of resistance in the daily life of participants.

6.1.4 Shifts in the Time Horizon

One of the tactics the founders chose to avoid accusations was to shift over time. The first rally explicitly refers to the constitution of the Islamic Republic as the source of the discriminatory law. As noted, they claim that interpretations of Islamic standards and appointed institutions promote inequality (Doc. 2,3,4). The same documents repeatedly refer to the "current constitution." The final resolution of the rally also emphasizes that "If, after 26 years (after the Islamic Revolution), the government fails to deliver on our righteous demands for equality for women, we will continue our peaceful civil protest" (Doc.4).

The emphasis in the second rally was on connecting this movement to the women's liberation struggle in Iran during the constitutional period (1905-1911). "Since the formulation of laws in the Constitutional Revolution, over the past hundred years, Iranian women's efforts have always sought to achieve equal humanitarian rights"(Doc.6). The answer to the question of why women have pushed back the start time of movement to over the one hundred years can be clearly found within the texts of this rally as well. "Following the announcement of this peaceful assembly of women in protest of inequitable laws now rumors of the rally being politicized have spread throughout the society and subsequent it the pressure has intensified. We reaffirm that for the past hundred years, we are struggling for equal and just rights since the issuance of constitutional orders and the formation of laws"(Doc.8).

This retreat in time as a tactic is very noticeable, especially because the reason has been explicitly mentioned in the text. Iran's constitutional movement in the first decade of 1900, eventually led to the formation of the first parliament and first Iran's constitution. Active women in the movement were easily removed from having power due to a lack of specific guild demands (Whitcher, 2005,p.53).

However, the first rally documents show that women strongly opposed the current laws that were a result of Islamic interpretation, not the laws that have been formulated throughout Iranian legislative history. As far as the secular approaches of the Pahlavi dynasty, they were more effective than the Islamic leadership in formulating progressive laws. For example, in 1962, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi granted women the right to be a candidate in elections and vote, meanwhile, Ayatollah Khomeini considered it in the opposite of Islam (Khomeini, n.d.). Another example was the abrogation of family protection law. After the revolution, Khomeini's first order was the abrogation of family protection law. Under the law, women had more authority over custody of a child or in the case of divorce, which Khomeini found to be a law that was in contradiction to his interpretation of Islamic law. These two examples show that at least during Pahlavi's reign, feminists did not have as many problems in the case of law discrimination. In fact, the issue of anti-women law happened after the Islamic revolution, because the current Constitution is based on Islamic Sharia.

Regarding these issues, it seems that inconstancy in the concept of time and its connection to one hundred years ago was only one tactic to avoid politicizing the movement and continuing it.

Another noticeable shift base on the subject of the time was the relinquishment of the request to join the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In all the documents published by the founders, joining the convention had been suggested only in the final resolution of the first rally. In the second rally does not name international laws, nor the human rights declaration that Iran had signed. Ultimately, the OMSCE statements refer to only the Declaration of Human Rights and ask Iran to follow it to ensure all citizens have the same equality in law.

The reason for this change in women's political demands goes back to the background of debates around CEDAW in the time horizon of the Iranian political field. In 1997, the first-time accession to CEDAW was introduced during the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, which was in turn rejected by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. In 1999, reformist cleric Mohammad Khatami was elected as president mainly due to the support of laypeople and intellectuals at the polls. "Khatami's politics appealed to the Iranian nation at large as he favored pluralistic Islam as opposed to the dogmatic religious rhetoric of his counterparts" (Barlow &

Akbarzadeh, 2008,p.26). He did not follow past presidents' footsteps and implemented a number of popular cultural shifts. For the first time in the Khatami's era, two women were able to attend cabinet meetings regularly and one woman was also elected as a deputy minister (Beyerle, 2008,p.42). With the majority of reformists in the sixth parliament (2000-2004), women found ground to request the support of women in the parliament and the state. In 2001, the state ratified the accession to the Convention on the condition that it did not oppose Islamic law. In 2003, after a lot of debate around CEDAW in parliament and public, the bill of accession was passed by a majority vote of parliamentarians. In the end, the plan did not come into law due to opposition from the Guardian Council (Atarzadeh, 2008,p.57).

One of the important points about the first rally is its concurrence with the end of the reform period. Popular president Mohammad Khatami submitted power to his opponents, after eight years. The first rally took place just before the election. The founders remind the public that "At this sensitive juncture, the possibility of political reactionary or extremism that will disrupt the process of peace and democracy faced the women's movement with this reality that now a civil lawsuit against the constitutioncan be an effective step towards accelerating democracy and peace through citizen participation" (Doc.3).

The prophecy of the women came true. With the emergence of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a candidate of the fundamentalists who were closely tied to the Iranian supreme leader, the political field narrowed (Beyerle, 2008,p.43). On the anniversary of women's solidarity day (the rally of 2006), participants were beaten brutally. In fact, the founders shifted their request based on the realities of the political field in Iran. The fundamentalists in power (Ahmadinejad 2005-2013) made it clear that women who ask for changes in the law would be accused of being against Islamic laws and therefore, a threat to Islam. There was no place for women to demand the compliance of Iran's constitution in accord with international law, especially since the CEDAW was controversial inside Iran.

I would not categorize this as a tactic. It seems to be more related to the concept of symbolic power and symbolic violence. The political field's structure in Iran had provided a constant conflict, because of the unequal distribution of capital between the authority and Muslim feminists. The supply and demand of the symbolic commodity depended on those who were able to generate capital or acquire a large portion of religious capital. It is obvious that the

founders did not have access to religious capital in the same way as the government. Then if they wanted to insist on their demand to join the CEDAW which was considered by the government to contrast with Islamic laws, they would be losers in their battle to remain in the political field. Their demands would be seen as a non-Islamic request. Their capital had never been enough to compete with the power resource and capital. Muslim women may have subconsciously embraced the point of view of authoritative players, although the adopted view was against their interest.

6.2 Missed parts

From the founders' point of view, changes to anti-woman laws were an important demand. Does the elimination of discrimination against women only include issues such as equality in divorce rights, the illegality of a second man's marriage, the right of custody, and so on? Did the Iranian women's community have any other demands for eliminating gender discrimination or did the founders not want to face and address them?

From the very beginning, the founders have not dealt with two issues, the compulsory veil, and issues around the sexual minorities such as homosexuals and bisexuals. They seemed to ignore facts that would be visible when one examines the field from the everyday practices of the actors involved in it.

The first protest against the mandatory veil was held on March 8, 1977, just 36 days after Khomeini's arrival in Iran with the help of women and numerous political groups. The rally took place following Khomeini's speech on the compulsory use of Islamic clothing in public offices and centers (Kar & Golriz, 2008, p.81 & Fazaeli, 2016, p.25). Following this, fundamental Muslims without any legal resources and just by Khomeini's speech prevented unveiled women from entering governmental organizations. The ban was later extended to the public sphere, although there was no existing formal law until 1983. Severe encounters by extremists, though, forced women to wear veils in public places, but it never meant general acceptance. For example, Homa Darabi, a doctor and university professor, burned herself after she was expelled from university because of failure to comply with the Islamic veiling rule (*Wikipedia*, n.d.)

As it stands, it is unrealistic to assume that the founders have been unaware of the requests of some segments of society. Although the exact statistics of these women are not available, it cannot be claimed that the group was so small that the founders decided to ignore them.

Moreover, the law of obligatory hijab meant that even a small minority suffered from discriminatory laws. (Religious minorities, tourists even foreign diplomats female are also required to wear a veil). Therefore, it cannot be underestimated that the founders disregarded the veil. This non-mention of the obligatory veil can be examined from various aspects. On one hand, the fact that political Islam produces a new definition of “the real” Muslim. From the beginning, Islamic fundamentalists considered “unveiled and employed women were symbols of the Shah’s regime, imperialism, and westernization” (Kar & Golriz, 2008,p.81). Such a viewpoint suggests the veil to be a symbol of “real” Muslim women. There was no room for objection in such an atmosphere. By not referring to a controversial woman’s right, the founders implicitly acknowledged that the Islamic veil was an integral part of the Islamic Republic. It also symbolically meant they have accepted the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic in this case. Shahidyan (1998) states that from the beginning, Islamic feminists had realized it was not possible to oppose the Islamic veil. For example, in the first issue of the Journal (Monthly Journal of Zanan, 1992-2008), Muslim feminists attributed opposition to the hijab as similar to being infidels and enemies of Islam (Shahidian, 1998,p.625). However, the fact is that the founders were made up of secular and Muslim feminist women, so the agreement on the lack of reference to the issue is more concerning. Shahidyan (1998) explains that there are two categories of Muslim feminists: those who believe in Islam, and the others who have to publish their beliefs within the scope of Islamic principles and the governing regulations. They have chosen this second approach as a way to avoid censorship and to present themselves in a way that does not pose a serious challenge to Islam(Shahidian, 1998,p.612-615). In other words, they censor themselves to avoid being completely censored.

The hidden relationship between power and culture in terms of symbolic violence involves all sorts of cultural expression. The social structures have been reconstructed by the general cognitive sections which bear hidden mechanisms of power. In this way, the powerful agents in the field impose their conception, doctrine, and description of reality without such a force. This silent violence by the complicity of women illustrates the symbolic violence “to put it as tersely and simply as possible, is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992,p.167).

Women present the fact that despite struggling for more equality in the law, they do not have enough access to the symbolic capital in the political setting of Iran. The capacities required to

negotiate with dominant power do not let them practice freely. “Symbolic capital, that is to say, capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is represented, i.e. apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge, or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity”(Bourdieu, 1986,p.255).

Regarding this, communicative and cognitive practices legitimize the unequal access to resources or symbolic capital. Muslim feminists could not technically perform in practice the same way the government could in the political field. Contextually, their appropriate action was defined by the same discriminatory laws that they were advocating to be changed. They had to act concerning the structures that did not have the same concern and interest with them. The opportunity to practice in the field would be blocked and dismissed, if they objected to the forced veil.

Another aspect of this issue is the popular impression of their plight concerning Islam. After the revolution, Islam became a matter of the public sphere. Extremist Muslims had turned Islam from an individual practice into social practice. They succeeded in expanding their religious values by using cultural capital, (education system and religious organizations such as Basij), even in the most remote areas of Iran. If women wanted to pursue the demand for freedom in clothing, perhaps the structural power had a legitimate justification to suppress women in the view of ordinary Muslims. Culture includes systemic beliefs and meanings which transform slowly and constantly through social practices. Iran’s political field was in the hand of government, national tv and radio, integrated education system, strict supervision on journals, military institutions affiliated to the Supreme Leader, powerful Islamic seminaries (Hozeh-Elmieh) and so on have provided a non-competitive sphere for other agents. For example, a biased documentary can excite the emotions of many ordinary people.

Other capital is embedded in symbolic capital which provides a sort of legitimate domination. The dominated agents felt loyalty for domination’s values. Although this is deceitful, the agent’s action would be an advantage that domination presupposes. Symbolic capital provides “the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability” (Bourdieu, 1984,p.291). Regarding this, Muslim women seem to have acted based on authoritative symbolic power not based on their willingness.

The issue of sexual minorities also engages these issues of symbolic capital. The cultural sensitivities of the Iranian community on this topic more likely illustrates the concept of habitus. None of the documents of the rally or OMSCE mention homosexuals or bisexuals. Iran's Constitution, however, strongly condemns any sexual orientation outside the normal family framework. The issue of transgender identity has been treated recently as a disease rather than a diversion¹⁹. Beyond the strictness of the fundamentalists, Iranian culture, in general, does not hold a positive attitude towards sexual minorities. Some non-religious people do not object to male and female sexual intercourse on condition that there is consent, but when it comes to homosexuals, they take a strong stand against it. Some of the founders have been active and brave lawyers who are aware of harsh punishments²⁰ for homosexuals in the Islamic Penal Code. Ignoring this is the result of the consideration of cultural factors.

The relationship between habitus and field in the missed parts in Muslim women's movement demonstrates "ontological complicity"(Jenkins, 1982,p.47).

Bourdieu (1989) states that " the relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of an embodiment of immanent necessity of a field (or of a hierarchically intersecting set of fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and with value, in which it is worth investing one's practice" (Pierre Bourdieu, 1989,p.44).

In other words, the habitus requires symbolic capital to produce or reproduce perceptions, meaning, and values. Muslim women had to follow the social structure of society besides the structure of power in the competition field. This is where the habitus had the power to eliminate and censor the social facts and played a large role in exercising control over the actions of Muslim feminists.

6.3 Practical Challenge of Muslim Feminists in Iran

The main goal of this study was to investigate the Muslim feminists' practical challenges in Iran by focusing on the case study of OMSCE. To better understand the nature of the challenges,

¹⁹ - Unfortunately, I did not find any documents that support my statements, however, as an insider, I can refer to my existing experience and knowledge from Iran's society.

²⁰ - - Articles 109,110, 129, 135,and 233 have determined The minimum sentence is flogging and the maximum death penalty.

the process that led to the establishment of the campaign was also examined. I utilized Bourdieu's theory to understand the place of power in practice. De Certeau's theory, the practice of every life, was used to explain the ways that agents (Muslim feminists) contribute in practice by integrating their activism into their lives often in response to the strategies of dominant power (Iran's government). Moreover, by presenting Abdul Karim Soroush's theory of the context of the Muslim feminist movement, I claim that Iranian women express a distinct discourse about gender issues that crystallized in the OMSCE's concerns and demands. In this part, I will present the main challenges that Muslim feminists faced. First, I will present their challenges with political Islam and second I will present the tactics and strategies which were utilized by the women and by the Iranian political powers.

6.3.1 Political Islam

I explained earlier that Islamic feminism and Muslim feminism are two different concepts. While Islamic feminism has broader concerns about the role of Islam with women's rights, Muslim feminists generally believe that a Muslim woman can be a feminist and do not need necessarily need feminism and Islam to be compatible. For example, Tohidi (2013), believes that "the term Muslim feminist, a Muslim who is a feminist is less troubling and more pertinent to realities than the terms Islamic feminism"(p. 137). According to this definition, OMSCE can be considered as a Muslim feminist movement. The founders, supporters, and nature of this movement were not completely Islamic but by asking for equality in-laws, they challenged Islamic law based on Ijtihad. To prove the compatibility of Islam with the laws in question, they refer directly to a few mujtahids such as Ayatollah Saanei and Bojnourdi, two reformist Islamic scholars (Doc.12). Also, they refer to some of their Fatwas on the campaign website. Therefore, the most significant practical challenge of Muslim feminists face is: on one hand, proposing to reform the laws and on the other hand to keeping their arguments within the Islamic discourse. "When Muslim feminists demand in the Islamic context for their rights, the state does not have any choice unless to recognize that rights" (Barlow, 2012,p.94). The religious-oriented feminists believe that misguided men's interpretations have caused the discriminatory law. In some cases, the interpretations are opposed to Islam's principles. As a practical solution, Ijtihad could enable women to ask for change while staying within the Islamic framework. Among Mujtahids, the only opinions of those who are close to power have been cited. The unequal position of men and women in the law is based on a discriminatory

interpretation of Islamic sources, therefore Muslim women needed a new trajectory in the Islamic context. “The reform movement was presented in the spirit of Ijtihad was a good alliance for Muslim feminists” (Barlow, 2012,p.27)Addressing Najmabadi and Mir-Hosseini, Badran (1999) points out that Muslim feminists introduced their approach according to Soroush's theory in Zanan's journal(Badran, 1999,p.184). Soroush claims that “the Sharia is not a manifesto, but the exponents of religion give it a voice, they interpreted it in the way they prefer” (Ahmadi, 2006,p.40).

By referring to the changeable components of Islam, the founders shaped a way to bring the current laws into the discussion. They hired the language of religion to make balance inside the power's field. The laws of marriage, divorce, testify, heritage, custody, etc could change under the current conditions of Iranian society, if you apply Soroush's philosophy, they are not the essentials components of Islam. These laws exist and are influenced by a culture where the people up to grow up with the Arabic language, Arabic culture, historical circumstance, inquiries of supporters and opponents and their responses, jurisprudential laws, and religious order, forgery of Hadises, and audience perceptions(Soroush, 2006,p.21). Therefore, they are not compatible with the conditions of today's Muslim women which is explicitly mentioned in Documents 2, 7, and 11.

However, to stay in this discourse, Muslim feminists shifted their demands and even ignored some of them as mentioned before. OMSCE stipulated and emphasized that they specifically wanted to change laws which they felt were not in conformity with Islamic criteria (Doc.12). All these attempts were tactics they adapted to do not lose their already limited access to the power field.

The theory base that distinguishes Iranian Muslim feminists from other Muslim feminists is their context of operating in the competitive symbolic capital in Iran's political field. Although Soroush's theory is situated inside of Islamic discourse, it does not match with the dominant definition of Islam which is used in the political field. The political field in Iran accepts just one definition of Islam: fundamental Islam, while the various versions of Islamic feminism approaches and Muslim feminists (as mentioned in 2.2) attempt to exonerate Islam from gender inequality by blaming other factors such as historical contexts of sexual inequality, patriarchy, masculine interpretations of the Qur'an or the Prophet's lifestyle. In contrast, Iranian women

did not waste time in the theoretical debate and instead went to the field directly. Although their results were not what they expected, according to Sameh (2010) their attempts did affect awareness of their cause and provided women a new sense of solidarity and empowerment:

“The women’s movement in Iran, arguably the most dynamic in the region, has succeeded in putting women’s legal equality on the national agenda. Moreover, millions of women all over the country, young and old alike, have become powerful agents of major changes in everyday life in Iran. Their presence and involvement in the public sphere and their desires for equality in all spheres of life have grounded and legitimated feminist activists’ struggles for legal reform” (Sameh, 2010, p .459).

6.3.2 The Strategies

Iranian women, whether Islamic or secular, have been a challenge to Islamic governments from the beginning. The government succeeded in eliminating the secular feminists from the scene by “religious pretext”(Sadeghi, 2010,p.211). Solidarity of women from diverse theoretical backgrounds in the first rally was a noticeable sign of women’s return to the field. Although feminist women never stopped fighting for their rights, the rally of 2005 sent a message of the collective determination to change. As reports show, in the first rally, police forces were present but there were no recorded instances of extensive arrest or violence. Instead, the police’s strategy was to hide women behind long city buses that prevented pedestrians to see or join the protesters (Doc.5).

The dominant powers changed the way they handled the protesters in the second rally. The founders have repeatedly emphasized that the second rally had been accused of being political even before it was held (Doc.7,8). By politicalizing the rally, the government reserved the right to confront women seriously. In the early morning of the rally on June 12, 2006, police forces stormed into the home of some of the rally invitees. Iran's Judiciary spokesman claimed the reason for the clash was that there was no official authorization to hold the rally (*Transferring 70 Arrested Woman to Evin Prison*, 2006). Shirin Ebadi, one of the main founders and well-known lawyers of the movement, referred to Article 27 of the constitution to defend the right to assemble.

Article 27 of the Islamic Republic’s Constitution explicitly provides for freedom of assembly, "provided arms are not carried" and the assemblies "are not detrimental to the fundamental

principles of Islam” (*We Have No Problem with Lawful Protest Rallies’ – Tehran’s Governor*, n.d.).

According to Article 27, women should be allowed to hold a peaceful rally as they mentioned in the “Call for Protest Against Discrimination Law in the Constitution” (Rally in Haft-e-Tir square, 2006) (Doc.6). The strategy taken by the government was to accuse the rally of being against Islam. “I have heard that these detainees also made some anti-Sharia statements during the rally” (*Transferring 70 Arrested Woman to Evin Prison*, 2006). The police forces explained their actions to the public by saying that the protesters were “anti-revolutionary peoples” or “These rabbles asking to be unveiled” (Doc.10).

The most important aim of the police was to prevent the rally from happening whether by force and/or violence. To achieve this goal, female police officers were used as a practical strategy. This decision of having female police officers confront the protesters raises questions of why female police officers were considered an important strategy against peaceful protesters? Intra-structural critics of Iranian governments are not limited to secularists. Insider Muslims also criticized the inadequate implementation of the sharia. In Islam, touching women’s bodies by non-intimate (non-Mahram) men is forbidden. Protesters could easily be dealt with by a female police force who is not prohibited from touching another woman. While male police could not grab the female protesters' hands, the women police could grab the protesters by the hair and drag them on the street (Doc.10). Thus, religious people who might object to violent and religiously improper treatment of the protests would have no claim anymore since a female officer was performing the action, especially if they believed that the women's demands were anti-Islam. The benefit of this strategy for power was twofold: avoid the stigma of religion and to provide an opportunity to deal with protesters severely. The power of religious institutions becomes clear here. People who might be worried about beating another human being were worried about non-Mahram contact. Political Islam, using its huge capital, reproduces the public’s sphere according to its standards.

“Following a particularly brutal episode on 12 June 2006 leaders in the movement decided to halt all street actions” (Beyerle, 2008,p.45). This creative tactic led to the launch of the OMSCE. The campaign’s main goal was to collect one million signatures asking the government to change the laws. The OMSCE campaigners used a unique tactic that is noteworthy: face to face

signature collection. In this way, the campaign tried to shift the public understanding of women's rights and the effect of discriminatory laws on citizens' everyday life. It seems that the campaigners knew from the beginning that they had a long way to go to collect one million signatures, and knew that even if they did, they would have little chance of making a change in the structure of power. They have therefore identified that their efforts were to prioritize raising awareness of the Iranian women's community. The bottom-up reform idea easily challenged government strategies because women were adopting tactics to counter the government's elimination strategies. Informing and educating the public as part of a civil movement has the potential to make the Islamic Republic of Iran vulnerable. This implies a breach in the symbolic capital that the government is fully in possession of with its advertising and education institutions.

Beyerle (2008) believes that the campaigner identified a public perception as the most important weakness of Feminists' movements in Iran (p.46). So by gaining grassroots supporters, they could affect the government's strategies over the long term.

Another strategy of sovereignty to counteract the movement was to use the accusation of importing western ideology or promoting non-Islamic values. The accusations included language characterizations such as "un-Islamic", "un-Iranian", or "endangering national security", "spreading propaganda against the state"(Barlow, 2012,p.124).

While these sorts of accusations are a common strategy the Islamic Republic uses to eliminate rivals or domestic dissidents, this time, an external matter had intensified those accusations against feminist Muslims. "Less than one month after the launch of the One Million Signatures for Equality, the US Congress declared it should be the policy of the United State to support independent human rights and peaceful pro-democracy forces in Iran" (Barlow, 2012,pp.124-125). To support Iranian activists "under the banner of the Iran Freedom Support Act, Congress granted \$75 million to the state department to assist these ends" (Barlow, 2012,pp.124-125). This obvious support provided enough pretext for the Iranian government to crack down on female activists. Even the campaign "labeled by the state as the fifth column for the US and conspiring a velvet revolution" (Barlow, 2012,p. 125).

Following this enactment of the US Congress, in the first year of the campaign's activity, over 50 women and men were arrested due to their relationship with the OMSCE(Moghissi, 1996).

Some of them were sentenced by drastic charges such as Mortad- Arabic word means apostate- (Rafizadeh, 2014,p56). It is important to note that the sentence for apostasy is the death penalty in Iran.

Notwithstanding the hard punishment and political atmosphere, OMSCE activists brought their action to everyday life. Sameh (2010) who tracked the OMSCE's website since its start claims that the campaign "Use a bottom-up conscious building reconciliatory method, all of which work to foreground the campaign as a distinctly Iranian (as opposed to Western-influenced) project that deserves support from a modern Islamic state" (2010,p.449). To promote these locally-driven desires, some gathering occurred in private homes in remoted villages or small cities. To confront the problems women attempt to change their tactics based on the context of the actions and strategies of the dominant power. For instance, the "Face-to-Face" and "Group Training" pamphlet outlined detailed conditions that candidates may encounter in the field. For example, it warns " do not carry extra stuff link driving license, student ID card, phone book, cash and more"(Doc.13). In other words, they suggest activists keep their anonymity. Another statement explains the reason for this "if the police came to you, ask for an identification card and never go with them elsewhere expect the neighborhood police office" or " before going with the police call to someone and if you can call to the emergency police that they take you to the police center"(Doc.13).

In Iran, besides the official forces, some political pressure groups like Ansar-e Hezbollah act the same as police except without legal permission. The founders warn activists about them.

I want to conclude this part by mentioning the reality of the political field has affected the reactions and tactics of Muslim women. The strategies of power agents appeared to close off all ways to escape. OMSCE tried to practice creatively in the context of Iran's culture and political structure. One of the best tactics of these women was to implement a bottom-up training process. This aspect of their methodology was a considerable part of the campaign's everyday practice because it was the most discreet and stable approach. The dominant state could not control these avenues of outreach and the knowledge which was spread in the field of everyday life.

6.4 Summery

This chapter presents the inconstancy of Muslim feminists in the field. Shifts in some basic demands can be traced through diverse documents of the three Muslim women's movements (Rally of 2005, Rally of 2006, and OMSCE). The founders changed their attitude towards Islam from the first rally to OMSCE. Step to step, they took a conservative approach on the ground. I discussed that these shifts did not help Muslim feminists be safe in the practice. Even adhering to Islamic discourse and Soroush's doctrine could not help Muslim feminists stay in the political field. The main challenge they faced was political Islam. The state's strategies also limited women in practice, although they adjusted their tactics to help them overcome obstacles. According to Sameh, "campaign members suffered constant harassment and arrest" (2010,p.457). The modest success of Muslim women in practice led to radical changes in the Iranian women's movement. The practical challenges of Muslim feminist in OMSCE illustrate the fact that authoritative Islam does not tolerate any movements which challenge its authority even when it engages Islamic discourse.

7 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to investigate the practical challenges of Muslim women in Iran during 2005-2009. This was done by analyzing the Campaign of One Million Signatures for the Repeal of Discriminatory laws (Change for Equality) launched in 2006. I focused on the strategy Muslim women used to try to overcome the limitations and impact of power relations in response to the actions of the theocratic society. This thesis utilized data obtained from three categories of documents that were related to the start of the movement in 2005 until the launch of OMSCE in August 2006. These documents provided the opportunity to follow and trace the changes in the tactics Muslim women used to rally supporters to demand that unequal gender laws change. Bourdieu's Theory of Power and Practice and the theory of The Practice of Everyday Life have been applied to analyze and answer the two following questions:

- 1- *What tactics do the women of the OMSCE apply to escape power?*
- 2- *To what extent do these tactics indicate power relations in social structure and everyday practice?*
- 3- *What does OMSCE see as the strategies of domination to regulate and control feminist Muslims?*

In this chapter, I present a review and analysis of my findings by answering each of the research questions. I will then conclude with my reflections and suggestions for future research.

7.1 Findings on the First Research Question

What tactics do the women of the OMSCE apply to escape power?

To understand the relationship between power and practice, the mechanism that ordinary people engage in everyday life to occupy the place in the field can change or challenge the power distribution order. This study showed that Muslim women from the very beginning had to use different tactics to persevere. The first women's rally was held after several meetings of women's activists, which led to them finding common ground among all feminists: the need to repeal discriminatory laws. It was a cause that women from different theoretical perspectives could agree on. The *solidarity* to change unequal laws brought back some feminists into the field who had previously withdrawn from the political field. The scope of the solidarity tactic was not limited to supporters. By claiming that the rights of minority women had been violated,

even more than the majority, they opened the doors of solidarity to women in other ethnic groups as well as to religious minorities. Moreover, Muslim feminists took this *common pain as a source of solidarity* and tried free themselves from the state's accusation that these were merely demands belonging to the high class and educated women. They brought their request to change the law public in order to determine whether their desire to change the law was a common wish. The *peaceful action* which involved collecting signatures one by one remains a practical tactic in the everyday practice of Muslim women in the field. However, the *face to face* tactic got enormous success. Training women about the impact of discriminatory laws on their daily life was the main resource of cultural power that was the target of the campaign. Low access to other sorts of capital such as symbolic capital encouraged them to insist on training women one by one. Perhaps, the women knew that even if they collected one million signature, it would not work to change the discriminatory laws in the context of political Islam.

7.2 Finding on the Second Question

To what extent do these tactics indicate power relations in social structure and everyday practice?

The relationship between power and social structure is not always obvious. Sometimes power gently controls the subordinates through the habitus and through the symbolic violence that forces people to accept the command or the ideology of the dominant power. In Iran's political field, the social agents have minimal chance to compete with the state which has accumulated all sorts of capital. Muslim feminists challenged the dominant powers by attempting to grasp some parts of the capital, especially cultural and symbolic capital. The social realities led women activists to use various tactics to infiltrate the field. The analysis of data determined that *inconstancy in the religious realm, in a supportive circle, in location, and time horizon* is related to the symbolic violence, while the missed parts more are representative of habitus. Even though the practices of the founders changed from the first rally until the emergence of OMSCE, it does not mean that they performed based on their independent wishes. The ruling system, indirectly and through the Muslim feminists, forced them to reproduce the structures.

Michelle Lazar (2007) addresses Bourdieu's claims that "modern power is effective because it is mostly cognitive, based on an internalization of gendered norms and acted out routinely in the texts and talk of everyday life. This makes it an invisible power, 'misrecognized' as such,

and ‘recognized’ instead as quite legitimate and natural” (2007, p.148). Regarding this, I can say that gender norms in Iran have changed after 1979. In the past twenty-five years after the revolution, from the time the Muslim feminist ran the first rally, the social structure has been strongly shaped based on habitus as seen by the fact that activists did not mention *missed parts* which I highlighted in Chapter 6.2. Even if we see all these tactics as the solution to shifting or eliminating the control of power, it is undeniable that the agents have to reproduce social structure based on social facts or objectivity. This can be seen by the founders choice of tactics such as shifts in the religious realm, shifts in the supportive circle, shifts in location, shifts in the time horizon and their lack of mention of the freeing women from the obligatory veil or sexual minorities’ issues based on Iran’s current social facts in political Islamic realm.

7.3 Finding on the Third Question

What does OMSCE see as the strategies of domination to regulate and control feminist Muslims?

The solidarity of Feminist Muslims in Iran was a response to an Islamic political system. It had to grow inside a political field because there appeared to be no other space to grow other forms of feminism. The structure of the field means the existence of a hierarchical set and power relationship(Bourdieu, 1998). Survival in the field requires some level of capital. The basic requirement for Muslim feminists was to grasp the capital by changing the discriminatory laws. Kar (2008) identifies discriminatory laws as the main obstacle women must confront in order to have access to the “position of power and decision -making”(Kar & Golriz, 2008,p.80). If the laws changed, women would have a huge amount of capital for their future demands therefore, the dominant power adopted strategies to keep them away from the capital. Arresting activists, beating them on the streets, blocking rallies, assaulting female activists, were strategies that the Islamic Republic has a history of adopting in various contexts. This study showed that this time the government tried to suppress Muslim women while it tried to keep its legitimacy-which is part of the symbolic capital. It can be said that the government succeeded in managing to get women out of the political field for a long time.

7.4 Final Reflections

Smalley (2016) claims that the ratification of the law of equal fines for men and women in the case of traffic accidents in 2009, was a delayed result of the OMSCE's 2006 campaign (p.93). Beyerle (2008) insists that the peaceful actions, bottom-up education efforts, solidarity with the different groups of women and compliance with human rights law, were bright spots of movement (pp.4248). Mckibben (2010) characterizes the transnationality of the campaign as a great achievement. Sameh (2010) argues that the campaign's inability to collect the one million signatures was a result of campaign members' "constant harassment and arrest" (p.457). Rafizadeh (2014) categorizes OMSCE as an example of "quiet encroachments" in the context of the Middle East and Islamic countries' movements (pp.60-62).

Although I confirm the success of the campaign as a social movement in political Islam's realm, I believe that the failure of OMSCE in practice led to the failure of Islamic feminism in Iran. Practically the Muslim feminists were eliminated from the field. I am in accordance with Mojab (2001) who believes their actions can be seen as a "dead-end of Islamic feminism" (p.142). Although Mojab's opinion is concerned with the failure of Islamic feminism in the Reform period (1997- 2005), I believe Muslim feminists' attempts to adapt to the political field of Iran was continued by OMSCE in 2006. This effort shows that even when the founders used Islamic language concerning their requests, the dominant power would not give women the appropriate arena to exercise their rights. On the other hand, even though some of the women receded from their former opinions such as attending to CEDAW and so on, they did not find the right position in the field. Iranian women realized the new ways to get through obstacles, which goes beyond Islamic discourse. White Wednesdays (2014-2017) and Girls of Enghelab Street (commenced in 2017) are series of reactions to compulsory veil in Iran.- a key issue that was the missed part of Muslim feminists' movement (OMSCE), now introduces a new platform to Iranian women to represent their request more freely.

While I was writing the thesis, on the 15th of November, a massive group of Iranians mobilized through most cities of Iran in protest against the sharp increase of fuel price. Over the span of one week, the internet was turned off and the protesters were beaten brutally by LEF. One of the highlights of the protests was the confession of the Revolutionary Guards' spokesman. He mentioned the police forces have been faced for the first time with a new phenomenon: "Employing women to start street conflicts" (*Using women to create conflict was a new*

experience in the recent turbulence-Guards' spokesman, 2019). By using the term employing, he insinuates the influence of foreign opposition such as the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia and so on. I believe that Iranian women are now expanding their tactics and call for reform as their Muslim feminists' counterpart wished to do all along. Iran is on the threshold of a major change in which women will play the main role. It is the result of a dynamic relationship between social structure and social agents which decided to reproduce a new social structure.

7.5 Recommendations for Further Research

The scope of a master's thesis introduces some difficulty in investigating all aspects of the issue. So, new questions often grow out of the research findings. According to the conclusion of this study, I believe that future research would be helpful if it could concentrate on the current situation of Muslim feminists in the political field of Iran, especially after the emergence of White Wednesdays (2014-2017) and Girls of Enghelab Street movements. I suggest that a large study of Muslim feminists with a focus on interviewing Muslim feminists in Iran can reveal a clearer perspective on the relation between power and everyday practice of Muslim women in the political field of Iran. It would be useful to obtain more direct evidence about the reality women face in the social sphere of Iran. Unfortunately, a study like that might bring harm to both researchers and interviewees, the results would be more trustworthy. I hope there will be a day when face to face interviews and on the field research about this topic can be conducted in Iran without fear of negative repercussions.

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