

## AFGHANISTAN WOMEN'S SPORTS PORTRAIT: VISUAL RHETORIC ANALYSIS OF PHOTOS BY EBRAHIM NOROOZI

Aditya Dwi Putra Bhakti<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Rizal Dwi Yulianto<sup>2</sup>

Communication Science Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia<sup>12</sup>

Email: [aditya@umm.ac.id](mailto:aditya@umm.ac.id), [rizaldwi@webmail.umm.ac.id](mailto:rizaldwi@webmail.umm.ac.id)

### Abstract

*Sport is a means for women to voice gender equality, but this is difficult to realize in Afghanistan. To be precise, in 2021, since the Taliban returned to power, women have been banned from participating in sports. Ebrahim Noroozi captured this in a series of photos published on the Associated Press' official website. This study aims to discover the message that Noroozi wants to convey in 15 photographs. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method by utilizing visual rhetorical theory by Foss and Hesford and Brueggemann's rhetorical triangle as data analysis techniques. From the analysis that has been carried out, it is found that this collection of photos is a form of criticism of the conservative policies implemented by the Taliban government which deprived Afghan women of the freedom to engage in sports and the freedom to carry out various other activities. The photographer utilizes a series of photographic techniques to create the illusion of audience intimacy with the phenomenon being raised. These photos were produced with the intention of getting public attention and provoking audiences to act and provide support to Afghan women.*

**Keywords:** *Afghanistan, Freedom, Gender, Photography, Visual rhetoric*

### INTRODUCTION

Women and men have the same rights and there needs to be rules aimed at regulating this. However, this does not apply in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a country prone to conflict and is one of many countries where discrimination against women often occurs (Liem, 1999). Starting from the limitation of the role of women during the invasion of the Soviet Union, which supported the Mujahidin group. After the Soviet Union left Afghanistan, it was recorded that the Mujahideen group had raped women there. It did not stop there. There was a power struggle between the Taliban and the Mujahideen which eventually resulted in the fall of Afghanistan into the hands of the Taliban.

After the Taliban took over Afghanistan from the United States, they began implementing regulations that restricted women's freedom of movement. Movement restrictions imposed by the Taliban provoked mixed reactions, especially among women. Many women feel that the Taliban are trying to make them invisible by limiting their education and work (Samantha Perry, 2019). Many women do not accept the rules imposed by the Taliban, such as restrictions on workplaces, schools, and Western dress codes. Various attempts were made to restore their rights. These efforts include lawsuits, protests, and expressing opinions through murals. Deprivation of women's rights includes various things as well as their right to be free to exercise

(Shalinsky, 1986). Of course, this hinders Afghan women from developing their potential to become professional athletes. Female athletes promote gender equality, as well as provide views on women's rights. Afghanistan is a perfect example of the implementation of a patriarchal system that views women as caregivers for their families, and men as breadwinners (O. Wolf, 2012). However, they face many obstacles and discrimination that prevent them from developing and excelling in sports. Despite the poor security situation and limited options, some of them manage to join various sports clubs. The ongoing conflict and the gender discrimination that accompanies it has attracted the attention of local and international feminists. Afghan women started voicing their opinions in person or through letters to international organizations in the hope that they would receive more help and attention from the public (Darwaish, 2015). The ban on sports for women was deemed inappropriate and unnecessary (Mahajan, 2021). Although just being able to get out of the house and exercise is something trivial, it is a great achievement. The former captain of the Afghanistan women's national football team and his colleagues burned their uniforms and deleted all social media in an attempt to save them from the haunting death threats (Khrishnan, 2021).

This was captured by Noroozi, to be precise, at the end of 2022. The photographic work shows the condition of the world of sports for Afghan women after the Taliban returned to power and would be interesting to study more deeply. Ebrahim Noroozi himself is a photographer working for the Associated Press (AP) who has also received numerous awards. He has received three World Press Photo awards, he also

received an honorable mention from the National Press Photographers Association in 2012 and won first prize in the 2012-2013 Nikon Photo Contest. Many of the photos he took for AP have been published in magazines, newspapers and websites all over the world. On this basis, the researcher is interested in examining more deeply the use of rhetoric in this photo by Ebrahim Noroozi. Noroozi has also raised the issue of women in his photo work, which won first place in 2013 for "Victims of Forced Love", where the photo tells the story of a mother and child who are victims of an acid attack in Iran. Based on this, the writer is interested in dissecting a collection of photos of female athletes taken by Noroozi from a visual rhetorical perspective. By collecting data and explaining in detail the phenomenon in the photo, it is hoped that this research can provide new perspectives for novice photographers in applying visual rhetoric to their photographic works.

The use of visual rhetoric in the analysis of photographic works is due to the use of related theories that researchers can uncover the message that the photographer wants to convey through the components that appear in the photos taken by the camera. (Atmaja, 2021). To avoid having similarities in research objects, researchers make several studies that are used as references and references by researchers. The first research is a journal written by (Soraya, 2022), The purpose of this research is to find out the visual rhetoric of human interest photography on Instagram. Subsequent research written by (Lutoi Fiyanto, 2018), the purpose of this study is to see the visual rhetoric of a collection of posters by Alit Ambara in conveying messages and their relation to the Bali Movement Against Reclamation. What makes this

research special from previous research is the object of research to be examined which shows photos that are full of criticism. On the other hand, Ebrahim Noroozi as a photographer is a rhetor who has many achievements. So this research tries to examine how Ebrahim Noroozi rhetoric visually through the photographs he produces.

## **LITERATURE REVIEWS**

### **Visual Rhetoric in Communication Studies**

In general, rhetoric can be interpreted as symbols used by humans. This science is often associated with persuasion, so rhetoric is used to compile and make arguments to write speeches. Along with the development of science, the focus of rhetorical studies has also increased and is increasingly broad, even covering various kinds of human ways of using symbols to influence the surrounding environment. The symbols used in rhetoric are not only limited to verbal delivery but can also be used with audio and visual communication models (Joshephon, 2020). Visual rhetorical theory is formed and focuses on discursive symbols (irregular or random symbols). Random and varied language has a limited meaning. Visual rhetoric is conceptualized as a form of communication artifact, in which an object can be categorized into visual rhetoric when it fulfills three certain interconnected aspects, including Symbolic Action, Human Intervention, and presence of Audience.

In the discipline of rhetoric, the term visual rhetoric does not only refer to visual objects as communication artifacts but also refers to rhetorical perspectives. The rhetorical perspective on works or

visual images is marked by special attention to the aspects of nature, function, and evaluation (K Foss, 2005).

### **Nature of Image**

Description of the nature of visual rhetoric, involves two elements of which elements are presented and suggested. At the identification stage, the elements presented focus on the physical characteristics of the visual work. In this case it is concerned with the mass and size of the image. Meanwhile, the identification of suggested elements relates to ideas, themes, and figures of speech where the audience can draw conclusions from the elements that have been presented. For example, ornate gold is found in Baroque buildings which have the meaning of power, honor and strength (Kanengieter, 1990). The analysis of the elements presented and suggested allows us to understand the main communicative elements of an image and develop the meaning that the image has.

### **Function of Image**

The next aspect focuses on how an image can communicate with the audience. In this case the function is different from the goal, which means that the aspect of function includes the impact of the intensity of the image maker (K Foss, 2005). The perspective on images or visual works ignores the intention of the rhetor who is the creator of visual works as a guide for interpreting the truth of a work. The creator of the work does not necessarily have the ability to verbally explain the goals and motives in his work, so that the audience can see the history of how the visual work was made.

### **Evaluation of Image**

There are several ways that the audience can evaluate a visual work. In the process of evaluating an image, the audience can see the criteria for whether the image has fulfilled the function suggested by the image itself. If the function is to commemorate someone, the evaluation can look at the function of the media, shape, color, and content used to achieve the overall function of the image. In addition, researchers can evaluate images by examining the image function to determine how big the implications and influences are in the image function (Soraya, 2022).

## METHOD

This study uses a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach. The choice of this approach is intended to reveal phenomena that are immortalized in the photos studied. With a comprehensive elaboration, readers can easily understand the results of the research conducted (Adlini et al., 2022). Research with a qualitative approach is flexible and focuses on the things that are studied in depth through in-depth data collection as well (Rachmat Kriyantono, 2014). In qualitative research, the researcher has the freedom to determine the type of data needed, so that the results of the research emphasize meaning more than generalizations. The researcher chose a qualitative approach with the consideration that the visual rhetoric in Ebrahim Noroozi's photo can be explained in depth. The type of data analysis used by researchers is a type of descriptive data analysis.

The subject of this research is a collection of photos taken by Noroozi's camera with a total of 15 photos uploaded on January 12, 2023 on the official

website of the Associated Press in an article entitled "Afghan women athletes barred from play, fear of Taliban threats". The article contains various kinds of problems faced by Afghan women in pursuing the world of sports.

This type of data analysis is not used to make conclusions more broadly but is used to analyze or describe the results of a study (Sugiyono, 2014). The researcher chose a qualitative approach and a type of descriptive data analysis with the aim of explaining the message that Noroozi wanted to convey as a photographer through a collection of photographs of his works as deeply as possible.

The research uses visual rhetorical data analysis techniques by Hesford & Brueggemann (2007). They are of the view that photographic analysis involves images in terms of form, sides, perspective, and audience/content. These three things are known as the rhetorical triangle and will be used by researchers as a guide for analyzing the research object.

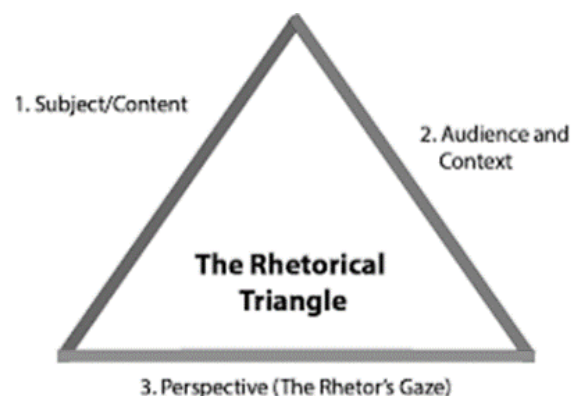


Figure 1: Hesford's Rhetorical Triangle  
Source: (Hesford & Brueggemann, 2007)

### *Subject/Content:*

- This aspect includes the subject of the image, appearance and views.
- Components in the image, arrangement/arrangement of

components, use of color, and eye-catching elements or points of interest.

- The types of narrative elements presented. What do the pictures want to tell? Is there a chronology before or after the drawing is made?

*Audience and Context:*

- From which historical and cultural context the image arose.
- The historical and cultural context in which the image is seen and read by the audience.
- The message or image itself, and how the historical and cultural context shape the particular theme or topics in the image.

*Perspective:*

- The photographer's point of view and the eye angle of the camera lens.
- Frame of the shape of the object.
- Using the camera to create an intimacy effect, or a sense of distance, such as near/far.

## RESULTS AND DISUSSION

### Subject/Content Analysis of Hesford & Brueggeman's Rhetorical Triangle

The object in each of these portrait photos is a woman who is carrying out sports activities wearing various burqa suits against a background of hills, fields and settlements in an area in the city of Kabul after the Afghan government was again controlled by the Taliban group. It can be seen that a group of women are exercising and posing for their portraits with their faces covered by burqas so that their identities are not known and to prevent them from being threatened by the Taliban. This activity is one of the many efforts that women can make to fight for freedom.

The image constituent components in this collection of portrait photos include the situation faced by women in Afghanistan due to the ban on sports being imposed on them. The woman in every photo taken by Noroozi's camera is wearing a burqa suit. The imposition of the burqa on these photographs is included in the visual rhetorical characteristics of symbolic action.



Picture 2: Burqa components pictured  
Source: Research Processed Results

The burqa is a traditional dress for Muslim women which is used to cover a woman's genitals from head to toe. This is in line with the Taliban's policy which requires a woman to wear a burqa when outside the home. In Islamic teachings, both women and men are ordered to cover their genitals properly. Whereas in Pashtun teachings the burqa is like a badge for women and it is an honor to be ostracized from men (Andani, 2022), the presence of the burqa element here is a way of illustrating how the Taliban government and the policies they implemented had an impact on taking away the freedom of women there. The burqa is used to protect the identity of each woman in the photo so that they are protected from threats by the Taliban, given the restrictions imposed on the press so that women are not allowed to appear in the media or state television broadcasts (Putri & Khairunnisa, 2023).

These photos are dominated by the use of contrasting colors between the background and foreground to further highlight the women in each photo. As seen in the image above, where the photographer uses bright colors like yellow, blue and green, which contrast with the background of the main object. This is intended to further highlight the main object and make the main object a point of interest that distracts the audience when viewing the photos.

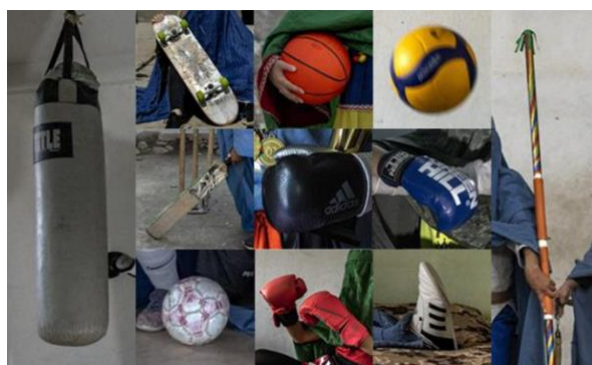


Figure 3: Sports Equipment  
Source: Research Processed Results

As seen in the image above, sports equipment is the next component displayed by photographers to represent sports that are loved and practiced by women in Afghanistan. From a total of 15 photos, there are 12 different sports, including volleyball, skateboarding, cricket, bicycles, football, and sports that are synonymous with violence, such as taekwondo, muay thai, mixed martial arts, wushu, boxing, and jiu jitsu. The point of interest in this collection of portraits captured by Noroozi lies in a group of women doing various sports. The situation shown in these photos is day and evening, which shows the phenomenon of the life of women who have an interest in sports in Afghanistan after the Taliban group returned to occupy the country.



Picture 4: MMA Fighters With Trophies  
Source: Associated Press

The next component is the award certificate. As seen in the picture above, a mixed martial artist is seen carrying various trophies. Trophies are a sign of someone's success in sports, which are depicted as trophies, belts and medals in the photo. This is a form of illustration that Afghan women can also be successful in sports and they have the right to be free to work as athletes like men.



Picture 5: Shooting Backgrounds  
Source: Associated Press

The next component is the shooting background, which is divided into two parts, namely indoor and outdoor. Among the indoor shooting settings are a football field, a boxing ring, and an indoor practice room. While the outdoor shooting backgrounds include residential areas in an area in Kabul City. These photos are dominated by indoor shooting backgrounds featuring dirty white walls. This suggests that the

training rooms used by female athletes to carry out sports activities are poorly maintained and the impact of the ban on sports for women in Afghanistan, which requires them to practice sports regularly, quietly with inadequate facilities to avoid threats of violence addressed to them. In the boxing ring area like the one in the picture above, a wall with red and green accents is shown which is identical to the colors of the Afghan flag in a dark room with its back to the woman as the main object. This is a symbol of the future of Afghan women who are less secure with the existence of the Taliban's power, which limits their right to freedom.

The narrative elements in this collection of photos tell about a group of women who are practicing sports but cannot practice freely because they are wearing burqas which restrict their vision and movement. This phenomenon shows that Afghan women experience difficulties with carrying out sports activities because they are required to wear burqas when outside the home and the implementation of other oppressive policies by the Taliban since the group returned to power in August 2021. In general, sports activities can be carried out in places like parks, as well as sports halls with adequate facilities. For example, to do skateboarding, a special place is needed that can be used to skate safely which is also equipped with obstacles to prevent them from traffic accidents, because basically, skateboarders often skate on public streets. Because women in Afghanistan are prohibited from carrying out outdoor activities such as sports, they can only exercise secretly in makeshift places and facilities.



*Figure 6: Woman With Skateboard*  
*Source: Associated Press*

As is the case in the photo above which shows a woman with a skateboard who can only sit quietly in front of the house and cannot skate freely because of the prohibition of sports on women. Every individual, regardless of gender, has the same rights to participate in, enjoy and benefit from sports. Discrimination based on gender in sport certainly violates individual rights and undermines opportunities that should be equal. Gender equality in sport opens opportunities for every individual to develop their talents and reach their full potential without being restricted by gender. This means that women and men have equal opportunities to compete and achieve equal levels of achievement in various sports. Gender equality in sports is an important means of empowering women. Through active participation in sport, women can develop self-confidence, physical skills, leadership and discipline, which are important in many aspects of life. Sport can also be a means of overcoming gender stereotypes and breaking down barriers that hinder women's participation in various fields. Exercise has a variety of significant health and well-being benefits. Gender equality in sport ensures that women have equal access to these benefits, including physical fitness, mental health and a better quality of life. Exercise can also

play a role in preventing disease and improving physical fitness.

### **Audience & Context Analysis of Hesford & Brueggeman's Rhetorical Triangle**

The theme that the photographer wants to convey to the audience through these photos is a social phenomenon that affects Afghan women, especially athletes living in the city of Kabul. This phenomenon leads to the participation of women in the world of sports in Afghanistan. In these photos, this phenomenon is likened to women covering their whole bodies. The burqa was chosen as an analogy to the Taliban's policy of limiting the freedom of women there. This is confirmed by the sports activities they are doing while wearing the burqa.

The historical and cultural context in these photos is based on phenomena that exist in Afghanistan, especially women who are involved in sports. After the last Taliban rule, things began to change when a democratic constitution was formed that emphasized equal rights, and gave women rights that they could not get before. Such as guaranteed women's political participation. Besides that, during this period, women also got their right to work, and allowed girls to go to school. Restricting women's access to work is one of the most controversial policies of the current Taliban government which has had an impact on various sectors, including the sports sector. Being an athlete and doing sports activities is one of the activities that can be done by women to voice gender equality. Equality referred to here includes equal rights and obligations in various aspects of life. For girls in their teens, exercising regularly can reduce the risk of disease in the future, and in

adulthood by doing sports they will avoid bone fragility or osteoporosis. Now the role of women in sports is starting to increase. Also with that, women are no longer a minority in sports and other fields.

However, this is precisely the opposite in Afghanistan, precisely after the Taliban returned to power there. Gender equality in sports should be stated in laws or rules. This is in line with opinion (Debusscher, 2015). The impact of the various attitudes taken by the Taliban to women in Afghanistan, has increasingly drowned women in poverty and experiencing a crisis of freedom. The Taliban indirectly stated that the future of every woman there is not guaranteed. The situation for female athletes in Afghanistan is highly uncertain and even dangerous. The fall of Afghanistan at the hands of the Taliban has raised concerns about the revocation of women's rights, including female athletes who have a career in sports. There is anxiety among women and girls about how they feel having to lose the achievements they have achieved since the last time the Taliban took control of the country. As was the case with Ali Zada, the first refugee athlete of the IOC (International Olympic Committee), the athletes' commission warned that the plight of women in Afghanistan and the decline of their rights risks being forgotten by the international community. If the government in Afghanistan doesn't allow girls to go to school, it's very difficult to convince them to allow girls to play sports. In addition, Ali Zada hopes that her participation in the Olympics can be an inspiration for women in Afghanistan. Education about the benefits of sport for women's physical and mental health is one of the first steps that can be taken to help dispel negative



stereotypes and promote the importance of sport for women.

The message that the photographer wants to convey in these photos is that the rule of the Taliban over the Afghan government has an impact on the decline of women in terms of sports. This is because of the policies applied to women there. This is what happened to Sarina, a 20-year-old mixed martial artist who was taking part in a local women's tournament in the city of Kabul in August 2021 (Press, 2023). Word spread among tournament spectators that the Taliban were moving into the outskirts of the city. This caused all the women and girls there to flee the hall. It was his last competition. A few months later, he tried to give private lessons to the girls, but the Taliban came to storm the place where they were holding their training and arrested them all.

In detention, the women were humiliated and ridiculed. After mediation by the elders there, they were finally released on condition that they would not return to practicing sports again. The fears and worries of these women were due to the previous leadership of the Taliban, the space for women's movement was very limited by imposing strict regulations (Andani, 2022). The Taliban promised 13 rules they said were lax towards women. Starting from allowing women to leave the house as long as they are accompanied by a male relative or mahram. It is not permissible to meet men over the age of 12 who are neither relatives nor mahram.

The prohibition of using make-up, high heels and the obligation to use the burqa. You are required to speak in a low, low voice so that no one else can hear, you are prohibited from sitting on the balcony of your house, and you are not allowed to become a product model in any books or

posters. Women get permission to attend all-girls schools and work with Taliban escorts when they return home. These regulations received negative responses from women there who felt that they had the right to choose clothes, be in public spaces and receive education where they wanted without being limited by rules. The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in 2003 by Afghanistan gave the country the obligation to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure equality between men and women in various matters. power. So that the Taliban still have an obligation to protect the human rights of its citizens, especially women, because this obligation will not change even if there is a change in authority that runs the government. The return of the Taliban to Afghanistan caused a lot of controversy related to human rights, especially for women. In fact, there are still human rights violations committed by the Taliban regime, one of which is the restrictions imposed on women. If the state of Afghanistan is unable to uphold justice and resolve problems with human rights violations there, then to be able to prosecute the relevant parties who committed these violations can become the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court through the Security Council (Ekanoviarini & Wibowo, 2022). Afghanistan is at risk of not being able to take part in the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics if women's participation in the team is not guaranteed, because the representation of women and men in the team is a necessary requirement to take part in the Olympics (Burke, 2023).

Prohibiting women from exercising is a form of gender discrimination that empowers injustice in society. Every individual, regardless of

gender, must have the same right to participate in sports and physical activities. The participation of women who achieve and succeed in sports can help overcome stereotypes and motivate women to enter the world of sports.

### **Perspective Analysis of Hesford & Brueggeman's Rhetorical Triangle**

In a photographic work, the angle of the eye of the photographer from the eye of the camera lens reflects the perspective that determines the composition and method of taking photos, where this affects the way the audience understands, feels, and connects with the main object in the photo (Rusli, 2018). In conveying messages, each photographer has their own views and experiences. Through their point of view, photographers can convey messages from an unusual or rarely seen perspective (Illahi, 2017). This opens up opportunities to bring attention to neglected social issues, injustices or human experiences. By choosing the right point of view, photographers can form visual narratives in the photos they shoot with their cameras.

An appropriate point of view can help set focus, highlight important details and direct the audience's eyes to key elements in a photographic work, which will make it easier to convey the message and story the photographer wants (Setiawan & Bornok, 2015). In addition, the photographer's point of view through the camera lens can provide information regarding the situation, environment or background of the subject of the photo. Through a broad or close point of view, the photographer can provide an understanding to the audience related to the social, cultural or political context in which the subject is located. The point of

view used in a photographic work can help express and evoke emotions among the audience (Antopani, 2016). By combining empathy, creativity, and contextual awareness, photographers can create strong human interest photographs that affect the audience emotionally. The photographer's point of view plays an important role in understanding and connecting with the stories told through the medium of photographs.

The photographer's point of view in this collection of portrait photos wants to tell you about the state of the world of women's sports in Afghanistan. The shooting technique carried out by the photographer uses the full shot type of shooting, with some of them using the medium shot shooting technique. Even though the photographer raises a sad issue, Noroozi does not forget the importance of the lighting factor in building messages from an aesthetic point of view in a photograph. Light can add mood to a photo.

A photo will look beautiful when it gets sufficient and appropriate lighting (Kusuma, 2022). The ability of a photographer to set and calculate lighting determines the quality of the resulting photos. In this case, the shooting time plays an important role because the right light only appears at certain times. Morning and evening are the ideal times to take pictures and the dominant photographers take pictures at that time. This is because, at that time, the sun emits light gently and not excessively, so that the details of the photo can still be seen clearly. Photographers tend to use contrasting color compositions which have their own advantages, where color compositions like this can bring out a dark atmosphere in their photos. In addition to carefully determining the shooting time, Noroozi also pays

attention to using the appropriate angle of view.

Frames can be interpreted as an object placement technique to create balance in a photo. The frames for all of these photos are in a horizontal format, which is better known as landscape or horizontal. By using this format, the photographer can provide a wide and broad view so that the audience does not only focus on the main object but also pays attention to the environment around the women in these photos. As is the case with the training ground used as a shooting backdrop in the photo. In some of Noroozi's photos, he shows a training ground with only dirty white walls, so that the audience can also see the condition of the female athletes there, who can only carry out sports secretly in makeshift facilities. In most of his photographs, the photographer positions the main object symmetrically or is placed right in the middle of the frame, which can create balance or stability in a photograph.



Figure 7: Applying the Rule of Thirds in Photos  
Source: Research Processed Results

These photos are dominated by the use of the rule of third composition where the main object is positioned by paying attention to the guideline that divides the photo frame into nine parts by using two vertical lines and two horizontal lines to form small squares. The guidelines are used as a guide to place important elements in a photo. The rule of thirds is a popular composition and is often used by

photographers. The rule of thirds, or better known as the rule of thirds, is a guide on how to position objects in a photo frame for aesthetic purposes (Silaban & Saleh, 2022). The use of this composition is used with the aim of showing the main object as a whole and clearly to the audience, by combining several other photographic elements as a complement.

The placement of the camera position also influences the message in a photo. The right camera position will certainly affect the audience's point of view in viewing the photo. In producing his work, photographers need persuasive efforts in the form of object arrangement, lighting, and other technical arrangements. This is done with the aim that the photos taken by the photographer can influence perception and create closeness between the audience and the theme raised. The majority of Noroozi's photos are taken from an eye-level perspective. By using this point of view, the photographer can bring out the effect of equality between the women in the photo and the audience. This effect is caused by the position of the camera which is parallel to the object of the photo, giving the impression that the audience is facing directly towards the women who are the object of the photo in this collection of photos.

In addition, the photographer also uses a high angle viewpoint. The use of this point of view can give the impression of a weak and oppressed photo object. A high angle viewpoint can be achieved by positioning the camera higher than the object in the photo.



Figure 8: Application of Low Key Photography Techniques  
Source: Associated Press

To generate audience sympathy, in some of his photographs the photographer uses low lighting techniques or, better known as the low key technique. This technique takes advantage of minimal lighting by setting the camera at a low exposure so that the audience can focus on the objects that appear in the frame.

By using low lighting combined with additional hard light, it will create an impression of mystery (Leon, 2017). As can be seen in the image above, in this image there is a photo of a female boxer in a dark burqa as a point of interest. Direction of light is one of the important things that needs to be considered in a shooting session.

The photographer positions the object right in the middle with minimal lighting. To further dramatize the situation, the object is highlighted with additional lighting from the front. This technique is also applied to photos of muaythai athletes practicing with a punching bag. In this photo, Noroozi sets his camera at a low exposure so that the photo is in low light and the audience's attention can be immediately focused on the main object when viewing the photo for the first time. The use of light like in the two photos is one of the efforts made by the photographer to separate the main object from the background and shift the focus from the audience to the woman in the photo by making the main object sharper compared to the blurred background due to dim lighting. Meanwhile, in some of the photos with

outdoor photo backgrounds, Noroozi uses natural light. As seen in the image above, the lighting of these photos uses sunlight as the main light source without adding an external flash shot.



Figure 9: Application of the Freezing Photography Technique  
Source: Associated Press

As seen in the photo above, Noroozi also uses the freezing photography technique in producing his photos. Shutter speed plays an important role in creating photos with this technique. The higher the shutter speed used by the photographer to take pictures, the photographer can freeze the movement of the photo object. So that moving objects can be immortalized in two-dimensional photos (Gunawan, 2013). Shutter speed also affects how much light enters the camera film. However, the shutter speed regulates how fast or slow light enters through the shutter when it is open, in contrast to the aperture, which regulates how much light enters through the large opening in the lens. Technically, the larger the nominal shutter speed, the faster the shutter opens and closes. So, when the camera shows the number 2000, the shutter speed of the camera is 1/2000 and less light is captured by the camera and so on. Vice versa, the smaller the nominal shutter speed, the slower the process of opening

and closing the shutter and the more light entering at that time.

In the image above, Noroozi applies this technique to freeze the movement of the volleyball that the woman in the photo is trying to hit. A high shutter speed causes the incoming light to be shorter, so the photographer needs to adjust the aperture and ISO settings so that the movement of objects caught by the camera lens can be maximized and look sharp or in focus.

### **Visual Rhetoric in Portrait Photos of Afghan Female Athletes**

From the perspective of the nature of the image, there are two components in this perspective, namely the elements presented and the elements suggested (Zahra, 2021). The element presented in these photos is how complicated it is for female athletes to carry out sports activities by wearing the burqa, because it is the obligation of women to wear the burqa when outside the home. Meanwhile, the elements suggested relate to the social phenomena faced by Afghan women, namely the value of their freedom to pursue sports like men. This collection of photos also uses figures of speech in the form of a combination of elements of the burqa and various sports equipment.

The Burqa is a figure of speech used by photographers as a narrative regarding the discrimination experienced by women in Afghanistan through the enactment of policies implemented by the Taliban since they returned to power, while sports equipment is a form of one of their policies which prohibits women from entering the world of sports. The deputy head of the Taliban's cultural commission, Ahmadullah Wasiq, argued that sport was deemed inappropriate and

unnecessary for Afghan women. This statement not only had an impact on the decline of women's sports there, but also hampered the pace of men's sports.

As was the case with male Afghan cricketers, the Australian national team which was scheduled to compete with the Afghan national team in the United Arab Emirates made the decision to withdraw from the match due to restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women relating to education, employment and access to the park as well as the gym. These restrictions reinforce the image that nothing has changed from the current leadership of the Taliban to those of two decades ago, especially in protecting women's rights in Afghanistan. The decision to cancel the series comes after Australia cited similar reasons to back down from a one-off friendly match against Afghanistan which was previously held in Australia in November 2021. In the same month, the International Cricket Council (ICC) set up a working group with the aim of supporting as well as reviewing men's and women's cricket in Afghanistan, but more than a year later, the country is still the only full ICC member with no women's team.

The next perspective is the function of image, namely rhetors trying to discover how images can operate for the audience. The function here is different from the goal, where the function includes the effect of the image maker's identity. The perspective on visual images ignores the intentions of rhetors as an indicator to determine the correctness of the interpretation of a work (Smith et al., 2004). The rhetors referred to here are photographers, namely Ebrahim Noroozi. Noroozi used these photos as a medium for criticism regarding the discrimination experienced

by women in Afghanistan. The choice of the issue of women's discrimination in this photo cannot be separated from Noroozi's background, who works as a photographer for the Associated Press. The Associated Press itself is a global news media that often raises issues of world social and political realities. Besides that, this media is also widely used as a reference for local media coverage. Many women have similar experiences with the female athletes in these Noroozi photos who are being systematically disenfranchised by the Taliban (Mahajan, 2021).

Not much different from the Taliban's leadership, years two decades ago, they were banned from attending schools and universities, had to cover their entire bodies in public and their ability to work outside the home was severely restricted (Johnson, 2006). An Afghan National Olympics spokesperson said that Taliban officials were planning new sports venues to allow women to participate once again in sports. Similar statements have been made about women being allowed to return to secondary and high schools, but none of these have so far been realized (Cavanagh et al., 2022).

The message that the photographer wants to convey through this series of photos is aimed at a broad audience. Photographers do not limit their audience to a certain age, educational, or cultural segments because photos are published in, news media that can be easily accessed by anyone. It's different with the presentation of advertising photos, where the intended target audience is so specific. In each of his photos, the photographer includes a brief narration about the issues he is currently documenting to protect the story he wants to tell about the condition of female athletes after the Taliban came to power.

From the perspective of evaluation of images, audiences and researchers may have an interest in assessing a visual image. The researcher evaluates this collection of portrait photos based on the content, as well as the visualization displayed on the entire photo. In these photos, Noroozi, as a rhetor, has the goal of showing social phenomena regarding restrictions on women related to education, employment, and access to parks and fitness centers, as well as prohibitions on engaging in sports. The phenomenon described is a description of the changing lifestyle of women in Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to control the country. Such as their obligation to wear the burqa, the prohibition against exercising, the restriction on access to parks and gyms, the obligation to speak in a low voice so as not to be heard by others, the prohibition on simply sitting on the balcony, the prohibition on being a product model in any form and various other kinds of policies that limit the space for movement and freedom of women there (Liem, 1999).

These prohibitions are visualized by Noroozi as the burqa, which limits the movement of athletes in carrying out sports activities. In addition, this collection of photos is a form of resistance in which, with these photos, Afghan female athletes want to prove that they are worthy of their right to be free to dress, get an education, and work as they wish, like men.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the results of the analysis conducted by researchers on 15 photos taken by Ebrahim Noroozi, it was found that these photos were a form of criticism of the conservative policies implemented

by the Taliban government against Afghan women during their leadership period.

Through the description of visual rhetoric, it is known that photographers use photo media to present complex realities regarding sports and women. This is illustrated through the use of a series of photographic techniques to visualize the message the photographer wants to convey. Starting from the selection of photo objects, shooting time, and the use of appropriate angles to create the illusion of audience intimacy with the phenomenon being raised. This collection of photos illustrates the condition of Afghan female athletes who are faced with various kinds of obstacles that require them to stop engaging in sports. In each photo they are wearing a burqa suit that covers all parts of the body. In addition to maintaining the identity of each woman, the burqa here is a symbol of the deprivation of freedom for female athletes because the use of the burqa limits their mobility as athletes. In addition, these photos were produced by the photographer with the aim of getting public attention and provoking the audience to act and provide support to Afghan women.

## REFERENCES

- Adlini, M. N., Dinda, A. H., Yulinda, S., Chotimah, O., & Merliyana, S. J. (2022). Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka. *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 6(1), 974–980. <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>
- Andani, R. W. (2022). Segitiga Kekerasan, Ham, Dan Perempuan Afghanistan Era Kepemimpinan Taliban. *Jurnal Pena Wimaya*, 2(1), 62–85. <https://doi.org/10.31315/jpw.v2i1.6165>
- Antopani, T. (2016). Fotografi, Pariwisata, Dan Media Aktualisasi Diri. *REKAM: Jurnal Fotografi, Televisi, dan Animasi*, 11(1), 31. <https://doi.org/10.24821/rekam.v11i1.1293>
- Atmaja, A. K. A. (2021). Penggunaan Visual Retorika oleh Fotografer Dalam Proses Penyampaian Pesan Melalui Fotografi Jalanan (Studi pada Foto Jalanan Komunitas Beku Institute). *Ficosis*, 1, 285–295.
- Burke, P. (2023). *Exclusive: Refugee Olympic Team member urges world not to forget about women in Afghanistan, and warns Paris 2024 ban possible*. Inside the games. <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1134967/ali-zada-afghanistan-paris-2024-warning>
- Cavanagh, Michaela. Steinwhr, uta. D.Walter, Jan. Hakimi, A. (2022). *Fact check: Have Taliban kept their promises?* DW. <https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-have-the-taliban-kept-their-promises/a-62649985>
- Darwaish, I. (2015). *The Media Representation of Afghan Women in Post-Taliban Afghanistan: A content analysis of women's media in Afghanistan*. 151, 10–17.
- Debusscher, P. (2015). *Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and the Opportunities for Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the post-2015 Development Agenda*.
- Gunawan, A. P. (2013). Pengenalan Teknik Dasar Fotografi. *Humaniora*, 4(1), 518.

- <https://doi.org/10.21512/humaniora.v4i1.3460>
- Hesford, W. S., & Brueggemann, B. J. (2007). *Rhetorical Visions: Reading and Writing in a Visual Culture*. Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Illahi, R. K. (2017). Penggunaan Visual Retorika oleh Fotografer dalam Proses Penyampaian Pesan melalui Foto Human Interest. *Jurnal Online Mahasiswa FISIP*, 4(2), 1–15., 4(Mi), 1–15.
- Johnson, T. H. (2006). Afghanistan's post-Taliban transition: The state of state-building after war. *Central Asian Survey*, 25(1–2), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930600902991>
- Joshephon, S., Kelly, J., & Smith, K. (2020). *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media 2nd ed.* Routledge.
- K Foss, S. (2005). Theory of visual rhetoric. *Handbook of visual communication: Theory, methods, and media*, 141, 152.
- Kanengieter, M. . (1990). *Message formation from architectur: A rhetorical analysis. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University.*
- Khrishnan, M. (2021). *Mantan Kapten Timnas Sepakbola Putri Afghanistan Ajak Rekannya Bakar Seragam.* vice.com. <https://www.vice.com/id/article/epn78z/taliban-kembali-berkuasa-mantan-kapten-timnas-sepakbola-putri-afghanistan-ajak-rekannya-bakar-seragam-dan-hapus-medsos>
- Kusuma, S. S. (2022). Analisis Arah Cahaya Dalam Studio Fotografi. *IMAJI: Film, Fotografi, Televisi, & Media Baru*, 13(2), 144–152. <https://doi.org/10.52290/i.v13i2.78>
- Leon, S. (2017). The Semiotics of Photography: Towards Objective Hermeneutics. *Philosophy Study*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5313/2017.12.002>
- Liem, L. (1999). Memisa in Afganistan: reconstruction of primary health care in a country during civil war and with restricted freedom of movement for women. *Nederlands tijdschrift voor geneeskunde*, 143(5), 260—263. <http://europepmc.org/abstract/MED/10086155>
- Lutoi Fiyanto, R. D. (2018). *Analisis Retorika Visual pada Poster Bali Tolak Reklamasi karya Nobodycorp tahun 2016 sebagai Resistensi terhadap Propaganda Proyek Reklamasi Teluk Benoa.*
- Mahajan, R. (2021). *Taliban \& Afghan women in sport.* Tribune.
- Noroozi, E. (2023). *Afghan women athletes barred from play, fear Taliban threats.* ASSOCIATED PRESS. <https://apnews.com/article/sports-soccer-youth-taliban-college-875079d49a1c8c7063da7c14f317a8b3>
- O. Wolf, D. S. (2012, Oktober). *Forgotten promises in Afghanistan The situation of women and their rights since the fall of the Taliban.* 14.
- Putri, L. D. R., & Khairunnisa, S. F. (2023). Alasan Pbb Memperpanjang Misi Unama Di Afghanistan. *Jurnal Pena Wimaya*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.31315/jpw.v3i1.8368>
- Rachmat Kriyanton, S. S. M. S. (2014). *Teknik Praktis Riset komunikasi.* Kencana.
- Rusli, E. (2018). Citra Dan Tanda Malioboro Dalam Konstruksi Fotografi. *REKAM: Jurnal Fotografi, Televisi, dan Animasi,*



- 14(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.24821/rekam.v14i1.2133>
- Samantha Perry. (2019). *Changing Roles of Women in Afghanistan: The Impact of the Rise and the Fall of the Taliban. 1*(December), 105–112.
- Setiawan, R., & Bornok, M. B. (2015). Estetika Fotografi. *Research Report Humanities and Social Science, 1*, 1–113. <https://journal.unpar.ac.id/index.php/Sosial/article/view/1468>
- Shalinsky, A. (1986). *Reason , Desire, and Sexuality : The Meaning Of Gender In Northern Afganistan By Audrey C . Shaiinsky Department of Anthropology University of Wyoming Working Paper*, 71–85.
- Silaban, R. A., & Saleh, K. (2022). Analisis Komposisi Fotografi Pre-Wedding Karya Jimmy Lukas Ditinjau dari Rule of Thirds. *Journal of Education, Humaniora and Social Sciences (JEHSS), 4*(4), 2655–2667. <https://doi.org/10.34007/jehss.v4i4.1107>
- Smith, K. L., Moriarty, S., Kenney, K., & Barbatsis, G. (2004). *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media*. Taylor & Francis.
- Soraya, I. (2022). Retorika Visual dalam Human Interest Fotografi di Instagram. *Jurnal Komunikasi, 13*(1), 27–36. <https://doi.org/10.31294/jkom.v13i1.12034>
- Sugiyono. (2014). *Metode Penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R & D*. Alfabeta.
- Ekanoviarini, Tsabitah Rizqi & Aji Wibowo. (2022). Pelanggaran Hak Perempuan Di Afghanistan Selama Kekuasaan Rezim Taliban Berdasarkan Konvensi Cedaw. *Reformasi Hukum Trisakti, 4*(4), 715–728. <https://doi.org/10.25105/refor.v4i4.14097>
- Zahra, F. (2021). Visual Rhetoric: Framing the Methodology for Truck Visuals Through Visual Rhetoric Theory and Rhetorical Appeals. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 15*(9), 409–418.