Restriction Policy on Afghan Girls' Education and its Consequences

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ABSTRACT

The people of Afghanistan experienced profound transformations across various spheres following the political upheaval of August 15, 2021, wherein the Islamic Republic government was replaced by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The new government has introduced various policies that are impacting people's lives differently from before. One of these policies is placing limitations on the education of women, signaling a significant shift in how educational opportunities are being provided to female students. The study adopted a qualitative case study with a sample of female school students across five provinces of Afghanistan, including Kabul, Herat, Bamiyan, Farah and Jalalabad. Each of the five provinces represented by 10 students, for 50 respondents. The findings of the research highlights that depriving girls of education has had a number of detrimental effects on them, including emotional and psychological issues, forced marriage, migration, a loss of hope for the future, and other long-term effects. The study highlights the value of providing girls with equal educational opportunities and contributes to the creation of more effective policies and methods to guarantee girls' access to education in Afghanistan and other countries facing similar difficulties.

Keywords: *education; Afghan girls; gender inequality; restriction policy; school*

1. INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan, the country with the highest illiteracy rate in the world (UNAMA, 2013), is currently the only that forbids girls from attending school. The phenomenon of closing girl's schools is not new and it goes back on September 27, 1996, when "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" was established after the civil war. During the first Taliban rule, the people of Afghanistan witnessed many changes in their daily life, especially the education system was completely impacted by the education policy of the Taliban regime, and the Taliban created a divergent education system compared to the previous governments. In the 1990s after the Taliban took power, their first action was to establish a government system based on Sharia and annihilated all the reforms of the previous government. In terms of the education sector, the Taliban removed the books, which contradicted the Islamic curriculum, and then completely barred girls from going to school. Taliban officials consecutively said that schools for girls were closed in 1990s due to the lack of financial support for having separate classes for girls and boys, hiring female teachers, and having transportation for girls (Strick & Kuehn, 2012).

In 2001, when Hamid Karzai was chosen for a two-year term as interim president, he signed "Declaration of the Essential Rights of Afghan Women," which provides that women have the same rights as men, including equality before the law, institutional education in all subject areas, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, and political participation, as well as the option to wear the 'Burqa' or not.

The increase in the number of girls enrolled in and remaining in primary and secondary schools was a priority of that declaration.
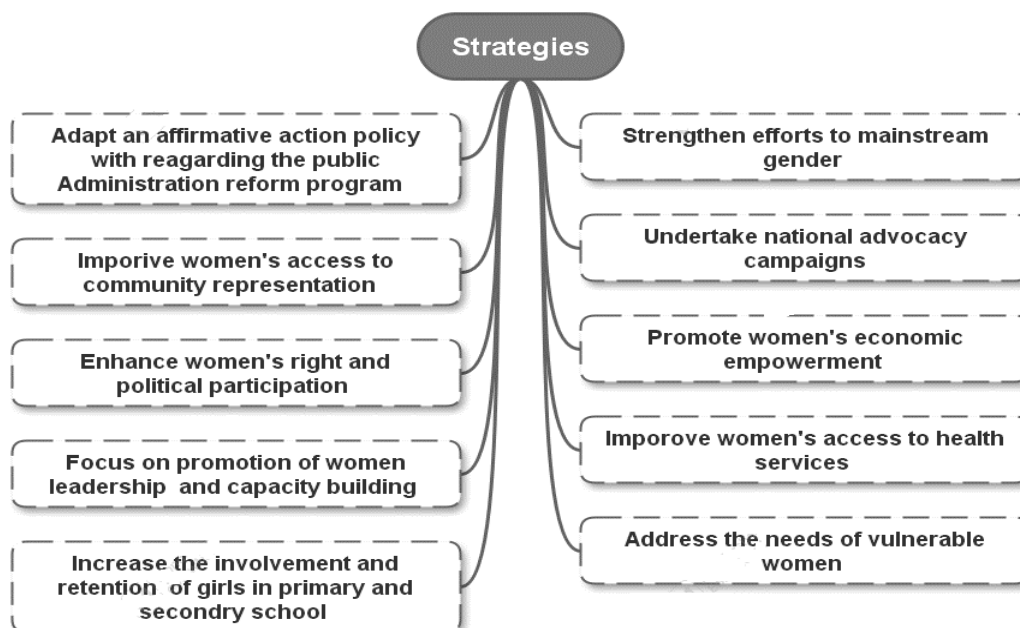

Figure 1. Ten-Point Strategy of 2002 declaration for Sustaining Gender Equality in Afghanistan
*Source: Afghanistan National Development Strategy   Secretariat (2008)

As per the data from SIGAR (2016), at the beginning of 2001, only 29% of boys and 1% of girls were in school, but if we have a glance at the statistics for 2016, it can be noticed an increase in student enrolment from 900,000 in 2002 to 8 million in 2013 as proof of the sector's overall growth. Although the Taliban government collapsed on September 11, 2001, but the Taliban had control over most of the rural areas, and the educational system in the areas controlled by the Taliban was operated according to their own policy, and the government of the Republic of Afghanistan had no observation over those schools. From 2001 until taking back power, the Taliban issued several so-called 'Layha' or codes of conduct which involved all Taliban policies including their policy toward both schools under Taliban and Afghanistan Republic rule.

In the 2006 Taliban's Layha, many issues are written concerning NGOs, education, health, and so on. Teaching in government schools became unlawful and subject to severe penalties under the 2006 code. Teachers were to be admonished and, if necessary, disciplined to have no collaboration with the government (Clark, 2011). The Taliban, after taking back power in August 2021, outlawed girls' secondary education. As of this year, girls were not allowed to select certain subjects for the country's national university entrance exam (Kankor), the Taliban has added yet another restriction to the education of Afghan girls (Yousufzai et al., 2022). Barring girls' schools can have many negative consequences; the international community and numerous organizations have put pressure on the Taliban to get permission for girls' schooling because they know that continuing this situation will have negative impacts on girls, their families, and the country's future. In this research, the focus is on the negative consequences of continuing the ban on girls' education.

A plethora of studies have been conducted on the subject of female education. With an emphasis on government and NGO rehabilitation initiatives, Alvi-Aziz (2008) study examined the relative advancements and significant losses in Afghan women's education since the collapse of the Taliban administration (2001). The study by Amiri & Jackson (2021) focused on education policies and

attitudes adopted the Taliban from 1990 to 2021, contrasting "the rules" with real-world actions. Another research by Kehoe (2008) investigated how women-focused education reform initiatives in Afghanistan may better support reconstruction's long-term objectives. The potential of girls' education as a driving force toward democracy and the ways that a diverse educational system might lessen historical gender disparities were examined by Kissane (2022). In his article, Khwajamir (2016) concentrated on the formal educational establishments from Afghanistan's founding in 1747 until that year.

Previous studies concentrated on topics such as the advancement of education over time, comparative analysis of female education in contemporary times, examination of the Taliban's stance on education, and the impact of cultural and ideological factors on female education. The present research aims to bridge the gap between prior studies and to address a crucial aspect of female education, which is the aftermath of school closures on girls.

Is culture a barrier to girls' education in Afghanistan?

There are different perspectives about hinders that culture may impose on girls' education in Afghanistan. According to previous researches (Kakar, 2004; Emadi, 2000; Hunte, 2006; Ahmadi, 2022), culture can be considered as a roadblock that can impact girls' education in Afghanistan. The country is consists of different tribes that every tribe has certain norms for women's social behavior which some tribes restrict women's activities even their education. Every tribe in Afghanistan has different cultural norms, which differences define a special beauty to Afghan culture. Among these cultural diversity, the gender restrictions are also different among the tribes of Afghanistan. For example, the people who live in the south and east of Afghanistan have their own tribal culture, the so called "Pashtunwali", which is a tribal code, and the people who live in the north and west of Afghanistan have a different tribal code (Kakar, 2004).

In some rural areas of the country, traditional Afghans are wary of foreigners and foreign programs because they perceive a danger to their cultural norms (Kehoe, 2008). Traditional cultural norms prevalent in regions south and east of Afghanistan are said to uphold patriarchal values. Within such societal frameworks, women's roles are often confined to the domestic sphere, with limited opportunities for engagement outside the home (Emadi, 2000). In most rural areas, families don't allow girls to attend schools due to cultural restriction. Many families fear the ramifications of breaking traditional norms if a girl attends school in a public setting rather than adhering to the traditional ideas of a secluded female. Fear of unfavorable social pressure and gossip in relation to the practice of female isolation and the maintenance of family honor (Hunte, 2006).

Culture can be called as a barrier to girls' education in Afghanistan as it is mentioned that women in Afghanistan have been the victims of elites and traditionalists who are taking decisions on behalf of women in many areas of Afghanistan. According to Rina Amiri, U.S. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights, "women have historically been the pawns in a conflict between the elite modernists, generally characterized as pro-Western, and the religious and tribal based-traditionalists" (Berry, 2016).

Theoretical Tools

The identity division and the predominance of distinct private and public domains of social activity are the starting points for liberal feminism's explanation of gender inequality. As expressed by liberal feminism theory, men are perceived as having a primary position in the public sphere, while women are viewed in a secondary place or can be called a private sphere. Children's socialization is seen as a preparation for their adult duties and employment in the spheres suited to their sex (Dorsey et al., 1990; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1992). According to liberal feminism, the private sphere consists of a never-ending

series of rigor, pointless, unpaid, and undervalued areas relating to caring for children, cleaning the house, and supporting adult men. The real benefits of social life, in contrast, can be found in the public domain and include position, power, wealth, freedom, self-worth, and personal growth.

In Afghanistan, the same situation prevails; currently the women are forced to stay away from social life and remain in the private sphere and should be busy with housework and taking care of their children and husbands. After the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the re-control of Kabul by the Taliban, women and girls are not seen in the society, and according to the existing theory, they are in the unvalued status. The only benefit that the liberals see in the private realm is that it encourages emotional openness. Its main concern is the denial of equal rights to women, with a focus on equal rights with regard to equal access to employment, healthcare, and education (Dorsey et al., 1990; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1992).

2. METHODS

Method

The chosen method for this research is a qualitative case study. The first reason behind choosing this type of research methodology is that it facilitates the exploration of a case or phenomenon by giving the option for the researcher to use different kinds of resources. As it is highlighted by Baxter & Jack (2015) that 'Case Studies' give the researcher a chance to get a comprehensive understanding of the study problem and make it easier to describe, understand, and explain a particular circumstance or problem. The other cause of opting this research method is that the researcher can easily explore the consequences of the school's closure policy for Afghan girls, so based on Yin (2013), with the use of the case study method, the researcher can learn about the characteristics of real-world occurrences, such as individual behavior, small-group behavior, organizational structures, and executive processes.

Furthermore, the writer tends to has the Afghan girl's perception about the impacts that the ban on girl's education have had on them, thus as Crabtree & Miller (1992) claims that one benefit of this method (qualitative case study), is that the researcher and participant work closely together while allowing participants to tell their story or opinion about the phenomenon. The participants can express their views, which helps the researcher better comprehend the participants' behavior (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993).

The researcher must take into account both the case and the research question when he/she formulate inquiry. Although it may seem straightforward, identifying the unit of analysis (case) can be difficult for both inexperienced and experienced researchers (Baxter & Jack, 2015). The unite analysis of this research is that it focuses on the negative consequences of school closures and restrictions on Afghan girls. Based on the unit of analysis and the research aims the following questions considered as the research questions.

Research Questions:

1. What are the negative consequences of schools closure on girls?
2. How do the limitations on education for Afghan girls effect their future?
3. What are the impacts of banning education on Afghan society as a whole?

Participants of the study

Respondents are selected based on 'Purposive Sampling', which is a type of non-probabilistic sampling method and the researcher selects a specific group of participants based on a certain set of criteria. The purposeful selection of a participant is a component of the judgment sampling method, which is also known as purposive sampling (Bernard, 2006). An array of options for Purposive Sampling are accessible when choosing which case to research. Creswell noted that in choosing cases, he would

prefer to show several viewpoints on the problem, procedure, or event that he wants to portray (called "purposeful maximal sampling,"),(Creswell, 2014). This non-random technique (Purposive Sampling) does not require underlying theories or a predetermined number of participants. Simply defined, the researcher chooses what information is necessary to have and then searches for sources willing and able to supply it based on their knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2006). Purposive Sampling is considered appropriate for this research because the population for the research is very large (more than 3 million school girls), so purposive sampling allows the researcher to specifically target and select participants who are able to respond to our questions and has been seriously affected by the school banning policy.

Data collection

According to Creswell (2014), setting the criteria of the study, gathering information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials, as well as developing the technique for recording information, are all steps in the data collection process. In order for our sample to be comprehensive and able to represent all school girls, the sample of the study is selected from 5 provinces of Afghanistan (Kabul, Herat, Bamiyan, Farah and Jalal-Abad) which are consisting a large populations and are rated and divided into first-class and second-class provinces by the government. 10 students opted from each of 5 mentioned provinces which the total respondents are 50. The participants are the student activists who have petitioned for girl's education rights and marched in the streets of Kabul and other cities since the school's doors closed for girls.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select study participants, with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews. I selected this non-probability selection technique because it enabled us to incorporate people who offered in-depth perspectives derived from their experiences. The researchers chose to conduct remote interviews via Zoom Meeting and WhatsApp due to the present political situation and restrictions placed on women and girls in Afghanistan. By using these online platforms, the researchers were able to connect with participants more easily than they could in person (Hai-Jew, 2015; Salmons, 2012; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009).
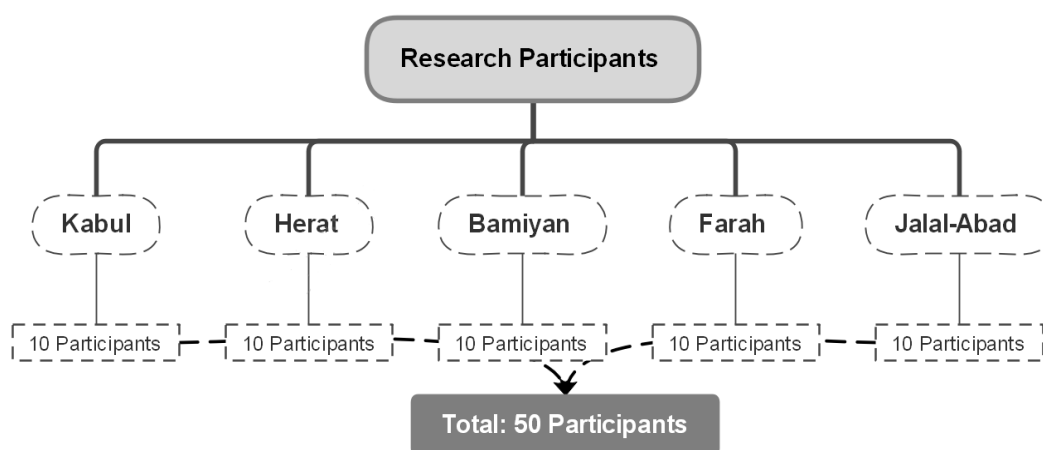

Figure 2. Interview participants of the research from five provinces of Afghanistan

Data Analysis procedure

To analyze the data of the research, thematic analysis has been used. This analysis method is opted for the research because it helps the researcher in terms of how to describe a complex topic and also the writer has the option to identify different issues and then select the cases that are appropriate for addressing the research questions. In order to comprehend the complexity of the case, the researcher

may choose to concentrate on a few key issues (or analyze themes) (Yin, 2013). One analytical approach would be to identify the problems in each case before searching for the commonalities that connect them (Yin, 2013). The researcher utilizes NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, for data analysis purposes. NVivo is a versatile tool that can be applied in various research domains, including the social sciences and humanities. This software facilitates the systematic organization, examination, and depiction of data, providing valuable insights. With the aid of its features and functions, NVivo allows the researcher to trace and document the attribution of specific statements within a theme, taking into consideration the interconnection of the theme with other relevant concepts. This, in turn, enhances the analytical rigor by validating or refuting the researcher's preconceived notions of the data (Welsh, 2011).

3. RESULTS

The findings of the research shows that girls have different opinion about the closure of schools and it consequences. Following data analysis, the researcher divided the data into four separate themes: "Emotional and Psychological Impacts," "Forced Marriage," "Migration," and "Future Negative Impacts." The 'Future Negative Impact' theme is further broken down into sub-themes, which include 'Illiteracy,' 'Lack of Hope for Future Opportunities,' and 'Marginalization of Women from Society.' In the sections that follow, each theme is covered in detail.
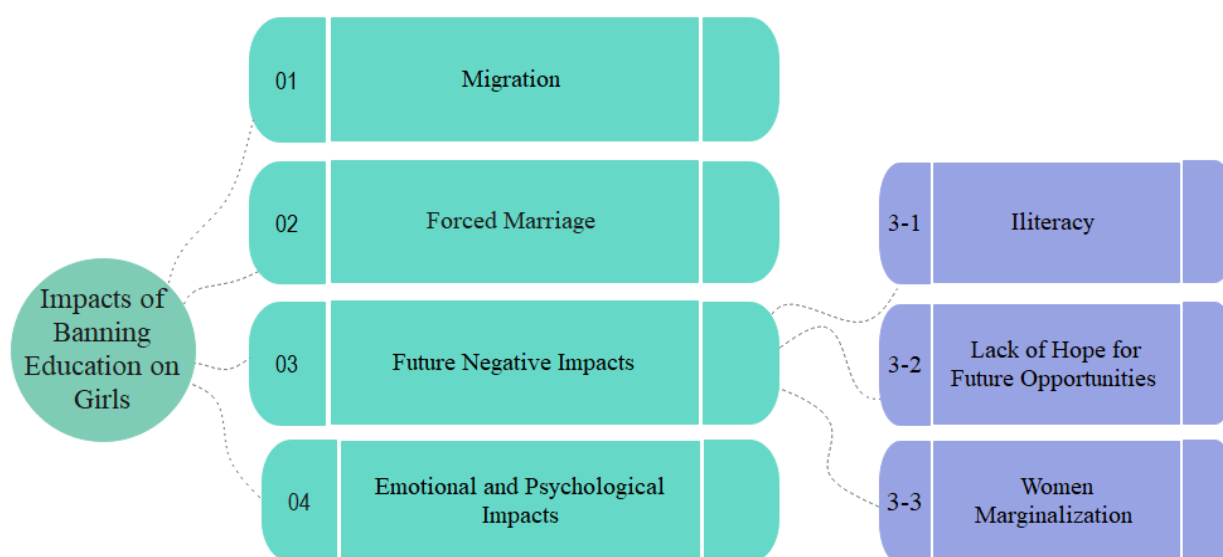

Figure 3. Analyzing of the Divided Data / Source: findings of the research

According to the study's findings, girls are most affected by forced marriage and psychological problems as the consequences of banning girl's education in Afghanistan. As expected by the researchers, Question 4 of the questionnaire, which examineded whether girls are experiencing emotional and psychological problems, had the greatest weight value of all the questions (96.4). Furthermore, Question 12's weight value is same 96.4, which the question asks respondents if they have witness an increase in forced marriages, indicating that the majority of respondents concur that the number of forced marriages has increased. With a weight score of 95,6, Question 5—which addresses migration—indicates that migration has increased as a result of Afghanistan's ban on education. On the other side, Question 6 and Question 10, which center on the lack of optimism for future opportunities, earned a value of 87.6, which is lower than the values for the other questions. See the chart 1 for more details.
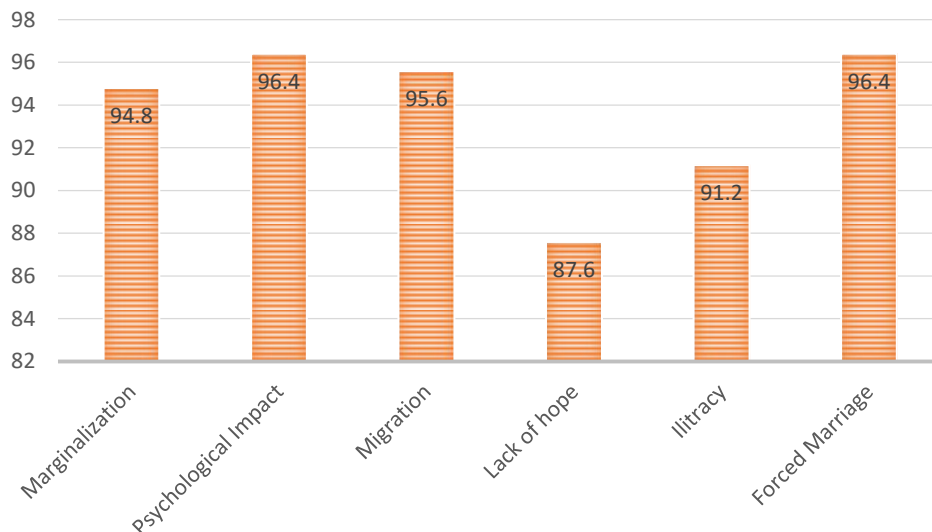
Figure 4. Weight value of the respondents on each theme

Emotional and psychological impacts of education ban

As of the time this research was conducted, more than 600 days have elapsed since the closure of girls' schools. The research findings indicate that female students have experienced significant mental and emotional stress. Many of the research participants reported that the uncertainty of their future and being away from school have led to feelings of stress and depression. One female student stated that the absence of a positive future and feelings of isolation and disconnection from the community have caused her to start each day with fear and anxiety.

"Many girls, including me, are depressed and have lost hope in life for having a great future and achieving our dreams. We are worried and waiting to see how our future and the future of our country will be" (P4, April)

Another participant of this research, in response to my question about whether the closure of schools has had an effect on his daily life, says that:

"I am a girl and I am not allowed to get education in my country and it's so painful for me" (P32, May)

Based on the research's results, the effects of preventing girls from receiving an education can lead to negative emotions such as disappointment, despair, and a lack of self-worth. Additionally, girls who are not able to attend school may feel separated and excluded from society and may be more vulnerable to mistreatment and manipulation. According to TOLO NEWS, famous 24-hours news channel in Afghanistan, psychologists have stated that the prohibition of Afghan girl students in grades above six from attending schools by the Taliban is causing mental stress for these individuals. This restriction on education is having a negative impact on the mental well-being of these young girls (TOLO NEWS, 2022).

Forced Marriage and Migration

While forced marriages and immigration have existed in Afghanistan for some time, research indicates that the closure of girls' schools has led to an increase in forced marriages and illegal migration, as families fear their daughters will be illiterate and have limited opportunities if they stay in Afghanistan. Afghanistan unfortunately has a high rate of early and forced marriages. In the past years, forced marriages seriously harm the lives of the girls, preventing them from going to school (Noori, 2017).

According to one of the interviewees, if the current restrictions on girls' education persist and she is not allowed to attend school, she may be forced into marriage as well.

"If schools do not open for another year and girls do not have the right to study and work, I will also be a victim of forced marriage as I do not have a father or older brother" (P13, June)

Another girl states that due to the absence of education and opportunities for a better future, families are compelled to arrange marriages for girls at a young age.

"Neglecting girl's education makes a person do misplaced things. In Afghanistan, the most important issue and pressure on girls is forced and underage marriages, which, in the absence of education, are forced to the above" (P38, May)

The other girl involved in this study states:

"This is so sad to say that families who were under pressure of the situation and patriarchal society forced their daughters to get married and worse than this they even sold their daughters to men who have their father's age" (P17, July)

A report by France 24 states that due to both financial struggles and traditional patriarchal beliefs, some parents in Afghanistan are arranging marriages for their teenage daughters at a younger age, particularly those who have been prevented from receiving education by the Taliban (France 24, 2022). Media reports indicate that forced marriages are not the only problem, as many families have been forced to relocate to other countries due to the lack of opportunities for their children. A significant number of interviewees reported that their classmates had migrated and are no longer in contact with them.

"In fact most of my friends immigrated to other countries for having a better future. And many of the families obliged their daughters to be married" (P3, April), *"Yes, I have many friends and classmates that immigrated and also I have a neighbour that after closure of schools they forced their girl to marriage."* Said two participants from Herat and Kabul provinces (P27, June).

Amnesty International, a human rights organization, has reported that the rise of the Taliban has led to an increase in the number of Afghan refugees seeking asylum in neighboring countries. With the cessation of evacuations from Kabul airport, many Afghans have been forced to seek alternative routes to Pakistan and Iran. A large number of people have crossed into Pakistan, but the borders have since been closed to most Afghans, with only a select few allowed to pass through the Torkham crossing point. In November, the Norwegian Refugee Council reported that around 4,000-5,000 Afghans were crossing the border into Iran on a daily basis (Amnesty International, 2021).

Self-improvement and personal growth

The researcher found that self-reliance through education was a significant topic brought up by interviewees. Many of them stressed the importance of being able to progress through their own abilities and not relying on others. One interviewee specifically mentioned that education would allow her to be independent and shape her own life. She expresses her excitement and positivity toward the opportunities for learning and personal growth that come with going to school. She says that there is potential for self-improvement and the ability to attain her goals through education.

"I think on that time (if she has the chance to go to school), I can stand on myself and can improve and make my life and future by myself" (P22, June); the other girl says: *"I am sure my life wouldn't be stressful and boring by just staying home and putting a cross-mark in front of my wishes and goals. I could really have reached to my goals and cheer my life"* (P13, May)

Afghan women have long sought freedom from the constraints imposed by a patriarchal and traditional society, and have called on outside institutions for assistance in achieving this goal. Schütte's (2014) research highlights that in Afghanistan, patriarchal social norms maintain a subordinate position for women, with men exerting control over various aspects of women's lives, such as their labor,

reproduction, sexuality, mobility, and access to household resources. The Taliban further institutionalized and reinforced these oppressive practices and marginalized women.

Future negative impacts of restriction policy on girls and the Afghan society

When looking at how things will change in Afghanistan in the future, there are three factors to consider that are particularly relevant to the current state of affairs, specifically the shutting down of schools for girls. Taking these variables into account, researchers aim to analyze each of them using the data gathered in our research.

A: Illiteracy

Afghanistan's overall literacy rate is 26.2%, with females significantly underrepresenting males with a literacy rate of 12.5% compared to 39.3% for males. The fact that just 40% of girls who were old enough to attend secondary school did so as of 2018 provides some insight into why this discrepancy exists. However, dropout rates were significant, with some estimates placing them at 15% by the sixth grade, even among girls who were enrolled in school (Lyons, 2023). The participants in this research all agreed that closing schools would negatively affect Afghan society because denying girls' education leads to widespread illiteracy. One of the participants emphasized that when a girl is illiterate, it means women's progress will have a ripple effect on the rest of society because the women will be the mothers of the future. She also highlights that women and girls make up half of the country's population, and therefore their education and literacy is crucial for the overall development of the society. Additionally, she states that preventing the education of women means preventing the progress of the whole society.

"It (school closure) hinders the progress of women in the society and this will affect other members of the society because the women will be the mothers of the future. Half of the country's population is made up of women and girls, illiterate women means an illiterate society, preventing the progress of women means preventing the progress of a society" (P6, April)

The other interviewee in the response to our question says that a literate society is vastly different from an illiterate one and that literacy is a key factor in the independence and empowerment of women. Additionally, she implies that literate women are more likely to raise literate children, highlighting the intergenerational impact of education.

"A literate society is so different than an illiterate society and literate women have literate children and women are independent too" (P4, April)

Kate Clark, co-director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network, stated that education and literacy are highly valued in Islam, and the Taliban could not ban girls' schools based on Islamic grounds, so they used the excuse of security concerns, but never followed through with reopening the schools (Harrison, 2021). The UNESCO report states that Afghanistan has a low literacy rate due to the long-lasting effects of war and poverty on the country's education system, which has resulted in millions of Afghans, particularly women, and girls, being denied the opportunity to learn to read and write. Despite some progress in recent years, with the literacy rate increasing from 32% in 2011 to 43% in 2018, there is still a long way to go. According to the report, 12 million Afghans (7.2 million women and 4.8 million men) who are 15 years and older are unable to read and write. If girls are not allowed to go to school, it will perpetuate the cycle of illiteracy and poverty in the country and further hinders the development of society (UNESCO, 2021).

B: Lack of hope for future opportunities

The findings of the research also show that the girls have fear and concern for the future, specifically for opportunities and well-being. One of the respondents says that the future for women is bleak and that it will have a negative impact on their overall lives.

"Now when I think abuot my future I see a dark and dreadful future for myself and other girls and women. We will not have any job or studying opportunity and it will hurts to our whole life" (P39, June).

The other interviewee utters that if she is not allowed to go to school, she will not be able to attend university, have a job, or achieve her dreams and plans for the future, due to schools being closed.

"It will absolutely impact my future. Me and most of my friends wanted to prepare ourselves for Kankor exam (college entrance exam) to go to university and finally to serve in our country and to see our country in a better place. But unfortunately right now we aren't allowed to continue further education" (P48, June).

Many international NGOs expressed their concerns about the future of girls and stated that girl's future chances may be significantly impacted if they are unable to attend school. An individual's capacity to access employment, healthcare, and other fundamental requirements are significantly influenced by their level of education. Pilar Orenes, the executive director of The Educo NGO, expresses concern that limiting girls to only primary school education will negatively impact both their individual futures and the future of the country as a whole (OCHA, 2022).

C: Women marginalization from society

The results of the research indicate that girls harbor a fear of marginalization and exclusion from the society. This fear is predicated on the belief that the closure of educational institutions will result in the perpetuation of female illiteracy, ultimately leading to the marginalization of women within society in the long term. An interviewee of this research posits that the Taliban hold the belief that the acquisition of knowledge by women will empower them and ultimately lead to resistance against the Taliban.

"In fact when they closed schools and universities it means that they want to omit women from the society. As they told in one of their speeches that they don't need women, there are many unemployed men to work instead of women. The Taliban think that if women and girls have the opportunity for improving, they will raise their voices against oppression and tyranny" (P47, July).

Rina Amiri, the U.S. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights, has consistently drawn attention to the issue of violence against women. She asserts that the policies implemented by the Taliban have denied women access to education, employment, and even recreational activities such as visiting parks. Furthermore, Amiri emphasizes that these policies have contributed to instability, economic hardship, and increased population displacement (Ahmadi & Ebadi, 2022). Women suffered severely as a result of the lack of political parties and a democratic political culture, becoming marginalized and powerless. Although "urban Afghan women middle- and upper-class families" had profited "from the post-2001 order," this does not imply that the situation for Afghan women was any better before to the Taliban's advent or that they were not politically empowered. Even in their situation, the patriarchal discourse's prevalence prevented women from having real political representation and the ability to affect policy decisions and discussions with the Taliban (Sahill, 2023).

4. DISCUSSIOIN

The right for education is recognized in many international human rights agreements, such as Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), guarantee the right to education. According to the UDHR, all people should have equal access to higher education based on merit and that technical and professional education should typically be available (General Assembly resolution 217A, 1948). The Child Rights Convention (CRC) was adopted on November 20, 1989, and it became operational on September 2, 1990. The CRC calls for States Parties to provide every child with access to a variety of secondary education options, and it mandates that all have access to higher education, based on need, using all reasonable means. Elementary education must be free and accessible to all people in accordance

with these treaties, while secondary and higher education must be "made generally available (General Assembly resolution 44/25, 1989). In order to ensure that women have equal rights to men in the sphere of education, parties are required by 'The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)'s article 10 to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women." The same item emphasizes the requirement to ensure the same conditions for enrolment in studies and completion of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories at all levels of education on the basis of gender equality (General Assembly Resolution 34/180, 1979).

However, the Taliban, since taking control of Afghanistan on August 2021, has implemented numerous policies detrimental to the education of girls, resulting in long-term negative effects on Afghan girls. Figure 3 highlights some of the Taliban's key policies against girls' education.
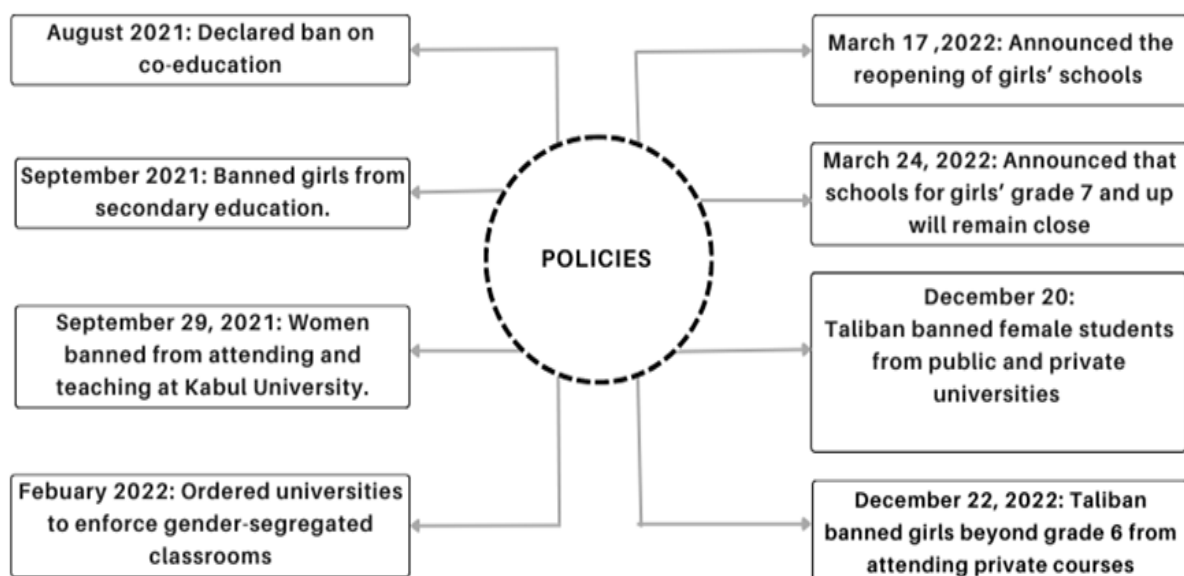

Figure 5. Key Policies Implemented on girl's education Source: Hakim (2023)

The findings of the research reveal that the above-mentioned policies (Figure-3) related to the prohibition of education for female students in Afghanistan have resulted in a plethora of negative consequences. The participants of the study conveyed experiences of stress and depression resulting from the lack of clarity regarding their future and the interruption of education. A significant portion of the study participants acknowledged that the unpredictability of their future and the absence of a school environment have contributed to their feelings of stress and depression. The research findings align with numerous reports from the media and international organizations that indicate the prevalence of mental and emotional stress faced by women, particularly female students. According to a report from The Guardian Newspaper, medical professionals in the country have warned of a rising rate of depression among teenage girls. The cause is attributed to the increased uncertainty and stress brought on by the current situation, which has left many feeling hopeless and without control over their lives. Despite the prevalence of the issue, mental health is still stigmatized in society, causing most Afghans to avoid seeking professional help and instead suffer for years. Psychologist Rohullah Rezvani emphasized this point (Glinski, 2022).

The shutdown of girls' schools has also been a problem that has worsened forced marriage and migration. Based on the results of the research, many families, due to the adverse economic conditions and uncertainty about their daughters' future, resort to forcing girls into early and forced marriages. The outcome is in line with a report by National Public Radio, an American nonprofit media organization,

which noted that while there hasn't been a comprehensive analysis to evaluate trends in early and forced marriages, there are a number of signs that point to rising rates, including studies by human rights and humanitarian groups like UNICEF and the Danish Refugee Council. According to the report, Amnesty International received more allegations about child, early, and forced marriage rates skyrocketing in localities, whether rural or urban, over the course of its inquiry from local activists and protection actors. Besides forced marriages, some families, dissatisfied with the educational conditions in Afghanistan, have chosen to migrate. The Mixed Migration Center says that as the political and economic turmoil has increased since the start of the year (2021), hundreds of thousands of Afghans have been displaced and driven to seek refuge across borders in neighboring countries and this situation is increasing every day (Mohammadi et al., 2021).

The findings of the research also demonstrate that self-reliance through education was a significant topic brought up by interviewees. Many of them stressed the importance of being able to progress through their own abilities and not relying on others and having the opportunity to work and be in society. The most crucial topic addressed in this study is that the ongoing shutdown of schools takes away the motivation of girls to rely on their own skills, and denies them the chance to become self-sufficient and work shoulder-to-shoulder with men. Denying girls access to education will result in a generation of illiteracy, leading to women becoming increasingly marginalized in society. As the theory of this study suggests, societies can be divided into public and private where traditional norms and patriarchy have always made it challenging for women to participate in social activities and remain at home, this situation is currently going on in Afghanistan and, unfortunately, has exacerbated since the Taliban's took the control of the country. The results of this study are consistent with those of numerous previous studies. According to a study by 'Women for Women International', 83% of the 204 women who participated in the survey said that the de facto authorities had tightened limitations on their freedoms and rights since August 2021. Afghan women spoke of being unable to leave the house alone or at all, as well as having limits on their ability to participate in or attend education, work, or freely move between villages (Takagi, 2017).

The research's results firmly support the theory used in this research 'liberal feminism'. According to the study, the Taliban's decision to close girls' schools has resulted in a clear separation between the public and private realms, which is consistent with liberal feminism's emphasis on this distinction. Women and girls are restricted to the home, denied an education, and pressured into conventional duties like childcare and young marriage. This reflects liberal feminism's worries about unequal opportunities for women. The study emphasizes how depriving girls of an education promotes gender inequality, having an impact not just on their destiny as individuals but also on society as a whole. The findings show that women's fear of marginalization and their potential for empowerment by education are in line with liberal feminism's emphasis on access to education, equal rights, and the notion that empowering women undermines traditional gender roles. The findings show that women's fear of marginalization and their potential for empowerment by education are in line with liberal feminism's emphasis on access to education, equal rights, and the notion that empowering women undermines traditional gender roles.

Compared to previous studies, the research findings corroborate the existing body of knowledge on the detrimental impacts of denying girls' education, such as increased rates of forced marriages, mental health issues, and a potential rise in illiteracy among women, leading to their exclusion from social activities. However, the study's focus on the Afghan context and the Taliban's policies contributes new insights into the practical implications of liberal feminism theory in a specific socio-political environment.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the negative consequences of the education ban in Afghanistan and highlighted the potential outcomes of maintaining this situation. After collecting data from 50 school girls from five different regions of Afghanistan and analyzing it, the research findings show that the closure of girls' schools has resulted in emotional and psychological problems for the girls. Forced and child marriages have increased as schools are closed, and families are concerned about their daughters' future. To alleviate the burden of limited education opportunities, some families have decided to migrate to other countries, leading to a rise in migration cases. The lack of educational opportunities for self-improvement and dependence on others, high illiteracy rates, lack of hope for the future, and exclusion of women from society is the most negative impacts of the ban on girls' education.

The education status for Afghan girls are still uncertain and despite attempts from the international community to solve the problem but Taliban has not been persuaded to open the school doors for girls. Many first-rate officials of the world countries, including Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights raised his concerns regarding the prevention of women's education and mentioned that in addition to violating the equal rights of women and girls to education, denying them access puts the future of the nation in danger given the enormous contributions made by Afghan women and girls (Bidel, 2022). Additionally, by exposing how the Taliban's policies have strengthened conventional gender roles and restricted women's access to education and possibilities for empowerment, this research is consistent with the principles of liberal feminism theory.

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for the international community to apply concerted pressure on the current government to reverse its policies regarding girls' education. Allowing an entire generation of Afghan girls to be deprived of their fundamental human right to education will have devastating and far-reaching consequences, not just for the girls themselves, but for the future development and prosperity of Afghanistan as a nation. By systematically excluding half of its population from educational opportunities, the Taliban is severely hampering Afghanistan's potential for economic growth, gender equality, and social progress. The prejudicial views underpinning the Taliban's policies fly in the face of the global consensus on gender equality and women's empowerment. To mitigate the impact of the these policies on girls' education, international organizations operating in Afghanistan should provide girls with the necessary educational materials and resources so that they can continue their studies with the same level of quality as boys, until schools for girls are reopened. This not only supports the education of the girls but also helps to prevent families from leaving the country and migrating to neighbouring countries.

While the researcher obtained satisfactory results, but it is crucial to be acknowledged that the study had limitations. Initially, accessing resources was challenging, particularly for women due to their difficult situation where most of them were not willing to be interviewed. As a result, it was difficult to gather data, and the data obtained for this research was with the condition that the names of the interviewees and their schools were kept confidential. Another limitation was that the data was collected by online interview and a more comprehensive study would require in-person interviews, which are currently challenging to conduct in Afghanistan. To address these gaps, future research should employ expanded data collection methods, strive for greater participant diversity and perform comparative analyses with other regions facing similar challenges. Overcoming the current limitations through these avenues is crucial for comprehensively understanding and addressing the complex issues surrounding girls' education and women's rights in Afghanistan.

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