Afghan Youth’s Expectation for Education, Economic and Political Development during the Reign of Taliban

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Abstract
Various aspects of life have been dramatically shifted when the Taliban conquered Afghanistan recently. However, the changes occurring in sectors of education, economy, and politics have been acquired as the prominent issues to be discussed for the three factors will become the ground of the country’s development. Thus, the study will be concentrated on the expectations of young Afghan for their country in the three aspects of education, economy, and politics. The study employs the qualitative method of the phenomenological approach. The data is acquired through in-depth interviews with twenty-five informants, consisting of five scholars, seven academicians, and thirteen influential youngsters in Afghanistan. Analysis of the data is conducted through Interactive Miles and Hubberman technique. The findings indicate four expectations of young Afghan in general. First, gender equality in education sectors means that males and females should gain similar opportunities at every level of education. Second, the duration of primary education should be shortened to twelve years as the rule recently requires elementary education for fourteen years. Third, the current curriculum should be reformed to be a more systematic, professional, and skill-oriented curriculum that graduates are qualified for job demands. Fourth, Despite of high-income tax which almost gains 50%, the reign should lower the income tax to 10% to invite investors to arrive in Afghanistan. Fifth, it is expected that the reign establishes political stability for every community group and the international world. The findings are expected to be relevant input for the reign of the Taliban for a better Afghanistan in the future.


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INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is a country with more than 99% Muslim population. This contemporary annual began with Ahmad Shah Baba in 1747 and continued into the 20th century with rulers and rulers who claimed to be guardians of the Islamic faith in maximum instances. Besides Afghanistan serves as a crossroads for many civilizations. Kingdoms such as Alexander of Macedon, the Achaemenids', Kushans', and Baktarians dominated across large areas of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia (Rois & Robaniyah, 2023). In Afghanistan, many remnants of ancient civilizations have combined to create a diverse society. In the 7th century, Islam arrived in Afghanistan, and later Islamic empires such as the Turks and Ghaznavids in Central Asia helped make Afghanistan a home (Rabbani, 2017). Notably, communities such as Balkh, Ghazni, and Herat have turned their homes into some of the most famous madrasas in Islamic history before the Ghaznavid and earlier Asian Turkic rule. These madrasas produced prominent and well-known Muslim scholars, academics, poets, and philosophers.

Historically, Islam entered Afghanistan during the era of Caliph Uthman bin Affan (Wicaksono, 2020). At that time, the great Islamic commander named Sa'ad bin Abi Waqash made an expedition and succeeded in conquering the territories in Khurasan. Today, Khurasan is an area located in Afghanistan, Iran, and several countries of the former Soviet Union. Islam is recorded to have spread to Afghanistan around 647 A.D. Islam was firmly entrenched when Afghanistan was ruled by the Ghaznawiyah dynasty (Fatianda, 2023). In addition, Afghanistan has never stopped experiencing throes, so there is no stability in terms of security, politics, social, and economy (Putra, 2021). From the 16th century to the 21st century, there have been fighting for power, ranging from wars between tribes in the nation to wars with other countries such as Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States (Putra, 2021).

Political Islam in Afghanistan in the current era is strongly influenced by the movement of the Taliban, which is considered an extremist (Azria & Ramayani, 2022). The return of the Taliban as the ruling regime in Afghanistan is an interesting phenomenon to observe (Anugerah & Purba, 2021). The large number of Afghan citizens who exodus abroad implies that the level of acceptance of the Afghan people towards the Taliban regime is very low. The Afghan people are worried that the return of the Taliban to power will trigger a prolonged crisis (Putra, 2021). Afghanistan under Taliban rule, experienced detrimental political and security conditions. Many policies restrict the freedom of the people, especially women who are the most affected by policies that limit their rights (Fatianda, 2023).

Anugerah & Purba, (2021) explain that the low level of recognition of the Taliban's return is due to the community remembering the policies adopted by the Taliban. The Afghan people certainly reminisce about the harshness of the Taliban leaders while leading Afghanistan in the 1996-2001 period. During the power of the reign, Afghanistan had been widely regressing in various sectors
such as education, health, economy and social affairs. Especially for the field of education, according to Mawardi et al., (2022) the development of education in Afghanistan experienced a setback during the Taliban rule as the regime implemented a very strict sharia law without an exception.

Afghanistan is a country that contributes greatly to discrimination and poverty among women (Rachman et al., 2020; Ramadhani, 2023). According to a UNICEF report, an estimated 3.7 million children have dropped out of school in Afghanistan, 60% of them are girls. Discrimination against women's rights in Afghanistan began 20 years ago when the Taliban took power in 1996. History records that the vacuum of power at the end of 1989 due to the defeat of the Soviet Union by the Mujahideen forces in Afghanistan became the main motive of the conflict and war between civilians (Argenti et al., 2023). The deprivation of women's rights and discrimination against women that occurred in Afghanistan is caused by several factors, including religion, education, and history (Nurfahirah et al., 2022). Moreover, the condition gets worsened when the access to health facilities, education and employment are highly restricted for Afghan women (Maharani et al., 2022).

The early days of Taliban rule were committed to women's rights. They were not opposed to women accessing education or having jobs. However, in just a few weeks, the Taliban has destroyed many schools and forced 2 million girls out of school (Putra, 2021). Furthermore, Andani, (2022) argues that the change of authority in Afghanistan does not necessarily bring good vibes, especially in terms of fulfilling women's rights. There are still many women who are continuously marginalized, discriminated, and violated. This discrimination can be seen in policy-making or regulations that focus on a certain type of gender (Adriana, 2009). In a radical opinion Septiadi, (2019); Ismira, (2022) said Afghanistan is the most dangerous country for women because of prolonged discrimination and poverty. The situation worsens with limited access for Afghan women to health, education, and employment (Karisma & Simbolon, 2023).

Thus, young people in Afghanistan who have often been characterized or classified as educated citizens are confronted with the conservative and anti-modern communities. Children, civic activists and young people speak up for human rights and freedom. These viewpoints are at the opposite of violent extremists functioning Islamic as the ultimate law of the state. The adaptation and the implementation of the Islamic sharia law are solely on the basis of the regime's interest and benefits. Thus, this is the reason for the author of this article to conduct a study of the phenomenon that occurred to Muslim youth in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime came to power. It is inseparable from the high hopes of Afghanistan's youth in welcoming their future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education was still a new phenomenon in Afghanistan, and no higher education system had been developed. As a result, the top graduate students traveled to study in foreign nations such as Germany, France, and Egypt. A small
number of female students went to Turkey to further their education (Sadat, 2004).

Significant progress was accomplished in the field of public education in 1960. As a consequence of popular pressure, middle schools have been created in all districts, however, facilities in certain zones remain poor. Furthermore, preliminary education and teacher training programs have been distributed with reciprocal and multilateral support (Giustozzi, 2010). Primary education was compulsory for all children in regions where the government had supplied the necessary facilities, and the government was responsible for constructing appropriate educational services as well as overseeing, managing, and supervising educational procedures (Yustikia, 2017).

Afghanistan is a country included approximately entirely of Muslims, and Islam pervades Afghan living, preparing a structure of minors and an origin for the communal character. The phrase “famous Islam” mentions the method in which the faith constructions ordinary living, lives tongue, raises experiment significant, and fortifies a social personality, it does not signify positional differences of the Islamic faith, nevertheless, thinned perhaps they by pre-Islamic faiths and traditions (Canfield, 2002). This means, the batch is not in distinction to the faith as specific or trained by the scholars or Islamists, signifying a high/low separation, nevertheless somewhat it is a shared denominator for all teams in the community.

The conquest of Balkh in 708-9 marks the beginning of the Umayyad Caliphate's control over what is now Afghanistan. Some Afghans rose against Damascus' new ruler. Some joined militias that were able to seize control from rival Abbasid Caliph Umayyads in 749. Until the eighteenth century, the city of Balkh was renowned as the Cupola of Islam, and Muslim academics of Islamic identity were considered precious to the place of their interment (Boyajian, 2017).

Amanullah fixed in action the sociopolitical advance of the nation-state by recommending a contemporary set of guidelines and standards. This was a ground-breaking effort since it would guarantee the rights of all Afghan citizens. Amanullah believed that by involving his people in the decision-making procedure, he could raise Afghanistan to a modern form of government founded on devotion to the leader rather than to any particular faith or ethnic group. In this system, the "sovereign is the chambermaid and protector of Islam, and he is as well the governor and sovereign of all the people of Afghanistan" distinction was made (Tarzi, 2012). In addition, regardless of their declared religious affiliation, all Afghan citizens had the right to Afghan nationality. These regulations directly reflected the goals of the Young Afghan motions.

According to Davies it appeared that the Taliban had a lot of support and popularity when they first started because of their victory over Mujahideen’s leaders. The Taliban government likewise used the violent Mujahidin textbook chain to incite the new descendant with combative Jihadist messages. Furthermore, teaching in the Taliban state was not only blatantly violent and obvious, nevertheless, it was also violent on an institutional level. Taliban heads barred females from joining schools, and this was supported by the especially stifling study of Islamic scriptures. As a result, girls were increasingly cut off from learning in a way that was characterized by quieting and inefficiency, while boys were exposed to messages of violence and disdain. Therefore, the historical legacy
Afghan Youth’s Expectation for Educational, Economic and Political Development during the Reign of Taliban

of recurring instructive failure under the Taliban state and more than two decades of violence have inescapably led to the creation of a "gone descendant" in the Afghan community, who have either been denied access to any instructive occasions or exposed to the dominant pedagogy of violence as the only option.

Realizing the role of young persons in times of war as well as their roles and opportunities within post-war rebuilding makes the idea of a "missing generation" more and more critical. The extent of Afghanistan's instructive failure confirms that very restricted achievement will be seen in post-battle rebuilding if attempts are not made to reach out to and reintegrate Afghan youth. According to Stedman's in 1997 analysis, peace procedures inescapably produce so-called "spoilers" who could weaken or endanger peacebuilding in post-war conditions.

Earlier in the twentieth century, education in Afghanistan was taught by specialized teachers at home, at mosques, in unofficial schools associated with mosques, and madrassas, and through non-official education and work (Fuady, 2015). Educational System in Kabul Province, Amir Habibullah created the first truly modern secondary school, the Habibia School, in 1903. At the same time, the first teacher training college, Dar-Al-Malimin, was formed (Sadat, 2004). The Amir of Afghanistan also constructed a school for many Pashtun children, the aristocracy, and the military in 1904, which was renamed the Harbiya Military College. In 1915, the preliminary school system was enlarged, and textbooks were made available free of charge in these institutions. After the end of Afghanistan's Third War in 1919 and the country's independence, King Amanullah proceeded to modernize the education system. He established the Ministry of Education, and the Afghan constitution made primary education essential for all residents (Sadat, 2004). In addition, King Amanullah constructed eight modern foreign language schools, three for females and five for boys. In the 1920s, preliminary schools began to be erected in major towns with the assistance of countries such as Germany, France, and Egypt. In 1921, primarily female high schools were created (Sadat, 2004). Teachers from Germany, France, England, Turkey, and India were invited to teach boys and girls in these schools (Sadat, 2004).

Education was still a new phenomenon in Afghanistan, and no higher education system had been developed. As a result, the top graduate students traveled to study in foreign nations such as Germany, France, and Egypt. A small number of female students went to Turkey to further their education (Sadat, 2004). The Islamist youth organizations displayed their enduring mentality when they approached those in charge. Neither group consistently collaborated, and they both made fervent arguments to eradicate the other and the enemy. The Mujahideen supported brutal and repressive actions, particularly toward females, in the places and areas under which they ruled (Carpenter, 1994).

The comparative advancement made in schooling and healthcare at the end of Daoud Khan's initial five-year plan demonstrates the extent of Afghan communal growth. Between 1933 and 1961, the Afghan educational program created strong foundations for progressive education able to educate pupils not only to become educators nevertheless likewise to become experts on a variety of grounds (Bashiri, 2002).

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological
approach. According to Alhazmi & Kaufmann, (2022); Yüksel & Yıldırım, (2015) the phenomenological approach is relevant if a researcher intends to explore meticulous and advanced information related to a phenomenon occurring in a society. Referring to the interpretation, this approach is relevant to the issues and objectives to be studied. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with twenty-five informants consisting of five scholars, seven university academics and thirteen young people who are considered influential in Afghanistan. To collect the interview data, the author used a set of interview protocols that had been validated by two qualitative research experts and two social science experts. All informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique with various categories determined according to the research data needs. All interview data were analyzed using the Milles & Hubberman Interactive Analysis technique.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the study and in-depth interviews with twenty-five informants consisting of five scholars, seven university academics and thirteen young people who are considered influential in Afghanistan, it is revealed that there are five main themes identified in the research, namely: first; equality in education between men and women, second; changes in the duration of education levels, third; a more systematic education curriculum, fourth reformation in economic sectors, and fifth political stability. The findings are simplified it through the following diagram:

![Diagram](image)

**Fig 1. Description of Young Afghan’s Expectation toward the reign of Taliban**

First (equal rights in education). After the Taliban comes to power for the second time, there are various fears and concerns, especially for women. These concerns are caused by the Taliban regime restricting women’s movement and applying very rigorous rules (Andani, 2022). The ruling regime does not give their rights as they should. This is inversely proportional to the concept of the Taliban regime which employs misleading Islamic law as the basis for running the government. In real, Islam refers studying as an obligation for every Muslim as said by the Prophet PBUH:
The Meaning: *The search for knowledge is an obligation laid on every Muslim, (man and woman)* (Ibnu Majah)

The above hadith is a recommendation for every Muslim to study. Meanwhile, the Taliban regime, which is based on Islam, does not implement Islamic Shar’ia as it should. This can be seen by the limited space for movement and discrimination against women in getting a proper education. As found in the following interview quotation with the informants:

Women are those who are negatively affected by the rules implemented by the regime, as they were not allowed to leave the house let alone go to school (I-4) ...Furthermore, women dropped out of school because our schools had been closed by the ruling government... (I-11). Women were only allowed to go to school until the age of eight... (I-19). We also want women’s rights in terms of education to be fulfilled by the government (I-23).

Related interviews show how Afghanistan has become a country that discriminates against its citizens in education, especially for women. Based on a study performed by Nurfahirah et al., (2022); Shamimi & Rijal, (2022) it is revealed that Afghanistan has become the largest country in contributing to discrimination and poverty for women. Furthermore, Nurfahirah et al., (2022) argued that the main factor in the discrimination of women’s rights in Afghanistan is the return of the Taliban to power for the second time. In another study by Anugerah & Purba in 2021 it is also due to the Taliban’s military repression in education, the dominance of Pashtun ethnicity, restrictions on education for women, and a different education system from the general. The situation was exacerbated by the Taliban government's policy towards women by not allowing women to go to school. After the Taliban comes to power, all schools in Afghanistan, especially schools for women are abruptly closed. According to Unriana, (2014) women have to accept many rules that make them unable to go to school.

According to a UNICEF report, an estimated 3.7 million children drop out of school in Afghanistan and 60% of them are dominated by women (Lestari, 2021; Nurfahirah et al., 2022; Argenti et al., 2023). Discrimination against women’s rights in Afghanistan began 20 years ago when the Taliban took power in 1996 (Salsabila, 2023). This history records that the vacuum of power at the end of 1989 due to the defeat of the Soviet Union from the Mujahideen forces in Afghanistan then became the root of the conflict and war between civilians to gain power (Nurfahirah et al., 2022). According to Paletchan et al., (2023) only 14% of Afghan women are educated. Only 4 - 5% of women in rural areas are able to read. The situation is further complicated by the cultural factor that considers that women are not obliged to achieve the highest possible knowledge among Afghan society (Nurfahirah et al., 2022).

Afghan women have suffered a lot due to discrimination, causing it to become a country experiencing a humanitarian crisis where women occupy the largest portion as victims. Not only that, women are officially banned from education and face various employment discriminations. Women are required to wear traditional pashtun Muslim clothing that covers the entire body (Burqa). Meanwhile, wearing a turban and growing a beard are mandatory for men. Six months after taking power, finally the Taliban regime through its official broadcast has ensured that women can still get a higher education at the university.
Secondly, education in Afghanistan consists of three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary education with 12 years of education. One is required to take additional two more years of education to enter the workforce. To see the extent of the views and expectations of Afghan youth on these problems, the author conducted interviews with the following informants:

The Taliban regime has made rules that make the youth’s future only to study, while the youth want to shorten the study period (I-1 & I-18). The Taliban regime has made rules that are not in accordance with the facts on the ground, they only force the youth to continue studying without any end and goals to be achieved, the objection is not without reason, because Afghanistan is experiencing a period of economic crisis due to prolonged war (I-7, I-11 & I-14).

The long period of education in Afghanistan has triggered new conflicts. There are many demonstrations related to the Afghans’ animosity with the prevailing system. The demonstration is a form of concern and anxiety of Afghans about their future under the Taliban regime as the ruling regime implemented a worsened educational system that led to educational turmoil as revealed by the following informant:

During the Taliban era, education was up to 14 years for primary education. (I-9, I-11, I-20 & I-25). If we wanted to work in the government then we were required to go to university first (I-11, I-20, I-18 & I-24).

The interview illustrates how Afghanistan has a long educational period. To obtain a certain degree in Islamic studies, students can continue additional education at Madaris for 2 years until grade 14. The long period of education diminishes the hopes of the younger generation to work and live a decent life. It is different in developed countries where all citizens are given equal opportunities to work (Anoraga & Sakai, 2023).

Thirdly, education in Afghanistan generally consists of three levels, namely: Ibdtidaiyyah Madrasah, Vustani Madrasah, and Fauquani Madrasah. For private madaris, the curriculum is Dars-i Nizami, a traditional curriculum designed by Nizamuddin Silhalvi and Shah Waliullah in the 18th century. The curriculum in Afghanistan is very similar to that in Pakistan. During the Taliban era the education curriculum was strictly enforced. As in the following excerpt from an interview with an informant:

The educational curriculum in Afghanistan is always changing depending on the ruler (I-15, 19, 20 & 22). Changes in the curriculum of each leader have an impact on education in Afghanistan and we hope that there is a stable curriculum and in accordance with the interests of Afghanistan in general (I-6, I-9, I-13 & I-14).

The changing of educational curriculum in each era of the ruling regime in Afghanistan has had a negative impact on the quality of education (Anugerah & Purba, 2021; Agustina, 2021). In another opinion, Haqqani explains that the Taliban intends to create an Islamic curriculum that is in accordance with the Islamic values, and the national and historical values of Afghanistan (Budiawan & Utomo, 2023). Haqqani’s opinion can be concluded that the curriculum changes made by the Taliban regime are an attempt to create a curriculum that was in accordance with Islamic and Afghanistan’s national interests. This means that the Taliban regime has its own way of designing the education curriculum in Afghanistan without considering the current job market situation and demands.

Fourth, the economic sector is one of the paramount aspects to be
highlighted in Afghanistan. However, the regime has imposed restricted regulation as many investors closed their business. The Taliban regime imposed a 50 percent tax on corporations operating in Afghanistan (Anugerah & Purba, 2021). Furthermore, Anugerah & Purba, (2021) explained that apart from imposing a 50 percent tax on corporations, the Taliban also imposed an import tax policy of 60 percent on any goods or commodities brought into Afghanistan. The economic policy choices made by the Taliban eventually brought Afghanistan down in the economic sectors. This situation will certainly affect the availability of jobs for Afghans themselves. The failing economic sector affects the availability of jobs for the population. Jobs are scarce and many government workers have not been paid since at least July (Putra, 2021). In addition, the Taliban is also considered to have committed violence against women by bringing women to the lowest position by considering them as a burden on the family (Rumadaul, 2017). This can be seen in the following excerpt from an interview with an informant:

In general, we want progress from the economic sectors (I-2, I-8 & I-19). We expect that there will be improvements from the economic sectors and that it should be given special attention by the ruling regime (I-4, I-21 & I-23).

Fifth, the political stability of a country is the determiner to all policies in many sectors in the country. Undoubtedly, when political conditions are not conducive, all policies will have a negative impact on the people. The reign of the Taliban regime since May 2021 has been a scourge for Afghans. The unstable political stability of the Taliban era has hampered progress in various aspects. The Afghan people are worried that the return of the Taliban to power will trigger prolonged unrest. The Afghan people certainly have not forgotten the past events that traumatized them deeply. These concerns and traumas are the result of the war which led to state bankruptcy and political bankruptcy. Such circumstances have led Afghanistan to become the world's 10th worst country (Hadibroto, 2002). Afghanistan under the Taliban regime, experienced chaotic political conditions as most of the policies limit the freedom of the people. Women are mostly affected by policies restricting their freedom in many sectors (Fatianda, 2023). For more details, it can be seen in the following quotation of interviews with informants:

We feel worried about the security of our country with the return of the Taliban to the Government (I-3, I-16 & I-18). Afghans fear that they will experience the same thing as in the previous Taliban era (I-20 & I- 25).

The interview reveals how concerned Afghans are about the Taliban regime. If we look at the Taliban era, Afghanistan is now much safer and more humane (Hasyim & Massi, 2022). The current regime has tried to pay attention to the rights of civilians. Therefore, in this case, the Taliban regime must be able to prove to the outside world that they deserve to lead Afghanistan in the future by paying attention to the rights of its citizens. It is also proof that they are leading for the benefit of the Afghan people.

CONCLUSION

Pursuant to the discussion in this study, it can be concluded that there are five expectations of Afghan youth towards the Taliban regime today. The top of the five concerns are equal rights in education between men and women. Furthermore, they also hope that there will be curriculum reformation by shortening the education period. Moreover, the Afghan youth also expect
improvements in the economic sector by opening up jobs and inviting shareholders to invest. Finally, the youth expect political stability in the country. Political stability is the main point that must exist in Afghanistan for it is the ticket for outside world trust that Afghanistan is a politically safe country. Political stability in Afghanistan will be an open platform for bilateral diplomacy between countries.

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Afghan Youth’s Expectation for Educational, Economic and Political Development during the Reign of Taliban


