



# Investigating the Status of Women's Education under Taliban Rule

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## Abstract

Education is one of the most basic and obvious needs of a society, which plays a significant role in human progress and development. It empowers people intellectually and spiritually and leads to improvements, innovations, and discoveries. In Afghanistan, especially after the formation of the interim government, significant progress has been made in education. However, challenges remain, including the gender gap in education. While measures have been taken, the participation of girls in schools and universities, especially in rural areas, is low due to cultural and traditional restrictions. In the past, the Taliban has caused irreparable damage to the Afghan education system, especially for girls. This article investigates the impact of Taliban rule on women's education in Afghanistan. The Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law has severely restricted women's rights, including access to education. The study utilizes a qualitative research method specifically a case study approach, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis, to gather data on the Taliban's policies, the evolving practices regarding women's education, and the influence of Afghan culture and social values. The findings highlight the significant challenges faced by women in accessing education, such as cultural attitudes, poverty, and security concerns. Despite efforts to improve women's education, there are concerns about the future under the recent return of the Taliban to power. The study highlights the need for multi-faceted strategies, including challenging Taliban ideology, increasing awareness, imposing restrictions, and providing suitable solutions to promote women's education. Overall, sustained efforts and long-term commitments from various stakeholders are crucial in overcoming challenges and ensuring sustainable change in women's education under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

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## INTRODUCTION

Women's education in Afghanistan has been deeply impacted by the rule of the Taliban, a militant extremist group that has enforced strict interpretations of Islamic law (Singh, 2022). Under their regime, women have faced severe restrictions on their rights, including access to education. The Taliban has historically banned girls from attending school, destroyed educational institutions, and implemented

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strict gender segregation policies, leading to profound consequences for women's economic and social status. Efforts have been made to improve women's education in Afghanistan, but cultural attitudes, poverty, and security concerns continue to pose significant challenges (Najibi & McLachlan, 2023; Mashwani, 2017; Wahyono, 2022). The recent return of the Taliban to power raises concerns about the future of women's education and rights in Afghanistan.

During the two periods of Taliban rule (1996–2001) and (2021–now), many women and girls were deprived of further education and work, and this regime applied severe gender segregation, which practically prevented girls and women from attending schools and universities (Hanif et al., 2022; Qahar Sarwari & Adnan, 2023). In addition, the curriculum taught under the Taliban regime was heavily influenced by their ideology and prioritized religious subjects while neglecting other subjects such as natural and social sciences, mathematics, and modern languages (Kumar, 2019; Mulholland, 2023; Pherali & Sahar, 2018). The education and labor situation in Afghanistan improved after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001.

Women in Afghanistan have made significant progress in the last few decades. Participation and presence of women in politics, work, education, sports, and social and cultural activities are among the most important achievements of women (Çevik et al., 2021; Wimpelmann, 2015). In addition, during this period, hundreds of thousands of girls received the right to education, and tens of thousands of girls went to university. Women in Afghanistan achieved progress in their education, work, and other rights after the rule of the Taliban (Albrecht et al., 2022; Yousufi, 2021). And most of the girls and women went to schools and universities; in addition, programs such as raising awareness and upgrading women's skills were also held. During this period, women were able to participate in the houses of representatives, urban and rural councils, and other government. While women were barred from participating in political issues in the past, now a large number of women are active at the political level. Women are actively working in various economic sectors such as agriculture, commerce, public and private organizations, etc. While women faced limitations in the past, they are now present in many sectors. Women in Afghanistan are also active in various artistic and cultural fields. They are present in fields such as music, poetry, painting, literature, etc (Albrecht et al., 2022; Saeed, 2015; Yousufi, 2021).

The Taliban's return to power in 2021 has raised concerns about the future of women's education in Afghanistan (Raouf, 2023). While the Taliban have made statements that they are willing to allow girls to go to school under certain conditions, reports of Taliban fighters attacking and killing female students and teachers cast doubt on the veracity of these statements. During the two periods of Taliban rule, women have faced an uncertain future in the field of education.

During the first period of Taliban rule, from 1996 to 2001, the group banned girls from going to school and women from working outside the home (Hanemann, 2015). The Taliban also destroyed schools and universities that allowed female students and teachers. By implementing their interpretation of Islamic laws, has been shown to have negative consequences for women's education, work, and rights. The Taliban's opposition to girls' education is based on its extreme ideology, which considers women's role to be only at home (Khoja-Moolji, 2015). And during their two rounds of rule, they imposed a strict

ban on women's rights to education, work, and activities. This ban had consequences for the economic and social status of women. The recent return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan has raised concerns about the potential impact of women on their education, work, and rights, and they are worried about losing their decades of gains in various sectors and returning to the dark future of the first round (Noury & Speciale, 2016).

Investigating the status of women's education under Taliban rule is the title of the article, and the purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the issue of women's education under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, including the historical background, current situation, potential results (Yaqubi & Mehrnoosh, 2023). The education of women under Taliban rule is a complex and deeply worrying issue. When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, they implemented strict policies that severely limited women's access to education. Girls were forbidden to go to school, and women were not allowed to work outside the home and could not even leave the house without a sharia mahram. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, efforts have been made to improve women's access to education in Afghanistan (Kayen, 2022).

The Afghan government, international organizations have worked to build schools and universities, train teachers, and provide scholarships and other support for girls and women. As a result, the number of girls who went to school increased significantly, and the literacy rate of women reached about 30% (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015; Stromquist, 2015). However, there are still many challenges to improving women's access to education in Afghanistan, including cultural attitudes, poverty, and security concerns. However, the situation remains fragile, and there are concerns that the Taliban's recent return to power will once again limit women's education. The Taliban have announced that they will allow girls to attend school, but it remains to be seen how this will be implemented in practice. Everyone's access to education is one of the most basic rights of every citizen, and unfortunately, half of the society in Afghanistan is deprived of this right. Depriving half of society of education based on gender discrimination is the cruelest action of the Taliban in 21st century.

The novelty of this research lies in its investigation of the current state of women's education under the Taliban's regime, addressing the potential challenges and opportunities for progress in the aftermath of the group's recent return to power (Asril et al., 2023). By examining the multifaceted factors impacting women's education, this research aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies and interventions that promote women's access to education and empower them to play active roles in the development of their country. The findings of this research can inform policy recommendations and guide efforts to counter the Taliban ideology, increase awareness, impose restrictions, and provide suitable solutions to ensure the advancement of women's education in Afghanistan.

The research is conducted to find answers to the following questions: How has the Taliban government affected girls' rights to education in Afghanistan? What are the Taliban's specific policies and practices regarding women's education in Afghanistan, and how have they evolved over time? And what extent do Afghanistan's culture and social values affect women's access to education, and what strategies have been effective in promoting women's education in this regard?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of women's education under Taliban rule in Afghanistan has been the subject of extensive research by researchers and experts in various fields, including education, gender studies, and international development. Before the Taliban came to power in the mid-1990s, women had made significant gains in education, with more girls attending school and women participating in higher education and the workforce. However, the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law has led to significant restrictions on women's education and other rights (Engkizar et al., 2021). This literature review examines the impact of the Taliban regime on women's education, the consequences of these restrictions, and efforts to improve women's access to education in Afghanistan.

Many articles have been written about education and women. In addition to extensive research by researchers and experts in this field, the institutions and countries involved in the Afghan issue consider issues such as women's access to education, respect for basic human rights and freedom, and respect for the rights of minorities as the most important conditions for recognition (Feyyaz, 2016; Ghasemi, 1999; Gupta, 2019; Lo et al., 2023). Knowing that this diet has been laid The Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 1996 and immediately implemented strict Islamic laws.

One of the most important restrictions imposed by the Taliban was on women's education and work. They believed that women should not be educated and should only stay at home to take care of their families. The Taliban forbade women from going to schools, universities, or any other educational institution (Yousufi, 2021). The ban on women's education under the Taliban regime had a devastating effect on women's access to education. According to Harsch et al., (2021); Niaz Asadullah et al., (2019), only 5% of women in Afghanistan were literate, compared to 38% of men. This gap increased during the Taliban regime. Lack of education has also limited women's economic opportunities and contributed to their marginalization in society.

The educational restrictions on women during the Taliban era had significant consequences for society. Women were denied the opportunity to develop their potential, and many lost critical skills and knowledge that could have helped them improve their lives and contribute to their communities. In addition, the lack of educated women has contributed to Afghanistan's overall economic and social underdevelopment (Sahar & Kaunert, 2021). In the second period of their rule, the Taliban continued to repeat the tragedy of the first. According to reports, the Taliban imposed restrictions on women's education, work, and activities in the first days of their rule. Women were forbidden to go out, work in offices, or attend schools and universities. All of these barriers have raised concerns about their long-term impact on women's educational and career opportunities in Afghanistan.

In addition, later women have imposed new restrictions on women's activities in public places. Women are required to wear a veil when leaving the house and be accompanied by a sharia mahram. This has raised significant concerns about women's safety and ability to access basic services such as health care. After the restrictions imposed by the Taliban, a number of women in Kabul and other provinces started a civil protest, but unfortunately, these demonstrations were violently suppressed, and these women faced the violence

and mistreatment of the Taliban. And this has caused significant concern about the safety of women and the possibility of widespread human rights violations under the Taliban regime.

### **Women and education in two periods of Taliban rule (1996–2001) and (2021–present)**

The first period of Taliban rule began after the overthrow of the Mujahideen government in 1996. When the Taliban came to power, a dark period for Afghanistan's education began, and it didn't take long for the anti-human policies of this group to reveal their true face. Dictatorship and terror reigned. The use of devices such as photography cameras, filming, video, and television was declared forbidden. The period of this group can be described as the dark age of education. Because they were alien enemies with knowledge. Especially new knowledge never had a place in that regime. During the same period of power, schools, especially girls' schools, were closed. And women and girls were officially forbidden from going to offices or working outside the home and were forced to stay at home. But what the Taliban did in boys' schools was to replace the main themes of Islamic teachings, so that the main and basic themes are completely out of the curriculum, were dismantled (Krzyżanowski, 2022).

The pessimistic policies of the Taliban had significant effects on the freedom and lives of women. According to Hervey, (2023); Nakanishi, (2022), on September 28, 1996, the Taliban announced the order of their Amirul Momineen through Radio Sharia that women are completely prohibited from working abroad and girls can no longer go to school. About 250 women in Herat province disobeyed this order. As a result, they were brutally beaten by Taliban forces for not respecting Islamic rule. During the first period of Taliban rule, women were only allowed to work in the medical field, especially in the Kabul Medical School, where they could treat and care for female patients. These five years have been quite dark in terms of women's access to education. In 2001, the Taliban announced that women could receive education after implementing a special law, but they did not implement such a law until the last day of their rule (Khwajamir, 2016).

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan again, and with the coming to power of this group, two decades of achievements in the fields of freedom of speech, democracy, the right to work and education for women, establishing relations with the world, freedom of the press, and other developments were destroyed. After coming to power, the Taliban claimed that they would behave more moderately than before and that women would be allowed to study, work, and engage in social activities, but these promises were nothing but deception. In the first days of their rule, the Taliban announced an interim government, and the interim cabinet of the Taliban did not have any female members. The Taliban issued a statement asking women to stay at home. However, women's demonstrations with the slogan "women's rights are equal to men's". Education, work, freedom moving towards settlement the champion cabinet with the presence of women" marched in different parts of Afghanistan to demand their rights (right to education, work, and freedom), and due to the return of the Taliban movement to power in Afghanistan, the women of this country are facing a very ambiguous situation.

A quote from a women's rights activist about the provision of their rights



by the Taliban: "Afghan women's demand from the Islamic Emirate government is not to ignore women, not to trample on women's rights, and not to take away opportunities from Afghan women under various pretexts". He further added: "We want that if the government is inclusive, if you want the system to survive and not collapse, the role of women in the government of the Islamic Emirate should not be ignored." The Taliban's restrictions on the education of millions of Afghan women and girls have various consequences for women, society, and the future generation. In the short term, it limits women's and girls' opportunities for personal growth and development and hinders their ability to contribute to their families, communities, and wider society. Lack of education also contributes to poverty and economic insecurity, which can have significant social and economic consequences.

### **Who is the Taliban?**

The Taliban is an armed group with extreme Islamist ideas. It was formed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 1994 and was overthrown by the USA-led coalition in 2001. At first, there was a group of Mujahideen who fought against Russia like other Mujahideen, and it slowly turned into a fast-growing Pashtun movement that ruled Afghanistan for two rounds. The founder was Mullah Muhammad Omar, one of the local clerics who led this group until his death in 2013.

The Taliban believe in a government that is governed by "Amir al-Mu'minin" and use the word "Amir al-Mu'minin" in its fundamentalist meaning. Amir al-Mu'minin does not need to be elected by the people, and therefore he will not be accountable to anyone. Based on this intellectual theme, not only women but all citizens of the property and obedience of Amir al-Mu'minin are considered citizens with rights. The concept of religious legitimacy of Amir al-Mu'minin as the highest authority of the country does not recognize elections or an elected government (Pennell, 2016; Sharon, 2017).

Taliban ideology is based on an interpretation of Sunni Islam, and they believe in establishing an Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan. Regarding the education of women, they believe that women should not be exposed to non-religious teachings because this is considered against Islamic teachings. They also believe that the main role of women should be inside the home, and the education of women can lead to their liberation and empowerment, which, in their opinion, is a threat to their fundamentalist ideology. The Taliban's rule was based on its strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia. Public executions and whippings were common, and women were largely prohibited from studying or working and were forced to wear a burqa or headscarf in public. The Taliban banned Western books and movies and destroyed historical monuments of other traditions and cultures, including the 1,500-year-old Buddha statue in the Bamiyan province (Hervey, 2023).

As for Islam, it has always emphasized education, and they consider individual and social development and progress to be dependent on education. In addition, there are many verses and hadiths. God has assumed that every Muslim has the right to study and learn, regardless of gender. "Iqra" is the first word that God revealed to the great prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH). The declension of "Iqra" as the first word indicates the importance of learning. Considering the importance of science and knowledge, the religion of Islam has assigned the task of learning them to Muslim men and women (Paivandi, 2019). Quran Surat Az-Zumar verse 9;

... قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Meaning; "...Are those who know and those who do not know equal?"

Quran Surat Tahaa verse 114

... وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

Meaning; "...Lord, increase my knowledge"

Quran Surat Al-Alaq verse 1-5

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ

الْأَكْرَمُ (٣) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٥)

Meaning; "1) Read! In the name of your Lord who created, 2) he has created man from blood 3) Read And your Lord, the most glorious 4) who teaches (man) with a pen 5) he teaches man what he does not know..."

Two important and fundamental sources in the religion of Islam are the Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet, and these two sources emphasize the learning of men and women. So, on what basis do the Taliban prevent women from getting an education? It is a question that has not yet been answered by anyone from this group.

Afghanistan is home to different ethnic and linguistic communities: Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Baloch, etc., each with their own unique cultures and traditions. Afghan culture has a significant impact on women's education in the country. Historically, Afghan society has been deeply conservative and patriarchal, with traditional gender roles limiting women's access to education and public life. The traditionality of Afghan society and discrimination between men and women are two of its cultural and social inadequacies.

There is a change in attitude towards the education and work of women and girls in different provinces and communities. There are some communities and regions where people have a high level of education and encourage girls to continue their education, which leads to the development of society. turn around for example, in Afghanistan, the Hazara community has more educated women and girls compared to other communities because the leaders and elders of this community have always supported women's and girls in education (Hervey, 2023; Nakanishi, 2022). In addition, there are groups in Afghan society that may limit women's access to education, consider girls' work and education a source of shame, and consider women to be the second sex.

For example, a number of Pashtun people explain and justify their special approach to women by relying on the "Pashtun Wali" ritual, and in this ritual, it is practically impossible to place independence as given to women in Pashtun tribes. The identity of women can be defined next to that of men, and for this reason, they use women and girls as tools in tribal fights and even to pay off debts (Gupta, 2019; Wahyono, 2022). However, it is important to note that not all Afghan cultural and religious traditions are inherently against women's education. In fact, there are many communities in Afghanistan that have a long history of supporting women's education and, despite significant challenges, have made significant progress in improving women's access to education over

the past few decades.

### **Women and an unclear future**

A woman is a mother, and a mother is the first teacher for a child. For the development of a society, it is necessary for women and girls to be educated in order to present a literate generation to society. The position of mothers in the structure of a society is very vital, and the progress or failure of a society can be attributed to the right or wrong upbringing of mothers and parents in general. In addition to these restrictions, it can lead to a significant loss of human capital and limit the country's ability to develop and compete in the global economy, and investing in women's education can have a positive effect on improving social progress and reducing poverty. In general, the condition of women's education in the first Taliban regime was dire, and women were mostly deprived of education and public life (Saigol, 2002). The situation under the current Taliban regime is still changing, but there are concerns that women's education and participation in public life will be limited again, despite the Taliban's promises. It remains to be seen whether the Taliban will allow women to fully participate in education and public life or continue to impose restrictions on women's rights.

If we think logically, the influence of women's education in society is greater than that of men. Why? Because a woman, in her role as a mother, is considered to be the main part of a child's upbringing, and with her behavior, she determines the child's future, this is how the possibility of a man's ascension from a woman's lap is provided. In human life, raising a child is of special importance. These are the women who give birth to tomorrow's generation. In addition, women can play a role in society in two ways: one is by raising righteous children and handing them over to society. As half of society, their role and presence are in the political, economic, cultural, and scientific fields. Woman is the foundation of human existence and life. A woman is a role-playing architect and a master artist at laying the foundation and structure of human personality.

### **There are two sides to the Taliban in relation to women's education**

The findings of the research show that there is a deep divide within the Taliban group regarding the education of girls, and this may be one of the factors behind the closure of girls' schools. On March 21, 2022 (the beginning of the Afghan school year-education year), the Taliban withdrew from their decision to reopen girls' schools, one day before the start of the school year. The Taliban leadership canceled the announced decision to reopen the schools and said that a comprehensive and Islamic plan is needed to reopen the schools for girls. This decision led to protests in Kabul and widespread international condemnation. But on that day, the female students returned to their homes with disappointment and tears in their eyes.

A quote from female students regarding the closure of schools: "When I heard the news of the opening of schools yesterday, I was very happy... I cried to God, but today I was very upset. What can I say? I didn't say anything; what can I do? They destroyed our dreams. We are also girls. We wish to study, become doctors, and become engineers, but they don't want anything". Another quote from a teacher of girls' school in Kabul, "I see my students crying, and they don't want to leave the class." "It hurts me so much to see my students cry," she said. A quote from a university student regarding the closure of universities: "The day the announcement was broadcast, we felt bad, and my friends and I



felt that we were an extra part of the society that wanted to remove us". She added that: I can participate in the demonstration, but for fear of harming my families, I cannot participate in the demonstration. But regarding the closure of schools and universities for women, the United Nations have remained silent and have only expressed their condemnation by distributing leaflets. Afghan women and girls hoped that these institutions would impose strict sanctions and restrictions on the Taliban, but this did not happen.

### **Opposing views of girls' education**

The findings show that among the Taliban group, some members are strongly Islamist and extremist and against women's work and education. These are most of the leaders and fatwa givers in this group. Among them, Amir al-Mu'minin, the Minister of Higher Education of the Taliban, and the Minister of the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of, the quote of the Minister of Higher Education of the Taliban in an interview with the media: "Education of girls is a foreign culture, and it was transferred to Afghanistan during the time of Amanullah Khan and Zahir Shah". In addition, he called the education of girls in conflict with Islam and Afghan and added that Amanullah Khan was trying to promote western prostitution and revelry by creating education for girls. After the publication of this interview, this Taliban minister was sanctioned by the European Union on March 7, 2023, in connection with the rapid violation of human and women's rights.

### **Opinion in favor of girls' education**

Among the Taliban group, the members have educational qualifications, are in favor of women's work and education, and most of them are young and educated people. Among them the ministry of defense, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the head of the National Olympic Committee, etc. The deputy foreign affairs minister quote: "Education is mandatory for both men and women." Noble scholars are present here; no one can deny his assumption. This is an absolute assumption. No one has any reason to say that I do not accept this; there is no religious reason. Dozens and hundreds of fatwas are available. Our property is full of scholars, and everyone agrees on this. The educational environment should be improved as soon as possible, and the gates of schools in Afghanistan should be opened to everyone as soon as possible.

The chairman of National Olympic Committee of Taliban, is among the younger members and the moderate group of the Taliban who agree with the opening of girls' schools. The decision to postpone and prevent the education of female students will cause distance between the people and the Taliban rule and increasing the distance between the people and the Taliban will end in war, and the people will win the war. In addition, the families of some members of the Taliban group live outside the country and are busy studying there, but millions of girls in Afghanistan have been deprived of education. As a result, it turns out that in addition to the two sides of the Taliban, there are other issues related to women's education that have not yet been resolved. Because this group officially claimed that they were no longer against girls' education, in practice only a few of their officials allowed girls to be educated until puberty.

## METHODS

The research adopts a qualitative research method, specifically a case study approach, to provide a comprehensive exploration of the complex dynamics and contextual factors impacting women's access to education under the Taliban's ruling (Flick, 2014; Mutathahirin et al., 2022; Poya et al., 2023). Semi-structured interviews with female activists and students, conducted remotely through platforms like WhatsApp to ensure participant safety, provide first-hand accounts and perspectives on the impact of Taliban policies on girls' education. Additionally, a review of relevant documents, including official reports, news reports, and media sources, offers insights into the historical context and evolving policies surrounding women's education under the Taliban rule. To analyze the collected data, thematic analysis is employed, enabling the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and commonalities in relation to women's education under the Taliban regime (Asmaldi et al., 2022; K, 2019). Thematic analysis facilitates a comprehensive interpretation of the data, leading to meaningful and coherent findings that shed light on the extent of Taliban influence, specific policies and practices, and the impact of Afghan culture and social values, all contributing to a deep understanding of the research questions (Akalibey et al., 2023; Fricke et al., 2023; Jaafar et al., 2023; Ranjbari et al., 2022).

In this research, data has been collected through semi-structured interviews with female activists and student girls through WhatsApp. I hold a semi-structured interviews with five school student and 1 female teacher and 2 female activists. In addition, talked via voice call with 3 parents. Because of the security situation I conducted remotely through platforms such as WhatsApp to ensure access and safety of participants. Based on review of documents and news reports: A comprehensive review of relevant documents including official reports and news reports will be conducted. I reviewed many national and international news media, articles and documents related to women education and Taliban.

This review provides a historical context and insights into evolving policies and practices regarding women's education under Taliban rule. In addition, data has been collected through domestic and foreign media reports, magazine articles, and authoritative websites of national and international institutions related to women and education. All interview and document data were analyzed thematically using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model. After the interviews were completed with all informants, a transcription process was carried out, then the author selected themes that were appropriate to the research needs (Febriani et al., 2023; Oktavia et al., 2023).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women's education in Afghanistan has experienced significant issues during two different eras of Taliban control, the first from 1996 to 2001 and the second from 2021 to the present (Barazangi, 2013; Shaffer, 2019). These times highlight the difficulties Afghan women and girls have faced in pursuing an

education. The Taliban's ascension to power in the 1990s was a dark moment for women's education, with rigid interpretations of Islamic law severely limiting women's access to school and employment. Girls' schools were closed, women were prohibited from working outside the home, and curricula were changed to conform to Taliban dogma, resulting in disturbingly low female literacy rates. Following the Taliban's demise in 2001, numerous groups launched projects to create schools, educate teachers, and give vocational training to boost women's educational access. The United Nations' "Back to School" campaign intended to educate previously denied females. Despite advancements, societal norms, poverty, and security concerns remained issues.

The findings of the research suggest that under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, women's education has been heavily restricted due to the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law (Wolf, 2019). The Taliban has implemented policies and practices that have severely limited girls' access to education, leading to the destruction of schools and universities and the imposition of gender segregation. As a result, women have been deprived of education and work opportunities, negatively impacting their economic and social status.

Furthermore, the research has shed light on the influence of Afghan culture and social values on women's access to education. It is evident that societal norms and values play a significant role in perpetuating gender inequalities and limiting women's educational opportunities. Cultural attitudes, coupled with poverty and security concerns, pose significant challenges to improving women's access to education in Afghanistan (Abukari, 2014; Karimi, 2022; Sahar & Kaunert, 2021).

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Despite their assurances of allowing girls to attend school, the Taliban's return to power in 2021 aroused concerns regarding women's education. Attacks against female students and instructors, along with an all-male interim administration, raised questions about the government's commitment to women's rights. The report highlights the Taliban's significant barriers and limits

on women's education, which not only impede women's personal and economic growth but also violate their fundamental rights and obstruct societal and economic progress (Weigand, 2017).

The results of this study paint a sobering picture of the barriers and limits placed on women's access to employment, higher education, and other social activities. During both of its reigns, the Taliban rule severely restricted girls' access to education. Girls were completely barred from attending school during the first phase (1996-2001), and women's employment possibilities were nearly nonexistent. Because the Taliban destroyed schools that allowed female students and teachers, female literacy rates fell significantly. Following the fall of the Taliban administration, there were efforts in Afghanistan to improve women's access to education.

The Taliban first pledged a more moderate approach in the second phase (2021-present), but then imposed limitations on women's education and labor, raising worries about women's rights and access to education. During both periods, the Taliban imposed tight gender segregation, barred girls from attending school, limited women's work, and imposed a curriculum substantially influenced by their ideology, focused on religious themes and remove another subject. They announced in the second phase that girls will be allowed to attend school under specific conditions, but the execution is still dubious.

Afghanistan's culture and societal conventions have long posed difficulties for women's education, with deep-seated gender inequities. Due to the Taliban's strict application of Islamic law, girls' education and women's employment are now prohibited. According to their worldview, women's only place is in the home. Additionally, women's educational opportunities severely declined throughout the administration. Women were not allowed to work outside the house, and girls were not allowed to enroll in schools or universities. The curriculum was altered to reflect the Taliban's ideology, neglecting essential courses and putting a greater emphasis on Islamic doctrines.

As a young Afghan, it is clear that denying women's education is a violation of their fundamental rights and an obstacle to social and economic progress. Education is essential for the development of individuals and society as a whole, and women's education is vital for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment (Hanif et al., 2022; Hervey, 2023). Therefore, efforts should be made to ensure that women in Afghanistan have access to education and work and to protect their rights. This requires the support of international organizations and governments, as well as the promotion of gender equality in society. Today, many Afghan women and girls seem affected and disappointed, and only through these efforts can we hope to create a future in which women in Afghanistan have the opportunity to reach their full potential and grow and develop country to help.

To address the challenges facing women's education in Afghanistan, especially under the Taliban regime, it is necessary to adopt a multifaceted

approach with the participation of various stakeholders including the international org, and the local community, Islamic institutions and Islamic countries and Muslim scholars and scientists should challenge the ideas of the Taliban in relation to women's education and call them for negotiation and debate, International community should impose restrictions and sanctions on the Taliban government and officials that prevent girls from studying, training and working, Campaigns and awareness programs should be done to highlight the importance of girls' education and to eliminate misconceptions and stereotypes that prevent them from accessing education (Burrige et al., 2016).

The international community should continue to provide financial and technical support to Afghanistan to strengthen the education system and ensure equal access to education for all. Donors can work with local partners to implement effective programs and initiatives that address the specific challenges faced by women and girls in accessing education, by implementing these recommendations, Afghanistan can make significant progress in promoting women's education, closing the gender gap, and empowering women and girls to use their capacities as active participants in the development of their country. However, it is important to understand that sustained efforts and long-term commitments from all stakeholders are necessary to overcome entrenched challenges and ensure sustainable change (Krzyżanowski, 2022; Pennell, 2016; Yaqubi & Mehrnoosh, 2023).

In conclusion, the Taliban government has had a negative impact on women's education in Afghanistan in both periods. However, it is important to continue to support the right to education for women in Afghanistan, both now and in the future, and work towards a society that values and supports the education of all its members, regardless of gender (Azzahra et al., 2021; Chineme et al., 2022; Raouf, 2023; Snow & Matthews, 2016). In addition, there is a need for local communities to cooperate to remove cultural barriers and promote gender equality in society, and efforts should be made to interact with this group through the dialogue and interaction of influential scholars and elders within the framework of Islamic laws to ensure that girls can It is important that they go to school safely and without fear of violence. This may include negotiating with the Taliban to allow access to education or providing security and protection for schools and students (Kayen, 2022; Khoja-Moolji, 2015; Noury & Speciale, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law has significantly restricted women's access to education in Afghanistan, banning girls from attending school and destroying educational institutions, which has severely impacted women's economic and social status. The article emphasizes the need for multi-faceted approaches to advance women's education, including challenging the Taliban's ideology, increasing awareness, imposing restrictions, and providing suitable solutions with international support. Despite efforts to improve women's access



to education, challenges such as cultural attitudes, poverty, and security concerns persist. The return of the Taliban to power raises further concerns about the future of women's education and rights in Afghanistan, underscoring the necessity of comprehensive strategies to ensure equal educational opportunities for women.

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