Educational opportunities and challenges in Afghanistan

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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Education is of great importance in developed and underdeveloped countries. In this respect, this article aims to analyse the opportunities and barriers to education in Afghanistan. Sources that discussed opportunities and barriers to education were identified and analysed. Primary data was collected from the Bamyan and Daykundi provinces in Afghanistan. This article shows five reasons for the inaccessibility of youth to education during the republican government (2001– 2021), and five alternatives when they do not access education. Violence, discrimination, and security were the three major challenges to attaining an education. The types of violence and discrimination in educational institutions were identified and discussed. This article also focuses on four sources of discrimination in educational institutions in Afghanistan.

KEYWORDS: *Barriers on Education, Violence, Discrimination, Security Threat, Source of Discrimination.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as essential for long-term development and as a fundamental human right. In recent years, significant efforts have been made to improve access to education in low and middle-income countries (Snilstveit et al., 2017). Afghanistan is one of those countries that needs more efforts to pave the way for the younger generation to attain education. The modern educational system was introduced in Afghanistan in the late 19th century, and in the 20th century, gradually, it was developed by the Afghan rulers throughout the country.

The government established a Board of Education in 1909 to manage education throughout the country, including traditional educational institutions. Several primary and secondary schools, along with a school for girls and an adult education institute for women and technical education in sectors including agriculture, arts and crafts, and public administration, were built in Kabul in the 1920s (Samady, 2001). The Ministry of Education was inaugurated in 1922 to support the growth of several general and vocational schools in Kabul and other large cities. Due to the expansion of higher education institutions, in 1977, the Ministry of Higher Education was established to consolidate the country's higher education institutions (Sherzad, 2017; Kamgar, 2008).

From 1929 to 2001, educational advancements were made in Afghanistan. However, during centuries and decades, there were significant challenges, particularly for female educators. Education has now improved in comparison to prior periods (Khwajamir, 2016). From 2001 to

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2021, there were opportunities to start schools and universities. During that time, a large group of young people went to schools and universities and achieved high degrees.

The last 20-years efforts (2001-2021) on education can be divided into two periods in terms of opportunities and challenges. First, from 2002 to 2014, when the security situation in the country was better and there were fewer threats against the education system and schools; and second, from 2014 to 2021, when the security situation deteriorated, especially in most parts of the south and southwest of Afghanistan, schools faced severe threats.

Twenty years of democracy have been a good opportunity for the growth of education, but some challenges cannot be ignored. This paper aims to discuss the developments in the education system from 2001 to 2021, which paved the way for the access of youth to education and the challenges in Afghanistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern education was introduced in Afghanistan by Amir Shir Ali Khan (1868–78), with two formal schools in Kabul (Khwajamir, 2016). With the opening of the new education system in the country, the kings of Afghanistan worked one after another to develop education. King Amanullah Khan (1919–29) made primary schooling compulsory. More than 322 primary schools were opened in all provinces of the country, and hundreds of students were sent abroad to study (Kamgar 2008; Vardag 2016). Nadir Shah (1929–33) established the Faculty of Medicine, the Arabic Academy, and the School of Pharmacy during his tenure (Panjsheeri 2017).

Since the Soviet Union's invasion in 1979, education was limited to the cities, which were under the control of the central government (Khwajamir, 2016). The country was thrown into chaos by the Mujahedeen's rule in 1992, with approximately 60 percent of school buildings and other educational institutions in Kabul and 70 percent of school buildings in the provinces destroyed by 1995 (Panjsheeri, 2017; Spink 2006). With the arrival of the Taliban in 1996, in parts of southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, all secondary and high schools closed because the Taliban argued that participation in jihad was a priority in contrast to education (Panjsheeri 2017).

From September 2001, with the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the need for education was highlighted as one of the key areas for post-conflict support (Spink 2005). In cooperation with foreign partners, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan, as the responsible institutions for education, carried out a good deal of work. The priority for the Ministry of Education was to attract children to attend school. In the spring of 2002, a total of 4 million students entered schools. According to the new constitution, the government was obliged to provide free educational services for children up to the age of a bachelor's degree (Vardag, 2016; Pherali & Sahar, 2018). The Ministry of Higher Education also reopened many universities in 2002, and many students went to universities to continue their higher studies.

Building and repair of schools and universities was another programme for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Pherali & Sahar (2018) stated that between 2001 and 2018, the Afghan government has built and reinstated more than 16,000 schools in support of its developmental partners. The Ministry of Higher Education also built provincial universities in every province to accept more students each year during this period. Roof (2014) and Couch (2019) asserted that higher education in Afghanistan made progress from only five public institutions in 1995 to 34 public and 101 private institutions in 2015. Since 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education has emphasised establishing more colleges and universities (Chauhan, 2008).

Higher education has increased, with the number of students from approximately 6,000 in 2001 to almost 100,000 in 2012 and over 300,000 estimated by 2020 in public higher education. There

were an additional 100,000 students expected to be enrolled in private institutions throughout the country (Berger & Thoma 2015; Hayward & Babury 2015). This shows that there was a demand for growing higher education for 20 years in Afghanistan due to the increasing number of students year by year.

There was a focus on equal access to education for girls during the Islamic Republic. Thus, special programmes were implemented for older girls who had previously missed the chance for formal schooling in the country (Jones, 2008). From 2002 to 2005, there was school registration for girls aged 15 to 16, with a demand for more girls to attend school. These new registered girls were starting classes in the 7th grade. To eliminate ethnic, religious, linguistic, and group discrimination, school textbooks were rebuilt during this period, expressing equal rights for all religious and ethnic groups. In December 2002, a draught of the new curriculum was presented (Jones, 2007) so that in the period of 2002 to 2006, syllabuses and textbooks for primary and secondary education were developed and disseminated in schools across the country (Georgescu, 2007).

Challenges and Barriers
Poverty

Along with their school, children took responsibility for some work at home and outside, like the other family members (Whitsel & Mehran, 2010). Families were waiting for their sons to return on holiday from university and helped them in terms of living costs. For those who did not pass the entrance exam for governmental universities, a second choice was to enrol in private universities. Middle-class and lower-class families could not afford higher education costs (Baharustani, 2012).

Lack of Equipment for Schools and Universities

The challenge for schools and universities was inadequate facilities, including chairs and chalkboards. Sallah (2016) stated that only 5 percent of high schools had a science lab for students, and there was no computer or internet in high schools. Roof (2014) reported in 2009 from a professor at Kabul University that having more than 100 students in a class was a major issue. The lack of classrooms for schools and universities, transportation, qualified teachers, drinking water, and so many other problems were challenging the students.

Cultural and religious barriers

The most obvious barriers could be shown to be cultural and religious factors that caused discrimination and violence. Gender disparities persisted in the southern provinces, where girls made up less than 15 percent of total enrolment. Parents were willing to enrol daughters, but issues such as the unavailability of separate sessions and classrooms for girls and ensuring security in conservative areas were key concerns (Jones, 2008). Gender inequality in Afghanistan was at an all-time high, with females being discriminated against in a variety of ways, including a lack of access to higher education (Baharustani, 2012; Mashriqi, 2016; Amiri, 2016).

Violence and security

Security concerns prevented parents from sending their children to school. In some rural areas, schools were burned down, allegedly by the Taliban. School teachers and headmasters were threatened to avoid teaching girls (Whitsel & Mehran, 2010; Sallah, 2016). Security in Afghanistan has been fragile in the last twenty years. Thousands of communities did not have access to schools due to distance or security. Insurgents burned down or closed down 6 percent of schools between October 2005 and March 2007 (Sigsgaard & International Institute for Educational Planning, 2011).

Objectives

1- To assess the access of the youth to education and their satisfaction with the government's activities in education during last twenty years (2001-2021) in Afghanistan
2- To examine challenges and barriers to education experienced by the youth during the above period

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary data for the study has been collected by way of a questionnaire. Data collection has been done in two provinces of Afghanistan; Bamyan and Daykundi. A sample of 350 respondents was selected through a stratified random sample from among students, PGs, teachers, and stakeholders. The secondary data collection focused on documents like books, magazines, and journals; the collected data was analysed and possessed by the use of computer assistance. The data was analysed using Ms. Excel and SPSS statistical measures for descriptive statistics. While in tables and figures, the percentage of each Likert Point Scale is reported, in interpretation, the strongly agreed and agree points are considered as agreed, and strongly disagree and disagree points are considered as disagree.

ANALYSES AND RESULT

Table 1 Personal Profile of Respondents

Profile	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	269	76.8%
	Female	81	23.2%
	Total	**350**	**100**
Age group (in years)	17-25	156	44.5%
	26-35	157	44.7%
	36-45	36	10.5%
	46 and above	1	0.3%
	Total	**350**	**100**
Religious Sect	Shia	331	94.4%
	Sunni	19	5.6%
	Total	**350**	**100**
Ethnic Groups	Hazara	311	88.5%
	Sadat	23	7.0%
	Tajik	9	2.5%
	Pashtun	4	1.1%
	Uzbeks	3	0.9%
	Total	**350**	**100**
Education Qualification	Graduation	190	54.5%
	P.G.	66	18.6%
	Technical	3	0.9%
	University Student	91	26.0%
	Total	**350**	**100**
Occupation	Government Job	142	40%
	Private	59	16.9%
	Self Employed	51	14.8%
	Agriculture	7	1.8%
	Student	91	26.5%
	Total	**350**	**100**

Table no 1 illustrates the demographic variables. Of the total sample size of 350 respondents, 76.8 percent were male and 23.2 percent were female. The data shows that a high proportion of respondents were men. It means that in Afghanistan, men had more opportunities to study or work in educational institutions than women, and women may have been denied education and outdoor work due to discrimination or other societal barriers.

The table indicates that 44.7 percent of respondents were between 17 and 35 years old, 44.5 percent of them were between 26 and 35 years, 10.5 percent were between 36 and 45 years, and 0.3 percent were above 45. The age profile shows that most of the participants belonged to the younger generation. That is why more than two decades of war (1978–2001) destroyed many infrastructures in the country, and educational institutions were almost inactive. Although 26.5 percent of respondents were students and belonged to the younger generation, many teachers, staff, and stakeholders in education were also young and graduated during the last 20 years (2001–2021).

The data shows that 94.4 percent of respondents were Shia and 5.6 percent were Sunni. Two dominant Islamic schools of thought, Shia and Sunni, live in Afghanistan along with some other religious minorities like Hindus, Salafiya, and Naqshbandiya. There were possibilities in the questionnaire to record responses from all minorities, but there are only Shia and Sunni in the research area.

The table indicates that 88.5 percent of the 350 respondents were Hazara, 7.0 percent Sadat, 2.5 percent Tajik, 1.1 percent Pashtun, and 0.9 percent Uzbeks. Although the Hazara were the country's third minority, a large number of them belonged to them because the majority of residents in Daykundi and Bamyan were Hazara. Sadat is the other ethnic minority that live among Hazara with the same culture, religion, and social norms. Placing ethnic groups in the questionnaire may reveal their different attitudes and perceptions about modern education or education reforms. Or, there are various forms of discrimination against some minorities in the educational system that are revealed during the discussion.

The table shows that 54.5 percent of respondents were graduated, 18.6 percent were P.G., 0.9 percent were technical, and 26.0 percent were university students. As the article is about educational opportunities and challenges, it is logically true that questionnaires must be filled out by more educated people who are more eligible to give accurate responses. As each level of education has its own demands and perceptions on education and other issues, different levels of education were chosen to represent different ideas on education.

Table 1 indicates that 40.0 percent of respondents had a governmental job, 16.9 percent had a private job, and 14.8 percent were self-employed. However, 1.8 percent were working in agriculture, and 26.5 percent were students. People with different jobs reflect varied viewpoints and show many aspects of any issue, as well as education.

Table 2 Satisfaction of respondents from government work on education

	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfied	169	48.3%
Neutral	57	16.3%
Dissatisfied	124	35.4%
Total	**350**	**100**

Table 2 reveals that 48.3 percent of respondents were satisfied with government work on the education system, and 35.4 percent showed dissatisfaction with the government's action on education. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the government's work on education.
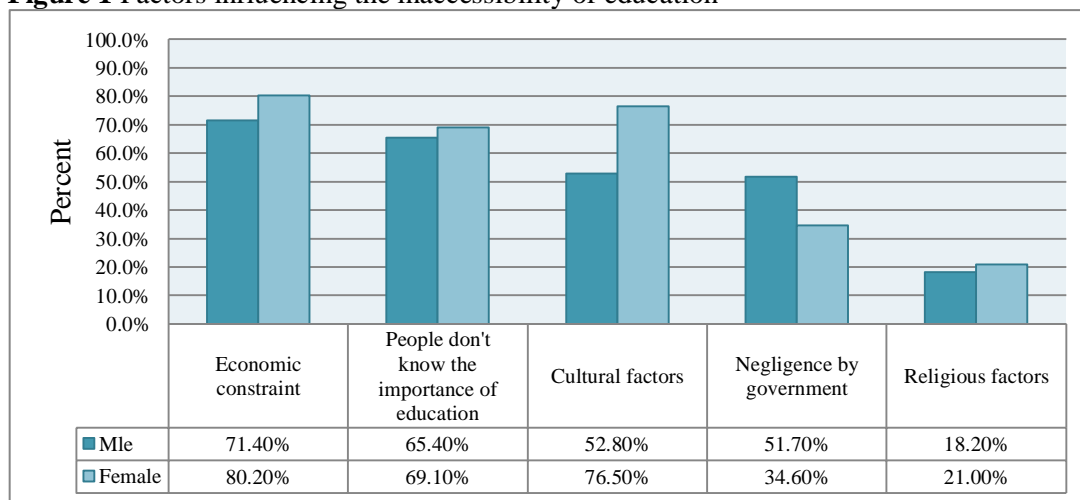
People have seen an inclusive education system over the last twenty years (2001–2021), so they have expressed their satisfaction with the availability of educational institutions with ignorance of deficiencies. Another reason for respondents' satisfaction was the unavailability of a competition sphere between private and governmental educational institutions to show them their weaknesses and strengths.

Table 3 Satisfaction from programmes of the government for those who do not have access to education

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	104	29.7%
Neutral	113	32.3%
Disagree	133	38.0%
Total	**350**	**100**

Table 3 shows that 29.7 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the government's programme for people who were deprived of school, but a significant number, comprising 38.0 percent, disagreed with the fulfillment of the government's programmes and taking responsibility. The majority of the respondents showed their disagreement and said that the government had neglected those who had been deprived of education. The government really had no programme to bring back students who were deprived of education in school or university, so the disagreement of respondents was rooted in reality.

Figure 1 Factors influencing the inaccessibility of education

	Economic constraint	People don't know the importance of education	Cultural factors	Negligence by government	Religious factors
Mle	71.40%	65.40%	52.80%	51.70%	18.20%
Female	80.20%	69.10%	76.50%	34.60%	21.00%

The above figure shows that economic constraints were at the top of the barriers in the way of education. From a sample size of 350 respondents, 71.4 percent of males and 80.2 percent of females reported economic constraints as the main barrier to education. Poverty had affected many aspects of people's lives and had imposed many problems on them. Most of the students worked with their families after returning from school or university. Students rushed to assist their families during the holidays instead of studying or doing any other academic activities. In many cases, students were involved in family incomes and deprived of education. There were also some families who could not send their children to school because of the cost of education. Therefore, some children were deprived of education throughout their childhood careers. Besides the general economic problems in education, girls were affected by economic constraints more than boys; in tribal areas, women didn't have any authority over the family's capital.

The second major barrier was the unawareness of civilians that most of them didn't know about the importance of education, so 65.4 percent of males and 69.5 percent of females presented. Most

people do not understand the significance of knowledge or do not know that gaining knowledge needs practise and is time-consuming. So, firstly, they ignored their children's education in order to

 send them to school. Secondly, they did not know that their schoolchildren needed to study when they returned home; so parents were sending their schoolchildren to work after they returned home, and children missed opportunities to learn properly. Therefore, students spent half of their days in school and the other half shepherding or working. In some tribal areas, people believed that it was sufficient for their children to read and write in their local language, so they thought school and university were unnecessary. As a result, their children did not attend school or university.
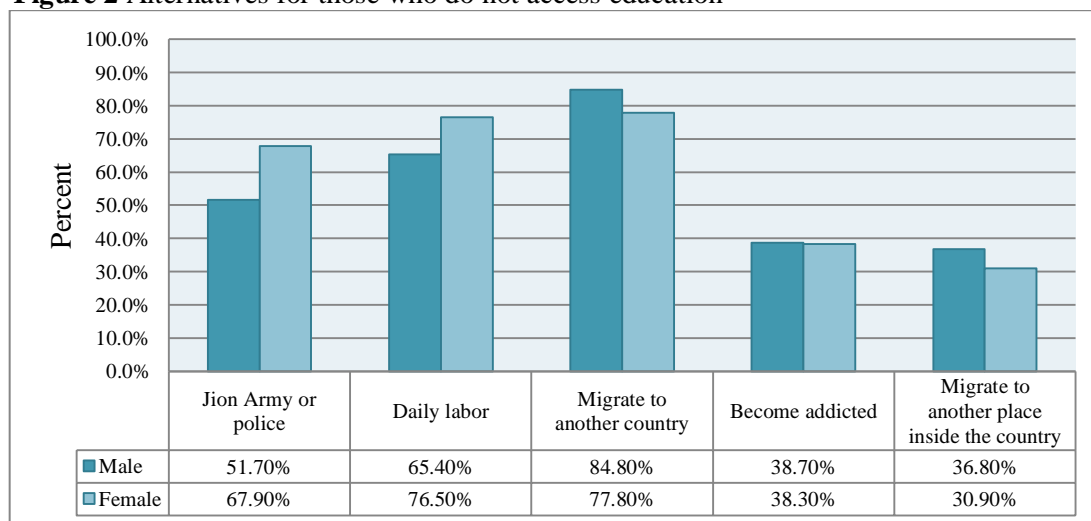
Figure 1 indicates cultural factors as a barrier, which 52.8 percent of males and 76.5 percent of females have mentioned. In some areas, due to a lack of teachers, classes, and facilities, boys and girls were forced to study in the same class, which was contrary to tribal culture. As a result, girls were not permitted to attend school. Some people believe that schools and universities represent modernism and are used as centers of cultural aggression. So they supported religious schools instead of schools and universities and burned schools in the areas. The result was the dropping out of hundreds of students.

There are still areas in Afghanistan where people are afraid to send their daughters to educational institutions. The presence of girls in education and work is a disgrace and a shame to some residents of tribal areas, and they think when their daughters go out of home, they destroy the family's pride. According to these people, genuine Afghans are those who do not send their daughters out of their homes. That is why, after the prohibition of schools for girls under the Taliban regime, all protests occurred in Kabul or some other cities but not in rural areas.

Another barrier to education was government negligence, which was cited by 51.7 percent of males and 36.6 percent of females. For the past two decades, the government has utilized comprehensive resources to help people of all backgrounds learn and enroll in educational institutions, but the situation remained fragile, especially after the domination of the Taliban. The absence of experienced teachers, suitable facilities, and a lack of budget were all significant problems. All of these issues were accompanied by poverty, cultural obstacles, and religious barriers. The result was to deprive a large percentage of young people of schools and universities. The republican government did not have a concrete plan for them, and neither do the Taliban.

The religious factor represented a barrier that 18.2 percent of males and 21.0 percent of females had mentioned. The Islamic text is one, but each sect interprets it differently based on its own goals and perceptions of the locality. In some locations, religion is one of the main obstacles to the expansion of modern education throughout the country. The interpretation of tribal clerics from the Islamic text is entirely anti-women and anti-modern values. In most tribal communities, misinterpretation of the Islamic text has set many schools on fire, resulting in both boys and girls being deprived of education.

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Figure 2 Alternatives for those who do not access education

	Jion Army or police	Daily labor	Migrate to another country	Become addicted	Migrate to another place inside the country
■ Male	51.70%	65.40%	84.80%	38.70%	36.80%
■ Female	67.90%	76.50%	77.80%	38.30%	30.90%

As illustrated in Figure 2, 84.80 percent of males and 77.80 percent of females mentioned that people who can't attend schools or universities migrate to other countries. 65.40 percent of males and 76.50 percent of females expressed that deprived of schools and universities were attending to daily labour. 51.70 percent of males and 67.90 percent of females reported that they joined the army or police. 38.70 percent of males and 38.30 percent of females mentioned that people who do not have access to education become addicted. And finally, 36.80 percent of males and 30.90 percent of females believed that young people deprived of education were migrating to another country.

In the past twenty years, those who did not have access to education have picked one of the five options listed above. Some people would rather go about their daily lives and provide a living for themselves and their families. Some thought that joining the army or police would be the best way to earn more money and have a job guarantee. However, most young people believed that leaving the country would offer them greater work opportunities and financial resources, as many migrated to other countries. Internal immigration was also an option for those who lacked education. Unfortunately, some young people have also been damaged by addiction.

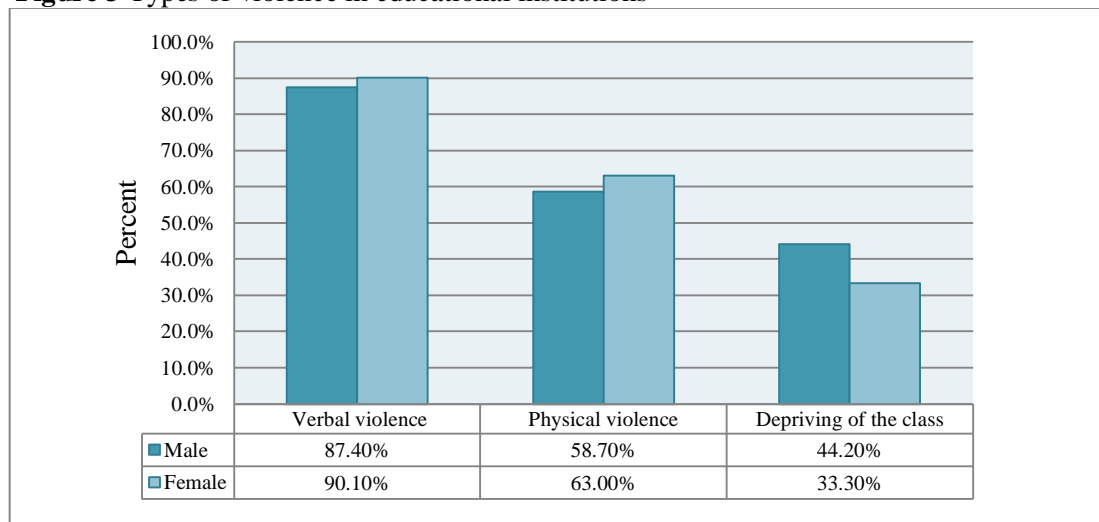**Table 4** Incidents of Violence, Discrimination and Security Threat.

Survey Question	Valid Cases	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total Percentage
Incidence of violence in educational institutions	350	340	97%	10	3%	100
Discrimination in educational institutions	350	344	98%	6	2%	100
Security threat	350	223	64%	127	36%	100

The above table indicates that 97 percent of the respondents reported incidents of violence in educational institutions in Afghanistan. Violence is a phenomenon that exists in all societal organizations and affects many people. Government and non-government organisations have taken no effective action to reduce violence during the last two decades (2001–2021). Most people who used violence in educational institutions may have been unaware of its negative consequences and may have believed that violence was necessary in some instances. A significant number of students were discouraged by violence during their presence in educational institutions. Students who were involved in violence were victimized, isolated, and, in many cases, dropped out of schools and universities.

Table 4 shows that 98 percent confirmed the cases of discrimination. Discrimination in educational institutions has become prevalent, and it includes gender, ethnic, religious, language, class, and geographical discrimination. According to Baharustani (2012), Mashriqi (2016), and Amiri (2016), gender inequality in Afghanistan is at its peak as females are discriminated against in many cases, and lack of access to higher education is one of them.

Table 4 indicates that 64 percent of the respondents expressed security threats in educational institutions. The provinces of Bamyan and Daykundi have experienced the least security threats in the last 20 years (2001–2021). But many students, school teachers, and university professors left educational institutions across the country. Security concerns prevent parents from sending their children to school. In some rural areas, girls' schools were burned down by the Taliban. Teachers and headmasters were threatened to avoid teaching girls (Whitsel & Mehran, 2010; Sallah, 2016). Thousands of communities did not have access to schools due to distance or security. Between October 2005 and March 2007, insurgents burned down or closed down 6 percent of schools (Sigsgaard & International Institute for Educational Planning, 2011).

Figure 3 Types of violence in educational institutions

	Verbal violence	Physical violence	Depriving of the class
Male	87.40%	58.70%	44.20%
Female	90.10%	63.00%	33.30%

Data in the above figure indicates that 87.40 percent of males and 90.10 percent of females faced or witnessed verbal violence in educational institutions. There were three major categories of violence in educational systems in the last two decades. All or most students were familiar with the above-mentioned sorts of violence. Verbal aggression can range from ironic remarks to insulting students. Girls were more susceptible than boys to verbal aggression. Students were often fearful of being insulted if they asked a question or criticised a teacher. In some institutes, the teacher-student relationship was like a slave-master relationship, marked by dominance from one side and obedience from the other.

Figure 3 indicates that 58.70 percent of males and 63.00 percent of females confirmed physical violence. Physical violence, which was considered punishment, was one of the most widespread habits in schools. Many students who have been physically punished and abused were affected by bad long-term memories and suffered mentally. In some cases, students who have been physically punished are seeking revenge one day. That was why we were witnessing or receiving reports of teachers being beaten in educational institutions by students.

According to survey results, 44.20 percent of males and 33.30 percent of females reported being denied access to classes in educational institutions. Conflicts between students or confrontations between students and professors have resulted in students being sent down from educational

institutions. In some cases, students have been forcibly transferred from one educational institution to another as a kind of punishment in order to complete their studies in a remote area.

Figure 4 Types of discrimination in educational institutions

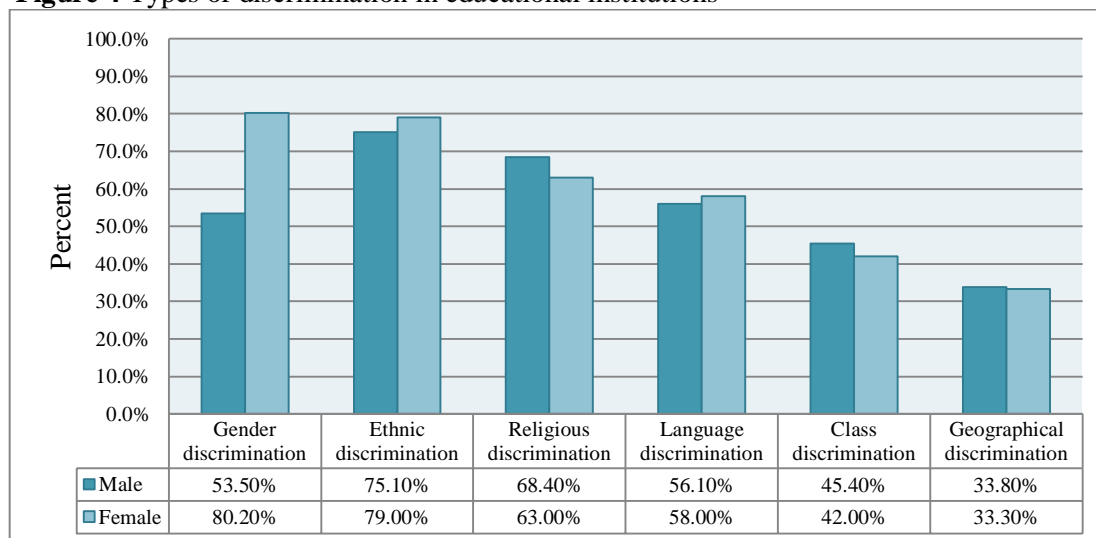|	Gender discrimination	Ethnic discrimination	Religious discrimination	Language discrimination	Class discrimination	Geographical discrimination
Male	53.50%	75.10%	68.40%	56.10%	45.40%	33.80%
Female	80.20%	79.00%	63.00%	58.00%	42.00%	33.30%

Figure 4 shows that 75.10 percent of males and 79.00 percent of females reported facing or witnessing ethnic discrimination in educational institutions. Ethnic discrimination affects Afghans' daily lives and has reached crisis proportions in several circumstances. Even though schools and universities were expected to take steps to minimise racial tensions, many incidents occurred in these institutions. In some cases, ethnic groups strived to highlight their members while oppressing others. One ambition was achieved when teachers of a particular ethnic group gave a higher score to their group members than to others. Sometimes, the dominant ethnic group awards all human honours to one ethnic group while humiliating other ethnic groups.

Survey data shows that 53.50 percent of males and 80.20 percent of females witnessed gender discrimination. In Afghan society, gender discrimination is one of the most widespread and deep-rooted kinds of discrimination that has caused many girls to drop out of schools and universities during the last two decades. The traditional local view about women is that they are unable to attain the same achievements as men. So, men have forcibly deprived women of their rights in most aspects of life, including education.

Figure 4 indicates that 68.40 percent of males and 63.00 percent of females mentioned religious discrimination in educational institutions. The religious text has mostly been misinterpreted in tribal areas. There are groups of people who are against modern knowledge and do not want new textbooks or new curriculums. They use religion as a frame to carry their own beliefs and perceptions to the public to gain financial profit and receive political power. The Taliban group is on top of them. This perception has hurt educational institutions.
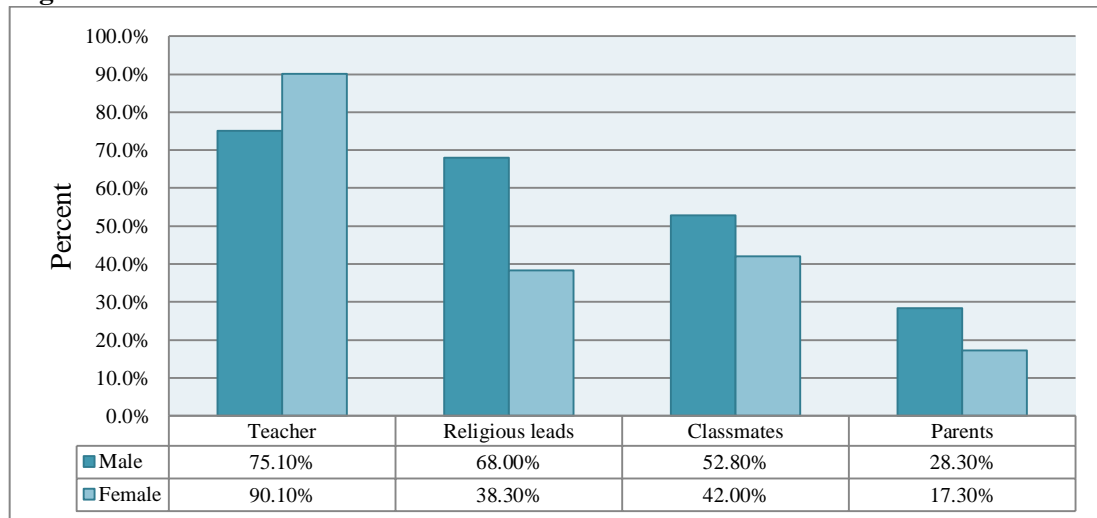
According to the survey data, 56.10 percent of males and 58.00 percent of females reported language discrimination. Language is another source of conflict between different speakers in the country. There are cities and regions where speakers of two or more languages are in the same educational institutions. In these areas, discrimination occurred against the speakers of a language in which they have less power.

Figure 4 revealed that 47.40 percent of males and 42.00 percent of females mentioned facing class discrimination in educational institutions. The gap between social classes in Afghanistan is widening, and this gap has resulted in a breakdown of class relations. The higher classes are always the source of this division. The top groups in society have the power to attract greater

attention to their children in educational institutions. As a result, they are treated with respect, and also, if there is a conflict between students of the upper class and the lower class, the upper class is always supported. All schools' and universities' honours are awarded to the upper classes, and the talent of the lower classes has been denied.

Finally, 33.80 percent of males and 33.30 percent of females expressed the availability of geographical discrimination in educational institutions. Geographical discrimination was also one of the issues that people were involved with. Some provinces of Afghanistan have been in political and military conflicts with each other during the decades of civil war. The education system was also involved in these conflicts, so the residents of some provinces discriminate against the residents of other provinces.

Figure 5 Sources of discrimination in educational institutions

	Teacher	Religious leads	Classmates	Parents
■ Male	75.10%	68.00%	52.80%	28.30%
■ Female	90.10%	38.30%	42.00%	17.30%

The above figure shows that 75.10 percent of males and 90.10 percent of females believed that discrimination occurred through teachers in educational institutions. Due to the weakness of the rule of law in Afghanistan, the upper classes and dominant groups who had more power than the others discriminated against the lower classes in any place and any sphere. In educational institutions where students of different ethnicities and different classes studied together, teachers of the upper classes and dominant groups discriminated against the weak groups. As girls were weak among any social group, they suffered more in social interactions and more in educational institutions.

According to survey results, religious leaders were sources of discrimination for 68.01 percent of males and 38.30 percent of females. The majority of religious leaders are opposed to modern education. They believe that schools and universities lead young people down the wrong path, separating them from religion and destroying traditional values. The religious leaders kept their dominance over society by pushing their personal beliefs, which they refer to as Islamic principles. Religious leaders discriminate against followers of other religions or other Islamic schools of thought. In some cases, religious leaders were employed as teachers in educational institutions. They discriminated against followers of other religions and other Islamic schools of thought.

Figure 5 indicated that 52.80 percent of males and 42 females expressed that discrimination was associated with classmates. Classmates were another source of discrimination. In educational institutions, students who belonged to ethnic majorities, religious majorities, and other dominant groups were discriminated against by minorities and vulnerable social groups.

Another source of discrimination reported by 28.30 percent of males and 17.30 percent of females was parents. Discrimination by parents is most common in the family sphere. In some cases,

parents who have sons and daughters prefer that their sons attend school while keeping their daughters at home. Also, a family may send one or more of their sons to school or university while keeping others at home and depriving them of an education. In some cases, discrimination was rooted in the poverty of families, which kept one or more of their sons working at home to help them with their living expenses.

DISCUSSION

The present study pertaining to challenges and barriers to educational opportunities in Afghanistan revealed that men had more chances of having educational opportunities than women, and that was because the females might have been deprived of education due to racial discrimination or social barriers. Moreover, it was found that, in many instances, the most critical barriers causing youth to be deprived of education were economic constraints; unawareness of civilians about the importance of education; cultural factors; negligence of government and religious factors. People who were deprived of schools or universities were dissatisfied with the government's activities to find a solution to their problems.

Overseas migration, laboring, joining the army, addiction, and internal displacement were found to be the choices of people who were deprived of education. The study further revealed that the external factors causing the inaccessibility to education were the prevalence of violence, discrimination, and insecurity in Afghanistan. Verbal, physical, and deprivation of classes were all forms of violence in educational institutions during the last two decades. Besides, ethnic discrimination, language discrimination, gender discrimination, religious discrimination, class discrimination, and geographical discrimination were the most prevalent types of prevalent discrimination in educational institutions. Teachers, religious leaders, classmates, and parents were found to be the sources of discrimination.

CONCLUSION

The present analysis shows that most people were satisfied with the government's schemes in education, but they also feel that the government did not take good actions for the good of those who did not have access to education. There were five barriers for youth that prevented them from attending the schools or universities discussed here and some alternatives. Violence was a major challenge in educational institutions that was articulated in three kinds: verbal, physical, and depriving of the classes discussed in the article. Discrimination was another challenge that young people faced. Of the six types of discrimination mentioned in this study, only ethnic discrimination was very prominent. The source of discrimination was another important issue that the study focused on. There were four sources of discrimination in educational institutions in Afghanistan. Teachers were ranked first, religious leaders were second, classmates were third, and parents were last.

After assessing the opportunities and challenges of the education system, the basic requirement is systematic and honest work in accordance with Afghanistan's education system. In addition to cultural obstacles, the country's educational progress suffers with the political activities. The country's rulers' hostage-taking of the educational system to achieve political goals has placed the educational system in a bad situation. Since the Taliban came to power, the condition of educational institutions has deteriorated, and girls are prohibited from going to school. Afghan people wish the UN and other international institutions and human rights activists must try to bring a change to the Taliban decision.

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