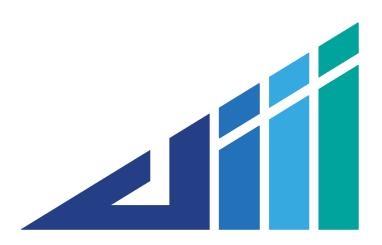
Gender and Taliban Ideology:

Pashtun, Women's Education and Politics in Afghanistan



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# GENDER AND TALIBAN IDEOLOGY: PASHTUN, WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND POLITICS IN AFGHANISTAN

by

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#### Introduction

Nearly 20 years from today, the Taliban was deposed by the U.S. in a military operation. This was in response to the Taliban's support of Al-Qaeda, an international Islamist terrorist organization. The Taliban regrouped and started an insurgency, which by 2005 was challenging U.S. military forces and the new Afghan government, as well as its emerging security forces in some parts of the country. U.S. forces declined after a 2009-2011 surge as Afghan forces assumed responsibility for national security. The Taliban continued to gain battlefield victories due to deep and persistent divisions within the Afghan political elites (Thomas, 2021).

The February 2020 U.S. Taliban agreement was signed in Doha (Qatar) by the Taliban. It stipulated that the Taliban would take specific action to stop other groups (including Al Qaeda), from using Afghan soil for their purposes. This was in exchange for the complete withdrawal of all international forces from Afghanistan by May 20, 2021. The U. S (Curtis, 2021). President Joseph Biden delayed the withdrawal date for several months in 2021. Two weeks before that withdrawal, the Taliban invaded Kabul on August 15, 2021 (Sakhi, 2022). This marked the end of a massive military advance that shocked many Americans and Afghans. As of November 2021, there is no credible Afghan armed opposition against the Taliban besides an Islamic State affiliate.

According to U.S. assessments, the Taliban had "one the worst human rights records" worldwide. One U.S. official stated in November 2001, "The human rights abuses that the Taliban have committed against Afghanistan are in a separate class." They are rated in the worst possible category in a variety of categories. The Taliban have

restored the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which was responsible for the Taliban's interpretation of Islam during the 1990s. The Taliban's government does not include the Ministry of Women's Affairs. This ministry was part of the previous Afghan government but was absent from the Taliban's previous government (Pannett, 2021).

Overall, the Taliban is ruling in Afghanistan once again after 20 years, as mentioned before, their goal is the implement a pure Islamic state in Afghanistan. Apart from that, today, the Taliban banned schools and not allowing women to access education, and no women are allowed to participate in politics. This study aims to determine how women responded to the Taliban's ideology regarding education and political participation, as well as why some ethnicities support the Taliban ideology of preventing women to not access to education and participating in politics. Also, this study caries two questions: Did gender and ethnicity affect people's responses to the Taliban's ideology on women's education of political participation in Afghanistan? Furthermore, how does Pashtun across Afghanistan respond to the Taliban's ideology on women's education and political participation?

#### **Research Problem**

Since 1996, the Taliban has imposed restrictive policies on women, especially in education and politics. Women are restricted and cannot leave the house without a *mahram* (male family member). These are the fundamental policies that the Taliban have imposed on women. Since the collapse of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, in the hands

of the Taliban, they have again imposed these policies and eliminated women from the public sphere, including education, politics, public gathering, and traveling without a *mahram*. This study aims to determine how women responded to the Taliban's ideology regarding education and politics and why the Pashtun ethnicity agrees with this ideology.

#### **Research Question**

This study aims to find out what did women respond to the Taliban's ideology for not allowing them to access education and participate in politics. Moreover, why Pashtuns are agreed with the Taliban's ideology regarding the restriction of women in education and participation in politics? This study has two questions which are as follows:

- 1. Did gender and ethnicity affect people's responses to the Taliban's ideology on women's education of political participation in Afghanistan?
- 2. How does Pashtun across Afghanistan respond to the Taliban's ideology on women's education and political participation?

#### **Research Objective**

There have been tons of research about gender in Afghanistan and worldwide, and each study carries a specific issue regarding women. This study will display women's and ethnicities' responses regarding the Taliban's policies on education and political participation. Since August 15, 2021, Afghanistan collapsed at the hands of the Taliban; they have imposed several policies on women, such as not allowing them in the public

sphere, gathering, expressing their ideas, excluding them from politics, and closing all schools for girls and universities.

#### Significant of Study

This study is different from others; in this study, the author collected data from Twitter based on Afghan ethics. More specifically, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazara, and Uzbek, because these are the largest ethnic in the country. There has been no prior study in Afghanistan to accomplish such a study regarding the Taliban's policies on women.

Thus, this is important, and it contributes to how to collect data and analyze them. Also, the study will practically help present a clear picture of women's responses to the Taliban's ideology, regarding education and politics, as well as, how the Pashtuns responded to the ideology of the Taliban. This study will provide a comprehensive understanding of which ethnicity agree with the Taliban's policies and which ethnicities disagree. Also, this study will help future researchers and students in education and politics regarding women in Afghanistan.

#### **Literature Review**

The gender gap usually happens because of the patriarchal society, and this phenomenon mainly affects women, such as education limitation or political participation. In the contemporary world, Afghanistan is where women are limited only to housing, and women are not allowed to educate or participate in politics. It is all due to the Taliban's restricted ideology. Afghan society is composed of a diverse array of

ethnic groups, and Pashtuns are the largest ethnic in the country and are dominantly Talib. The Taliban has a critical rule that dictates how its policies should be implemented, including restrictions on women's rights, such as wearing the *Burqa*, and bans on women working, education, politics, travelling, and public gathering.

In this regard, Huma Ahmed-Ghosh (2003) says that Afghan women's problems are "traditional societies"; women are not independent of their families and communities. Huma highlights that the problem of women in Afghanistan is not only the result of the Taliban policies. This subjugation has been there since the time of Mujahideen. Moreover, economic reconstruction is the primary goal; it can also be linked to social change and new ways of building political democracy that include women. This success can be assured by the full participation of women, particularly in rural Afghanistan. (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003).

While Larry P. Goodson (2001) argues that it is because of "Islamization ideology," particularly about Taliban policy towards women and girls various policies such as religious practices, minority rights, and entertainment; further, Goodson says women in Afghanistan were traditionally considered inferior to men economically and legally. Nonetheless, Goodson's third argument is that the Taliban are split into different factions and groups within their ranks (Goodson, 2001). Further, Anastasia Telesetsky (1998) argues about the Taliban's education and schools; most of the Taliban members graduated from Islamic fundamentalist schools in Pakistan, which Afghan refugees established. The author continues that the Taliban put their interpretation in the Quran

and insist on strict measures to restore Islamic balance. The Taliban banned women from the education and work fields and imposed particular dress and behavior codes to enforce the separation of women and public life. (Telesetskyt, 1998).

Followed by Anastasia, Aneela Sultana (2009) claims that the Taliban are students of Deobandis and caries the ideology of Deobandi, thus holding a strict view of the roles of women and opposing any form of hierarchy within the Muslim community. (Sultana, 2009). In this regard, Saba Gul Khattak (2004), "The Taliban's ultra-conservative worldview affected both men and women" until 2001, Taliban rules in Afghanistan forbade men from shaving their beards, while women were denied many fundamental rights. However, the Taliban's decrees were ignored by most of the world until September (Khattak, 2004).

Based on the above scholarly arguments. My position in this argument would be that the country has four main ethnic groups: Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. Based on language, religion, or ethnicity, there exist significant boundaries between ethnic groups. Thus, each ethnicity has its similarities and differences regarding women's behavior. Among the four prominent Afghan ethnicities, Pashtuns are more **restricted**. As Palwasha Kakar (2004) says, "The Pashtunwali code constrains women so many ways that it is difficult to understand why they participate in this system, or why when women's rights reforms are discussed, they resist them, even those associated with health care and education (Kakar, 2004)."

My argument regarding ethnicity supports the Taliban's ideology regarding women's education and political participation. Pashtunwali has a central role in Pashtun identity. Most Pashtun or Pashtuns do not view Pashtunwali as a separate entity, and Pashtuns are more restricted by Islamic law and Sharia. The Pashtunwali and Sharia overlap in Pashtun consciousness. However, they serve different purposes. The Sharia is God's will for humanity and is practiced as a moral code. On the other hand, Pashtunwali is considered a matter of honor, and Pashtunwali is defined as integrity in upholding and applying the concepts that make Pashtunwali.

The Taliban co-opted discontented commanders of militia previously connected to other organizations in many cases. Evidence is emerging of Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik Taliban recruiting small groups from the grassroots. Although most insurgents in Afghanistan are Pashtun, this emerging trend is not to be ignored (Giustozzi, 2010).

Other ethnicities, like Hazara, are minorities. They are predominantly Shia Muslims and account for around 9% of Afghanistan's population. They live in the "Hazarajat", their ancestral homeland in central Afghanistan, and several areas of western Kabul. The Taliban have persecuted Hazaras since the late nineteenth century. The Taliban forces killed many Hazara civilians during their 1996-2001 rule (Thomas, 2021). Many Hazaras expressed concern about their possible return in 2021 (Ghanizada, 2020).

Thus, the Taliban's policy on the gender side continued to undermine women's rights in 2022 by announcing that women should cover their faces and not leave their homes without a male relative (Yousufi, 2021). The Taliban punished women who broke

these rules during the second regime, which was in place since the late 1990s. The practice is back in force; however, women who violate rules regarding head-to-toe coverings in public places may be punished by their nearest male relatives. It will transfer some of the enforcement burdens to the families of women who are not complying with the law (Malik & Faizullah, 2021).

The Taliban has enforced laws against women's rights and encouraged violence against women. It has also made it harder for women to report violence from their families and neighbours. Gender-based violence against women in Afghanistan was underreported. The "MoWA" recorded 1,518 incidents in the first half of 2021. However, after its dissolution, no reliable reporting has been done on gender-based violence since the Taliban took over (Amnesty International, 2022).

#### Theoretical Framework and Research Hypothesis

Gender relations in education are complex and dynamic. Gender research in education has seen a remarkable increase in momentum since the 1960s as national and local policymakers responded to women's demands for better education. In the 1980s, the Conservative education policy was constructed to "modernize" gender relations. This is despite its patriarchal roots. Although this rhetoric, new distinctions were made between male and female citizens' rights and responsibilities in the family and public spheres. New forms of gender differentiation were also created within the areas of knowledge (Arnot, 2005).

Feminist research focuses on the issues and challenges that women face in today's society. This research is based on the principles of social justice and the understanding that women in patriarchal societies are oppressed. Feminist literature also often addresses the theme of dominance (Creswell, 2013).

Feminist Theory's goal "center and make problematic women's diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations (Creswell, 2013). "Feminist Theory research often focuses on gender discrimination and how to live and operate in patriarchal societies. The theory's lens views gender as "a gender as a basic organizing principle that shapes the conditions of [our] lives." It emphasizes the centrality and relationship between gender and consciousness in shaping consciousness. Feminist Theory can correct the invisibility of the female experience and the distortions that it causes in ways that are relevant to ending the unequal social status of women when used correctly.

The feminisms that emerged in the 1990s multiracial/multiethnic feminism, feminist studies of men, constructionist, postmodern, and queer theories, challenge "what everyone knows" about sex, sexuality, and gender. These feminisms go beyond resolving the patriarchy or misogyny inherent in the gendered social system.

They also challenge the dualities and opposites of male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, as well as the roles of women and men. They argue that there are many genders, sexualities, and sexes and many ways to express masculinity or femininity. They challenge deep-seated value judgments and assumptions, forcing us to examine how we "do gender" as well as how we have created and maintained an unjust social order.

H¹: Women are more likely to disagree with the Taliban's ideology: Gender not only raises their voice against these types of ideologies, ready to defend their rights. Education is a human right that is given naturally to everyone. All human beings are equal to learn and improve their knowledge, either men or women. And this right has not been given to anyone, to limit your education scope.

As Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani (2010) reports that the clergies in Iran had limited gender access to education, the responses from women immediately took place, and all women came to the streets to fight for their rights. The author contuses, to explain that the women's movement recognized that demands for equality and self-determination were not limited to particular ideological groups. The Iranian Green Movement is a battle waged by pro-western reformists against Islamic hardliners (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2010).

All ethnicities have the right to work in the government and become a politician, men and women must be given this right to make decisions about their country. Today women are not happy with the Taliban's ideology, because the Taliban has limited women's rights, and limited their scope of politics and education. If one looks at the feminist theory, gender rights would be different, as Pamela Johnston Conover (1988), "found that feminist women were significantly more liberal than all men", further, gender equality is achieved because there are no gender differences, feminists argue that "feminine values are typically overwhelmed by masculine values in a patriarchal society" (Conover, 1988).

H<sup>2</sup>: Pashtuns are more likely to agree with the Taliban's ideology as a means to support the power of their ethnic group: Pashtuns had the most power in control during

1996 – 2001, but they have lost all powers during the United States attack on Al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan. Pashtuns support the Taliban because there is no any other force left that can continue the Pashtuns' ethnic domination. These people think that even though the Taliban are hitting the progress of the entire Afghan gender, this hitting is tolerable.

In their opinion, the Taliban are an efficient force as long as they keep the power in the hands of the Pashtuns and they can be dealt with. This force, according to these people, will gradually be replaced by better Pashtuns who are not as anti-development, anti-knowledge, and anti-freedom as the Taliban. If we look back, the Taliban fought against foreign forces for twenty-five years, and today, they have full control over Afghanistan, there is no single place that is not taken by the Taliban.

On top of that, the Pashtun ethnic has Pashtunwali tribal code, and no other ethnic in Afghanistan has this kind of tribal code. This Pashtunwali has also strongly unit them. As Tom Ginsburg (2011) further explains, "Pashtunwali has a particular logic of its own" (Ginsburg, 2011), and what Richard McAdams called "adjudicating in anarchy (McAdams, 2004)." Haseena Kabeer (2020) says, "Pashtunwali code of integrity that a Pashtun must follow until death (Kabeer, 2020)", and each Pashtun must follow the code.

Winston Churchill (2009), further highlights, "Pashtunwali provides the Taliban a sanctuary (Churchill, 2009)"; Churchill continues that contemporary "sanctuaries" is not only realm or territory but "banking system" and "media," which is crucial for

"insurgent" group to succeed. Churchill proceeds to say that Pashtunwali is a cultural tradition that helps maintain Taliban motivation.

In this regard, James D. Fearon (2004), believe that ethnicity is always important in politics and is based on something natural and unchangeable. Some argue that this view is wrong because it cannot explain how ethnicity differs in different places and times. Further, James argues there is no doubt that groups with shared preferences over public policy. Based on the above references, one can say that the Pashtun ethnicity supports the Taliban's ideology regarding women's education and politics because they are committed to sticking with the tribal code and perpetuating the Pashtunwali, perpetuating the Pashtun ethnic power.

To move on, there is a especial unity among Pashtun ethnic, which are rare in other Afghan ethnicity, as Thomas h. Johnson (2017) in his Book "Pashtuns need in order to restore the lost glory of the past (Johnson, 2017)" Thomas, "Yosofzai" depicts the Pashtuns in wartime as an ethnic group that has suffered a lot. He is looking for a leader to change the ineligible social and political status of Pashtuns. Indirectly, he asks the Pashtuns not to fight against each other but to unite. He also emphasizes the necessity to replace the sword and gun with a pen. Thomas continues, He believes Pashtuns, who are the sons and daughters of one mother (Afghanistan), are brothers. He concludes that they shouldn't fight but should be united. "Yosofzai" presents a list of essential values that are crucial in creating peace and progress among Pashtuns. This poem is not about all Afghans, but rather the importance of Pashtun national unity. This poem is an example of ethnic sentiments that continue to be strong among some or many Afghans.

"Poem: From Badakhshan to Kandahar, From Heart to Nangarhar, From Paktia to Mazar, From Jawzjan to Asmar, all together is my housE... They are the power of the fist of Afghan."

#### Methodology

This study uses "machine learning approaches to sentiment analysis using Twitter." For achieving data, we use an Application Programming Interface (API); this study focuses on sentiment analysis on a dataset achieved based on the requirements. This data is based on Afghan ethnicities, politics, and education. A collection of public tweets was obtained that covered August 15, 2021, until the current time. These records include a tweet I.D., the submission date (GMT+0), the submission type, and the tweet's content.

Natural language Processing (NLP), and valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner (VADER) analyzer and the scoring method applied to the VADER results to evaluate its ability to classify tweets using a 5-point scale (Yang, 2019). VADER is a lexicon that uses Sentiment Reasoner and a rule-based sentiment analysis tool. It is especially suited to social media sentiments.

### **Research Design**

Research Material and Tools

This study is based on Twitter analysis; the data has been collected from Twitter.

Thus, research needs some tools, which are:

1- Python: Python is a high-level, general-purpose programming language. Its design philosophy emphasizes code readability with the use of significant indentation.

2- Pandas: Pandas is a software library written for the Python programming language for data manipulation and analysis

3- NLT or (NLTK): The Natural Language Toolkit, or more commonly NLTK, is a suite of libraries and programs for symbolic and statistical natural language processing for English written in the Python programming language.

4- Visual Studio Code (vscode): Visual Studio Code, also commonly referred to as VS Code, is a source-code editor made by Microsoft with the Electron Framework, for Windows, Linux, and macOS. Features include support for debugging, syntax highlighting, intelligent code completion, snippets, code refactoring, and embedded Git.

## Research Management

This stud is based on Twitter data analysis, and the tweet is collected based on ethnicity:

- 1) Pashtuns,
- 2) Tajik,
- 3) Uzbak,
- 4) Hazara

Data collection, the data has collected from Twitter through Python Computer Language, it has four stages:

- 1) Data Collection
- 2) Pre-processing
- 3) Sentiment extraction
- 4) Classify sentiment as positive or negative

Thanks to digitalization, researchers have unprecedented access to textual data that can be used to investigate contemporary phenomena. Natural Language Processing (NLP), is a computer-assisted analytical technique that aims to automatically analyze and comprehend human language (Christopher D. Manning, 1999). Scholars can easily extract valuable insights from textual datasets without having to do any computational work (Ronan Collobert, 2011). Recent years have seen significant advances in NLP with the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.).

NLP is a critical interest in artificial intelligence and computer science. NLP studies focus on theories and methods for effective communication between computers and humans in natural language. NLP is a scientific field that studies computer science, mathematics, and linguistics. Its primary purpose is to translate human (or natural language) into commands that computers can execute. NLP comprises two research directions, Natural Language Understanding (NLU), and Natural Language Generation. NLU's primary mission is to understand the natural language (human languages), (Schank, 1972), by deciphering and extracting information from documents for downstream tasks. NLG, on the other hand, is creating text in natural languages that humans can understand. It relies on structured data, text, and graphics (Allen, 1981).

#### Variables

The independent variable in this study are: *gender and ethnicity;* gender is divided into two parts, male and female; also ethnic, one cannot limit the ethnic diversity; ethnicity can be divided into four, five, six... Since this study focuses on Afghanistan, it has four prominent ethnicities: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbak. Women are not limited, in this study, they could be from Pashtun, Uzbak, or Hazara. But Ethnics are limited to only Pashtuns because they are essentially Taliban.

The dependent variable in this study are: *agree* and *disagree*; regarding the Taliban's ideology banning women from educating and participating in politics. I have claimed that the Pashtuns agree with the Taliban ideology, but the study only talks about the Pashtun ethnic agree or disagreement, not all ethnicities.

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