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# A Study On Girls' Access To Education In Rural Ghazni, Afghanistan

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## Abstract

Girls' education has experienced numerous ups and downs throughout history in Afghanistan. It has never been considered suitable, even before the three decades of civil war in Afghanistan. However, during the former Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001, girls were completely deprived of educational opportunities. Due to the Taliban's perception and their interpretation of Islam on women education, no girl was permitted to attend educational institutions during that period, resulting in zero participation of women in education. A new hope for the Afghan people was created in 2001 with the establishment of an interim administration and the support of the international community. Struggle for 20 long years on building infrastructure, including education, was going to bring a stable situation for women in terms of education and market places. However, unspecified decisions by the U.S. and evacuation of Afghanistan, set the country back on a fragile path; and women are deprived of educational opportunities again in the country. The present study is intended to know the attitude of Religious Scholars and Parents on the girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan. Descriptive Survey method has been adopted in this study. A sample consisting of 200 individuals (25 Religious scholars, 175 Parents) has been taken from 10 different villages of Andar district in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan. The sample has been selected using 'Purposive sampling' method initially to identify the province, the district and the villages in Afghanistan. Then the researcher selected the Religious scholars and Parents from Andar district at random using 'Random sampling' method for the present investigation. The data were collected using two questionnaires developed by the researchers for Religious scholars and parents separately. The data were analyzed using different statistical techniques like means, standard deviations, t-tests and f-ratios. The findings of the study revealed that the variables – gender and occupation of parents have no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in Afghanistan. Further, the study revealed that the age and educational qualification of religious scholars have no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in Afghanistan. The study suggested that there should be access to girls' education in Afghanistan in general and in

the rural areas of Afghanistan in particular.

**Key words:** Girls' access to Education, Afghanistan, Taliban, Discrimination, Tradition

### **Introduction**

Education is a process in which and by which the knowledge, characters and behavior of the human being are shaped and molded. Education is lead to the enlightenment of mankind. The purpose of education is to train, to bring up, to developing and shaping up the individual's talent and his/her inner potentialities. Education is polishing and filling of human personality, so that it reaches its fullest development. It enables one to lead a better physical, intellectual and spiritual life. One of the primary goals of education is to produce trained human resources capable of overcoming the development challenges of a certain country in the world (**Gunter, 2001**). According to him, the objective of schools and schooling is to educate and train children and enable them to engage in the theory and practice of what it is to be a citizen in a developing and reforming democratic endeavor.

There should not be any gender bias with regard to providing educational opportunities for children in schools. But things are quite contradictory with this expectation in a country like Afghanistan. The girls in Afghanistan, particularly in rural areas, are deprived of their educational opportunities.

### **Girls' access to Education**

Investing in girls' education transforms communities, countries and the entire world. Girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy, productive lives. They earn higher incomes, participate in the decisions that most affect them, and build better futures for themselves and their families. Girls' education strengthens economies and reduces inequality. It contributes to more stable, resilient societies that give all individuals, including boys and men, the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Despite evidence demonstrating how central girls' education is to development, gender disparities in education persist.

Gender-equitable education systems empower girls; and promote in them the life skills such as self-management, communication; negotiation and critical thinking that young people need to succeed. Such education systems can contribute to reductions in school-related gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation.

### **Status of Education in Afghanistan with special reference to women**

Afghanistan's educational history has always been characterized by difficulties, particularly for women. The first time the subject of female education was addressed during King Amanullah Khan's rule (1919–1929). This marked the beginning of for female education

in Afghanistan's history formally. However, with the fall of Amanullah's government, girls' education began to decline for 9 months during the rule of Amir Habibullah Kalakany. The girls' schools were reopened after collapse of Habibullah Kalakany. Female education developed during the Sardar Mohammad Dawod Khan era in the 1960s, and more girls began to have access to schools. The decline in women education started in the year 1996; and experienced ups and downs until the Taliban's rule from 1996 to 2001. During this period, the situation of education for women deteriorated. This was the point at which female education came to an end. Following the fall of the Taliban and the formation of new administration, the main focus has been on equal rights for girls and boys in education. Girls in secondary education have been sent home since the Taliban took power again in October 2021. Girls are not permitted to attend schools beyond the sixth grade.

Women's access to education still remains one of the main problems in Afghan society where progress has been made, with positive outcomes including their construction of schooling infrastructure and substantial increases in the number of girls attending primary schooling. However, significant barriers remain to be addressed. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recently noted that at a global level, girls and women are the most disadvantaged in terms of accessing their right to education; they constitute the majority of out-of-school children and illiterate adults, are more likely to live in poverty and to experience gender-biased discrimination and violence, and are less likely to have access to services, including education (UNESCO, 2013).

More than a decade after the Taliban was deposed, only 20% of women aged 15 to 24 are literate, with the number being three times lower in rural areas. Only 30% of adult women with some primary education in Afghanistan are literate. According to cluster surveys, increase in the number of Afghan girls attending school will not be sufficient in itself to address systemic inequities in women's educational outcomes. According to the Government, some of the key barriers to access to education are: insecurity, poverty and working children, lack of schools in remote areas, long walking distance to schools, harassment of children on the way to schools, low quality of education. There are also specific barriers toward girls' education including: shortage of female teachers, especially in higher grades, cultural beliefs about girls' education, lack of necessary facilities in schools such as toilets, drinking water, and surrounding walls, early marriages, lack of security etc. (MoE National Education Strategic Plan, 2010-2014). Parents were hesitant to send their kids to school due to security concerns. Further, it shows that due to bad security and the elimination of women and girls from the main stream of education, adversely affected female education in other areas as well.

### **Review of Related Studies**

The studies carried out earlier by the other researchers on girls' access to education in

Afghanistan have been examined; and a brief review of the same is provided in the following paragraphs.

**Ghulam Hassan Naqawi & Vinay Rajath, D. (2022)** conducted a study that aims to analyze the opportunities and barriers to education in Afghanistan. Sources that discussed opportunities and barriers to education were identified and analyzed. Primary data was collected from the Bamyán and Daykundi provinces in Afghanistan. The researchers provided five reasons for the inaccessibility of youth to education during the republican government (2001–2021), and suggested five alternatives when they do not have access to education. Violence, discrimination and security were the three major challenges in attaining access to 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.

The study revealed 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. These barriers include: violence, discrimination, lack of efforts in accordance with the education system of the government, political interference and Taliban's reluctance towards girls' education.

**Hazrat Usman Mashwani (2017)**, in a study on 'Female Education in Afghanistan: Opportunities and Challenges' felt that female education in Afghanistan has witnessed a number of ups and downs throughout the history of Afghanistan. In the history of Afghanistan, the people who suffered the most in the part of education were female. From the very beginning, female education was not that much satisfied prior to the civil war in Afghanistan but the three-decade civil war and conflicts made the situation worse for female learners. It was the government of Taliban (1996-2001) when the female education fell to 0%. Hopes came to lives with the establishment of the new government and support of the international community in 2001. However, after sixteen long years, the female education is still remained substandard. The focus of this study is on the unequal access to females and males in primary, secondary and particularly at higher education. The study also explores the major obstacles that hamper females' education. This study is based on the collection of data available in different research papers, educational articles, reports and numerous other related sources.

The study suggested that it would be better if the religious leaders take the responsibility of motivating people, especially family elders for female education. It is also suggested that public awareness programs are to be arranged to the parents to brief them about the importance of female education.

**Zafar Shayan (2015)** conducted a study to examine the unequal access of females and

males in primary, secondary and higher education, and presents the main obstacles that prevent women or girls from having access to education in Afghanistan. The article is prepared by a desk study using a variety of presently available researches, papers and data related to education, women's rights and gender inequality from national and international organizations.

The study viewed that radical religious beliefs and absurd misogynistic traditions challenge female education. Majority of these obstacles are somehow related to people's beliefs. Parents are afraid of alienation of their daughters. In unsecured regions, the fear of Taliban's attack or kidnapping causes low participation of females at schools. Poverty is one of the other important factors; parents are not able to invest in their daughter's education. Meanwhile, lack of government's attention in establishing teacher training institutes in remote areas has resulted in a lack of female teachers. The low quality of educational services at schools and universities, in addition to other challenges, constrains female education in the country.

### **Need and Importance of the study**

The issue of gender discrimination in education within Afghanistan attains enormous significance and urgency as the country falls back into Taliban control. Access to education, a human right in itself, is the center of all human rights that stems from education and capabilities development. Understanding the issue of gender discrimination in education in Afghanistan under the present Taliban regime offers useful policy insights as well as an understanding of the issue and the inherent challenges it portends. Insights from the research can also provide useful policy guidelines for any external help, bilateral or multi-lateral, in promoting female literacy within Afghanistan.

Ghazni is one of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan, wherein the education of girls is neglected. Further, Andar is a backward district in Ghazni with a rural background. The main aim of this research is to study the accessibility of girls to education in Andar district of Ghazni in Afghanistan. This necessitated the researcher to select sample from the Andar district in Ghazni, Afghanistan.

In the light of the above, the investigator proposed to study the attitude of Religious scholars and Parents towards girls' access to education in the province of Ghazni, Afghanistan. Further, the study is confined to find out the influence of age and qualifications of Religious scholars; and gender and parental occupation on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan. The study suggests ways and means of providing access of girls to education in the rural areas of Afghanistan. The present investigation is an attempt in this direction.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the present investigation is to study the attitude of Religious scholars

and Parents towards Girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

**The following are the other specific objectives of the study:**

1. To study the influence of 'age' of the Religious scholars on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.
2. To study the influence of 'qualification' of the Religious scholars on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.
3. To study the influence of 'gender' of the parents on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.
4. To study the influence of parents' occupation on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

**Hypotheses of the study**

1. The age of the Religious scholars has no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.
2. The qualification of the Religious scholars has no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.
3. The gender of the parents has no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.
4. The occupation of parents has no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

**Limitations of the study**

The study is limited to find out the attitude of 200 individuals (25 Religious scholars and 175 Parents) from 10 different villages of Andar district in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan. Further, the study is confined to find out the influence of two demographic variables, viz., age, and qualification of Religious scholars; and gender and parental occupation on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

Methodology

**Method of Research**

The researchers followed the Survey Method of the descriptive research for the present investigation.

**Sample**

The sample of the study consists of 200 individuals (25 Religious scholars and 175 Parents) from 10 different villages of Andar district in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan.

**Research Tool**

The researchers used two questionnaires – one for the Religious scholars and the other one

for parents to collect data for the present investigation.

### Administration of the Tool

The tool was initially administered to 25 individuals (5 Male and 20 Parents) in the schools located in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan under Pilot study. The measures of reliability, validity and objectivity of the tool have been calculated. Further, the researchers conducted item analysis for the items included in the tool. The researchers retained only those items whose discriminating power is positive in the scale, eliminating those items whose discriminating power is negative. The final tool has been administered to 200 individuals (25 Religious scholars and 175 Parents) from 10 different villages of Andar district in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan.

### Statistical Techniques used

The investigators used different statistical techniques such as Mean Score values, Standard Deviations, t-tests and f-values for data analysis and interpretation.

**Table-1** Table showing Mean, SD and t-values on the attitude of Religious Scholars towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan

Sl. No.	Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Result
1	Age	Below 45	12	68.84	17.24	0.017*	*NotSignificantat 0.05 and 0.01levels
		yrs.45yrs.&above	13	68.96	18.33		
2	Education Qualification	Religious grand courses	10	68.50	18.87	0.085*	*NotSignificantat 0.05and0.01 levels
		Religious madrasas & Private studies	15	67.84	19.13		

**Table-2** Table showing Mean, SD and t-values on the attitude of Parents towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan

Sl. No.	Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio/ F-value	Result
1	Gender	Male	75	69.97	18.75	0.307*	*NotSignificantat 0.05 and 0.01levels
		Female	100	69.10	18.17		

2	Occupation	Teaching	60	69.17	18.57	0.0014*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		Health care services	25	68.90	17.82		
		Others	90	69.62	17.62		

### Findings of the study

There is no significant difference in the attitude of religious scholars aged below 45 years and those aged 45 years and above towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

There is no significant difference in the attitude of religious scholars who studied 'Religious grand courses' and those who studied religious madrasas and private courses towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female parents towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents working in Teaching profession, Health care services and other occupations towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

### Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that the age and education of Religious scholars have no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan. Further, the study also revealed that gender and occupation of parents have no influence on their attitude towards girls' access to education in rural Ghazni, Afghanistan.

### Recommendations

The study has suggested that there should not be any gender disparity with regard to the education of children in Afghanistan; and girls should be encouraged to have access to education on par with boys.

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