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### **Факторы, влияющие на гендерное неравенство в сфере образования: на примере Афганистана**

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**Аннотация.** Женское образование признано одним из наиболее эффективных средств уменьшения гендерного неравенства и обеспечения участия женщин в развитии общества. За последние десятилетия сфера гендерного неравенства в образовании резко изменилась. В представленном исследовании анализируются эмпирические данные и теоретические подходы к гендерным различиям в образовательном процессе.

Дискриминационная культура Афганистана обуславливает отсутствие адекватных образовательных возможностей для женщин и девочек. Негативное воздействие культурных традиций привело к тому, что страна оказалась в самом низу рейтинга Глобального индекса гендерного разрыва, ежегодно составляемого Всемирным экономическим форумом. Цель данного исследования состояла в том, чтобы изучить элементы, влияющие на равенство между полами в системе образования Афганистана; предоставить информацию, необходимую для разработки и реализации эффективной образовательной политики; предложить рекомендации учебным заведениям (образовательным организациям) для достижения успеха в данной сфере.

Использован описательный дизайн философии исследования. Для сбора данных использовалось анкетирование, в котором приняли участие 80 человек, представляющих широкий спектр культурных и социальных слоев Афганистана.

Сделан вывод, что образовательная политика, учебные программы и процесс обучения, разработанные соответствующими государственными учреждениями, имеют серьезные проблемы, включая поддержку дискриминации и поощрение нетерпимости в отношении женщин и девочек. Исследование также продемонстрировало, что женщинам не разрешается участвовать в финансовых вопросах семьи из-за культурных ограничений. Гендерное неравенство на уровне образования негативно влияет на экономическое развитие страны (доходы на душу населения и спад производства).

**Ключевые слова:** гендерное неравенство; культурные ограничения; женское образование; обучение девочек; Афганистан

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Original article

### **Factors affecting gender inequality in education: the case of Afghanistan**

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**Abstract.** Women's education has been the most effective means of decreasing gender disparities and enabling women's full involvement in the development phase. In past decades, the environment of gender inequality in education has evolved dramatically. From early infancy to young adults, this study analyzes empirical evidence and theoretical approaches to gender differences in academic achievement.

The discriminatory culture of Afghanistan toward girls is a fundamental element in the country's inadequate educational opportunities for girls. The negative cultural impacts have pushed the country in the lowest ranks of the Global Gender Gap Index conducted by the World Economic Forum every year. The goal of this research has been to look at the elements that influence equality between the sexes in basic learning throughout Afghanistan, to provide more necessary details to guide policies and to provide tips to the educational institutions.

The study was conducted using a descriptive research philosophy design for investigation of the phenomenon. Questionnaires were used to collect data. A total of 80 people took part in the study, representing a range of cultural and backgrounds.

This study concluded that educational policies, curriculums and learning process which were developed by relevant government institutions have major issues including supporting discrimination and encouraging intolerance against women and girls. This study also concluded that women are not permitted to participate in the financial issues of the family owing to cultural restrictions. The economic development is negatively impacted by gender disparities in educational attainment as per capita income and production decline.

**Keywords:** gender disparity; gender inequality; cultural restrictions; female education; girls education; Afghanistan

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#### **Introduction**

Women's and men's traditionally determining roles and responsibilities are related to gender. Because of the

differences in our communities, economies, and civilizations, men and women have various responsibilities. Because it comprises our presump-

tions about the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of men and women, gender is a key concept in these studies. The obligations, privileges, and resources shared by both genders throughout the community have an impact on how severe gender inequality and unemployment are. Gender gaps in resource availability are especially prevalent in developing and underdeveloped nations. Inequalities between men's and women's circumstances when trying to fully exercise their human rights are referred to as gender inequality [Aldrich, 1989; Alsos, 2006]. Women's status in Afghanistan is different from that of women in Western nations. One of Afghanistan's guiding values for a stable future is gender equality as per the cultural and moderate religious values. Women have traditionally been seen as carrying out their procreative duties as mothers and wives in the home, whereas men dominate the outside world and fulfill their productive roles as wage workers. Philosophically, the worlds of men and women are divided into two different domains. The assets of the home are divided in favor of sons due to their economic activity. While female members of the family are educated on household chores to be effective mothers, male family members should be given better education and training to compete for knowledge within the public world. There aren't many opportunities for women to choose that will affect their lives. As an outcome, there are noticeable gender differ-

ences in academic attainment across provinces as well as throughout rural and urban areas [Amit, 1990; Arenius, 2005].

The most important tool for building human resources is education. It has developed into a fundamental human right and a significant factor in the potential and empowering women. A remarkable modern empirical study demonstrates that women's income rises as their education level rises and that their return to schooling is frequently larger than men's. As per various experimental results, increasing female education boosts teaching-learning process efficiency as well as life span, healthcare, and literacy. As per studies, lesser female education had a negative impact on economic growth by decreasing the overall quality of the workforce. In undeveloped nations, female education can increase children's enrollment in school and lowers childbirth and infant mortality [Armuña, 2020].

According to data from 2018 compiled by the previous government, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and Ministry of Women's Affairs, there were more than 5000 cases of violence against women registered annually. This data does not completely reflect the severity of the problem as only registered cases were tracked. Based on a United Nation Women Survey (2016), more than 80 % of women in Afghanistan have experienced at least one type of gender-based violence. Since August 2021, the situation for women has deteriorated further. This illustrates that as per the international

definitions, discrimination and violence against women in Afghanistan is a substantial social issue which starts from families and schools which is partially based on the cultural settings. While there are several factors which influence and exacerbates this problem, school curriculum is one of the root causes.

From the collapse of Taliban regime in 2001 and their re-gaining power in 2021, the education sector with support from the international community in Afghanistan made significant achievements; however, those achievements were primarily reflected in a “numbers game”, e.g., including number of children enrolled in schools, number of teachers recruited, number of schools built, number of text books printed, number of students graduated, etc. The discussions related to quality of education provided were never started. Currently Afghanistan is on the brink of losing all previous gains and achievements.

Related data reflecting the situation of education and literacy in Afghanistan are:

– As per UNESCO, the adult literacy rate reached 47 % in 2020, up from 26% in 2008.

– In 2020, the literacy rate for men stood at 55 per cent; for women, only 29.8 per cent.

– In 2016-17, 6.4 million children attended primary and secondary school, up from 4.3 million in 2010

– The youth literacy rate reached 54 % in 2017, up from 52 % 2014, 47 % in 2012 and 31 % in 2008.

– 56 % of primary school age children attended primary school in 2017, up from 52% in 2008.

– In 2017, the primary net attendance rate for boys was 62 % compared to 45 % for girls.

– In 2017, the secondary net attendance rate was 36 %, 47 % for boys and 26 % for girls.

– 84 % of women and 51 % of men aged 15-49 had no education.

– Looking at women in younger age groups; 65 % of women aged 20-24 and 49 % of women aged 15-19 have no education.

– The youth literacy rate for girls is 37% compared to 66% for boys.

These statistics illustrate the magnitude of the challenges faced. Thus, independent research and evidence-based studies are vital especially for curriculum developers and educators to develop practical action using data to improve the status quo, rather than hurling funding at a problem without direction.

The above noted statistics also illustrate the challenges of education from a quantitative aspect in Afghanistan while the focus of this study is on one specific problem related to the quality of education. During the last 20 years the focus of government and international community was on quantity and increasing numbers in the education sector which resulted in a sacrifice of quality education. The validity of using this approach – quantity over quality in a developing society – requires separate independent research to clarify whether such sacrifices and consequences are legiti-

mate and is beyond the scope of this study.

### Related work

Almost all poor countries, and the poor within these countries, have gender gaps in schooling. In low-income countries during the past three centuries, gender inequality in schooling has grown significantly. Gender inequality is currently seen as a crucial problem for the evaluation and reduction of poverty due to its detrimental consequences on several significant development agendas. There are several ways that poverty affects girls' access to education. The latest researches from West Africa show that poverty significantly contributes to gender differences in access to higher education [Greve, 2003].

Afghanistan also exhibits large gender differences in academic achievement. Across regions and urban and rural communities, there are considerable gender disparities. Afghanistan is a country where women experience many kinds of discrimination, that have negative impact on their social, financial, and political life. In all aspects of Afghan society including education, gender inequities are growing. According to the Global Gender Gap Index for 2022 by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Afghanistan is ranked 146 out of 146 countries in the Gender-related Development Indicators, although it was placed second to last in 2019 and its current ranking in this report is 30 % lower than in 2017.

There are many different techniques to assess gender differences in education. Gross and net enrollment rates, and also finishing and drop-out rates, can be used to measure gender inequalities. Afghanistan intends to reduce gender gaps throughout education at all levels and to achieve the Millennium Progress Objectives [Hacker, 1951]. Afghanistan not only hasn't done much to close the gender disparity in schooling but has widen the gaps due to recent social and political unrests. Significant financial and technical assistance as well as policy change is necessary to build academics and other infrastructures to achieve the goal of eradicating gender inequities in the education sector in Afghanistan.

Numerous studies have examined gender discrimination, including its root causes, effects, and repercussions. There is a lot of information accessible at the national and international stages regarding gender differences throughout schooling, their consequences, and their effects. The authors conclude that female empowerment is essential for reducing poverty. Education can help women out of poverty. According to an empirical study, a woman's education degree and the presence of students' woman has been negatively correlated. For educated women, health and family is the first priority. He arrived at the assumption that women's participation in social, political, and other efforts is also incredibly low. Women's vocational education should be promoted to combat poverty [Hampton, 2011].

Children are typically not the primary subject of research on gender variations for educational outcomes, which is changing as even more data sources, become accessible. Standardized testing and other evaluations, as well as academic results and exam results, are used to evaluate school achievement. The conclusion that men typically score higher on standardized tests whereas women typically receive higher marks shows that the two metrics capture distinct aspects of educational achievement and capability.

Instructors and the settings in learning environments have been investigated as potential reasons for gender inequalities in academic achievement. Girls and boys used to be assigned to distinct higher education tracks frequently; however as was said above, today's course-taking trends for girls and boys are more comparable [Hampton, 2011]. The fact that women tend to choose easier classes in high school does not explain the gender gap.

There is conflicting scientific data about whether and how gender inequalities regarding education outcomes are caused by teacher gender. Male students' performance is not much higher when educated by male teachers compared to female professors, according to some extensive research. Contrarily, shows that high education science, political science, and English classes with female teachers rather than just male teachers enhance the performance of girls and decrease it for boys, resulting in a total gender disparity of 7% of a standard deviation. It is not at all obvious;

however, whether such benefits are the result of gender prejudice in the classroom and whether they show that teaching is somewhat successful based on fit and that, overall, learners' study more from teachers of their gender [Harrison, 2007].

An important finding of the study is the shift from a male advantage to a female one in higher education and graduation, primarily for its own sake and due to the obvious possible effects on the job market, the wedding business, fertility rates, and other areas. One of the most significant tasks for social researchers is to comprehend the structure, reasons, and effects of the increasing gender inequalities in university education. Its section concentrates on the institutional and individual factors that have contributed to the growing gender advantages throughout higher education.

Although studies have not fully separated all the processes linking high education success with college results, gender disparities in higher education behaviors and educational success are probably connected to the female advantages throughout higher education and graduation. Females may accomplish better than high education in part due to their stronger desires to enter college. In 1980, greater male higher education seniors (70 %) than female higher education seniors (55 %) anticipated attending a four-year education, however by 2020, 81 % of female higher institution seniors and 75 % of male higher education seniors anticipated attending a four-year college.

Around the same time, the better academic goals of women and their higher rates of college graduation probably result from their superior academic achievement throughout their educational careers. According to some studies, the female-favorable difference in college and university students enrolled is partly attributable to young women's higher test and score rankings, so many mathematics and science classes they begin taking out higher education, propensity to devote so much period to homework, and lack of disciplinary difficulties as compared to their male peers [Ibarra, 1997]. The basis for women's superior academic achievement throughout college, which in turn greatly contributes to the female advantages in overall college attendance, is provided by gender imbalances during higher education behaviors.

Independent decisions as to how much schooling to pursue may be significantly influenced by variations in the returns to studying and finishing education. The increasing returns on education for women more than for males may be one explanation for the increasing rates of female college attendance and graduation. According to studies, while men's salary rates of return for university education have improved more quickly than women's, this is because fewer higher education graduates are finding high-paying, male-dominated industrial industries. However, research shows that using pay returns alone to compare the relative benefits of education for men and women has become too limited [Jas-ko, 2020]. They examine whether dif-

ferences in outcomes of university education for men and women in respect of incomes, the likelihood of becoming married and having children, the living standards for families, and protection over starvation are related to the increasing female advantages for academic achievement. They discover that women have benefited more from higher education in terms of living standards and protection against the poor than males, based on a pattern assessment of the effectiveness of higher education in all of these results assessed against the baseline values of a high university degree. Therefore, it is conceivable that student reactions to gender-specific variations regarding the worth of a university education may make up at least some of the female-favorable tendency [Logy-based ventures ... , 2013]. towards university graduation. Although not as quickly as for women, average returns to a university degree have increased for men as well. The well-known increased return to school in the employment landscape is one factor driving the increase for men. Additionally, as female salaries have increased, so has the financial weakness of males to divorce, increasing the monetary worth of a husband to men. The modest rate of rising in men's college completion rates, despite increasing benefits from education for men, maybe one surprising aspect of the gender disparity throughout university completion's reversal.

Institutional-level factors are likely to influence gendered trends regarding

higher education and achievement in addition to the variables that affect people's finances and motivations to pursue higher education. Such include shifts in gender responsibilities and aspirations for the life-course pathways of men and women brought about by social influences. Modifications in higher education institutions, of that kind as the expansion of colleges and universities, the rise in tuition prices, and modifications to financial assistance regulatory requirements, have an effect on individual rewards to participate in college [Malmström, 2017]. Modifications in the workforce marketing environment, including decreasing discriminatory practices against women and modifications in occupational sex segregation, have a similar effect.

**Research Methodology**

The research philosophy is used to conduct this investigation. The study's realist or positivist research ontology views the sociocultural elements that contribute to gender discrimination in schooling as objective truth and examines how they affect economic growth.

Furthermore, positivism philosophy is used to examine the mentioned gender discrimination. The positivist paradigm's ontologically objectivist and ontologically objectivist precepts act as a guide for choosing a quantitative approach for this research that combines a variety of techniques [Malmström, Voitkane, Johansson, Wincent, 2018]. The respondents were from three major cities of Afghanistan including Kabul, Herat and Balkh provinces, mainly students and teachers, 45 were male and 35 were females, and age difference was 20-45 years old as stated in table.1. Most of the participants were from two locations i.e. Kabul and Jowzjan provinces. Respondents have been selected on the basis of their education level which we have set secondary education level to post graduate level for male respondents and for women we have set the Secondary education to graduation. Most of the participants in our survey study were from teaching, students, businessman, and professional working males and females.

**Table 1.**

**Participants information**

Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Location
Male =45	20-45	Secondary level to post graduation	Teaching, businessman, students, job holders	Kabul
Female = 35	20-50	Secondary education to graduation	Students, teachers, working women.	Jowzjan

We have done the survey interview of participants using the written questionnaire. We designed 10 questions for the data collection of this survey. With every participant we have spent 20-30 minutes to get complete the questionnaire and provide feedback

for all questions. We have only selected the outputs that are completely filled by the respondents. Every response which was unfilled, not properly answered, and missed were not included in the data analysis.



**Analysis and Discussion**

To achieve authenticity, correctness, and the correctness of hypotheses, the dataset has been statistically interpreted using statistical analysis techniques like the Chi-square test and correlations. The dataset has gone through aggregation, explanations, and graphical display in the form of a bar diagram at the conclusion of each table to illustrate the percentages for greater comfort of the findings. The tables are divided into different sections, or "categorizations," that are identified in alphabetical and figurative designs for the readers' convenience and ease of understanding as C1, C2, C3, etc. At the bottom of every table, CT is used to indicate total frequency and percentage. The "variable" is preceded by its distribution, which includes "frequencies" and "percentages", and is then "category". The responses are recorded

using two-point classifications, "to a lower degree" and "to a larger extent", which are represented as (TLE) and (TGE), and are coded as 1 and 2, respectively [Marlow, 2012; Marlow, Patton, 2005].

**Female Education and Gender Discrimination within Education**

The data support the claim that gender difference within the education system is severe and has led to women becoming illiterate, lowering their status, and impacting the nation's average literacy rate. Gender disparity throughout society is present in many aspects of social life, but it is particularly high in the area of education and employment. The ten elements used to group the debate are C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, and C10.

**Table 2.**

**How gender differences in educational attainment**

Classifications	Educational Imbalance by Gender	Women Education		Total
		Lower extent	Greater extent	
C1	Variations in the text	2%	98%	100%
C2	Differences in enrollment in schools	4%	96%	100%
C3	Female dropout rate	3%	97%	100%
C4	Priorities for women	2%	98%	100%
C5	Public preferences	36%	64%	100%
C6	Costly education	33%	67%	100%
C7	Differential subject choice	0%	100%	100%
C8	Less benefit from girls' education	37%	62%	100%
C9	Divergent approaches to education policy	0%	100%	100%
C10	Infrastructure capabilities are lacking.	13%	87%	100%

$P=0.000^{**}<0.05$  and  $\chi^2 = 42.141$

The statistical assessment in Table 2 shows how gender differences in educational attainment have a negative impact on both human capital and economic growth. The majority of participants (88 percent), who clearly state that gender difference throughout education lowered women's economic productivity to the families and community as a whole, prefer gender inequality throughout education to a lesser extent (TLE) and a bigger extent (marginalize it). The statistical study also shows that gender inequality in a text (C1) is 100 % attributable, while C2 has 100 % of participants, a significant dropout rate (C3) is 25 %, and C4 is marked by 35 % of participants. In addition to 34 %, 68 % of participants agreed that social preference (C5) in the academic contexts (which are determined by families) often lowered the position of women in families and communities. However, 32 percent: 67 percent of participants suggested using C6 for determining the quantitative outcomes of gender discrepancy in schooling. Additionally, 8 percent of participants indicate that there is a lack of equality in subject choice, 34 percent: 62 percent of survey participants agree with

C8, 8 percent of survey participants indicate there is disparity throughout the education system, and 11 percent of the respondents strongly agree with C10, which states that the main reason for gender difference throughout education is inadequate infrastructure.

As an outcome, the theory "Disparity in content and registration promotes illiterate among women" is put forth to address the gender gap in education. A chi-square test is used to assess the results, and the value of  $P=0.000^{**}0.05$  indicates that the finding is very substantial and that there is a strong correlation between women's illiterate and gender discrimination throughout educational attainment. Further, the correlation test supports the finding in a man that  $**Correlation$  is extremely significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed),  $r(164) = 0.947$ ;  $p 0.01$ . Since 91 percent of the variance is shared, the relationship is undoubtedly strong, leading to the conclusion that gender discrepancy is similar to a parasite that affects women's schooling see Table 3. With a  $r^2$  of 0.92 and a shared variance of 92 %, the correlation is clearly significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed),  $r(164) = 0.947$ ;  $p .01$ . The link is also clearly significant.

**Table 3.**  
**Women's Learning and Gender Inequality throughout Education Associations**

		Women's schooling	Gender differences in schooling
Women's schooling	Person correlation	1	0.947
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
	N	164	164
Gender differences in schooling	Person correlation	0.947	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
	N	164	164

**Effects of Socio-Cultural Barriers on Women’s Learning**

The data gathered demonstrates the relationship between sociocultural barriers and women's education in the Afghan society. The findings also demonstrate that socio-cultural barriers prevent women from pursuing higher education in the society, while there is variety in that certain barriers are minor (15%) and indicated by a small number of people, while others are more significant (TGE) and marked by the majority (85 percent). According to the statistical research, cultural barriers including sexism and male dominance (C1) contributed 2 percent:98 percent to the decline in women's educational attainment. Customary rules prohibiting women from leaving the house are responsible for (22 percent: 78 percent) of the gender gap in schooling (C2). Correspondingly, the feudalistic nature of the

community, where customs and values are made a priority, opposes education for women in a fashion of 20 percent: 80 percent (C5), and negative perception regarding purdah and veiling add (21 percent: 79 percent) C6. These gender bias social structures ignore women in the context of education, which resulted in 30 percent: 70 percent (C4). According to the data research, poverty is one of the possible obstacles to women's education and contributes to the fact that 18%:82% of the population in the C7 region cannot afford to send their children, including daughters and sons, to school. The analysis also shows that the indicators of unemployment and female economic dependency (C9) contributed to the results of 10 percent: 90 for women's illiteracy and 14 percent:86 percent of respondents belonging to C10, respectively.

**Table 4.**

**Shows a cross-tabulation of sociocultural challenges to education for women**

Classifications	Educational Imbalance by Gender	Women Education		Total
		Lower extent	Greater extent	
C1	Variations in the text	2%	98%	100%
C2	Differences in enrollment in schools	22%	78%	100%
C3	Female dropout rate	23%	77%	100%
C4	Priorities for women	25%	75%	100%
C5	Public preferences	30%	70%	100%
C6	Costly education	21%	79%	100%
C7	Differential subject choice	23%	77%	100%
C8	Less benefit from girls' education	22%	88%	100%
C9	Divergent approaches to education policy	14%	86%	100%
C10	Infrastructure capabilities are lacking.	15%	85%	100%

*Факторы, влияющие на гендерное неравенство в сфере образования: на примере Афганистана*

### Conclusion

Women make up half of the population in the research area of this study's findings. However, the socio-cultural discourses of the region have a significant impact on gender inequality in schooling, which in turn has an impact on the region's economic development. Women and men have unequal access to human capital as a result of the biased gender discourse in education. Interestingly, the region's structure and system play a critical part in obstructing women's access to education. This study also concluded that women are not permitted to participate in the financial issues of the family owing to cultural restrictions. The economic development is negatively impacted by gender disparities in educational attain-

ment as per capita income and production decline, which negatively impacts the country economies importantly, because of the way that women are treated unfairly in education, they are considered in the category of low to none income group in the socio-economic hierarchy of the society which has negative impact on the local economy as well. According to the study, women's sociocultural environment should be more accommodating, particularly for their educational needs. Additionally, gender equality-based socialization and orientation may be implemented so that both genders might potentially contribute to the economy by accessing and completing standard education from public and private education institutions in the country.

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