



Barriers to Women Education: An Empirical Study of Afghanistan

Taiba Karimi

Lovely professional university
Department of public Administration

Abstract

The present study aims to examine the barriers to women education in Afghanistan. In order to achieve this objective, the present study developed a questionnaire and collected data from 100 Afghan girls/women aged between 13-19 years. Total, 10 schools including five publics and five private schools were selected and 10 students from each selected school were selected to be part of the survey that resulted in total 100 girls/women. It was found that Afghan women face discrimination in educational institutions because they are considered to inferior sex in their country. Afghan women perceived that they are treated differently in their educational institution because of their gender. Further, it was found that Afghan women perceive that they have limited money to attend college and also agreed that Afghan women were not preferred by my family members to attend college. Afghan women revealed that they do not feel independent to commute from college.

Introduction

Women education in Afghanistan seems to be an important issue which requires discussion on international level. As per previous studies conducted by researchers in conflict zones such as Afghanistan, there is a dearth of empirical information on status of women education in such war-torn areas. There is a strong need to broaden the purview of studies to be conducted in war-torn areas in order to glean insights on level of women education. Afghanistan has endured a combination of armed conflict. This country has also witnessed widespread poverty amid social injustice. These factors have led to pathetic conditions of women education.

The country has witnessed a lot of disturbance due to Taliban's rule. Moreover, during Taliban's rule, the country has been suffering from large-scale poverty, widespread malnutrition and hyper corruption. With the invasion of United States of America in 2001; Taliban was overthrown in 2001 leading to establishment of elected government in the country. Despite of that, women in this country have experienced extremely difficult times while living in Afghanistan.

After US invasion in 2001, it has been an enormous task to rehabilitate people of Afghanistan. Historically, Afghan population has been harassed by decades of violence and wide spread destruction in the country due to a long war with several enemies. The Afghanistan population has very weak mental health and it is very challenging to upkeep their mental health. In 1996, a survey was conducted on mental health of Afghani people that highlighted that 42 percent of women reported stress disorder; whereas 86 percent of them were found to have symptoms of anxiety. Similarly, in a survey conducted in 1997; 90 percent of the Afghan children believed that they would die in the war; whereas 80 percent of Afghan children were found to be sad in their life (Van 2002).

In the light of above discussion, the present study aims to examine the barriers to women education in Afghanistan.

Review of Literature

Panter, Goodman and Eggerman (2011) conducted a study entitled “Mental Health and Childhood Adversities: A Longitudinal Study in Kabul, Afghanistan” used stratified random-sampling in schools. Findings highlighted that with the exception of posttraumatic stress, one-year trajectories for all mental health outcomes showed significant improvement. Family violence had a striking impact on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire data, raising caregiver-rated scores by 3.14 points.

Bronstein, Montgomery and Dobrowolsk (2012) undertook a study aiming to examine the mental health of Afghan unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the United Kingdom. Authors argued that Afghans are the largest group of children seeking asylum in the UK, yet evidence concerning their mental health is limited. Authors estimated of probable posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Afghan men and attempted to examine its influence on traumatic events. Findings highlighted that male adolescents completed validated self-report screening measures for traumatic experiences and likely PTSD. Further, greater traumatic events were found to be linked with greater level of probable posttraumatic stress disorder.

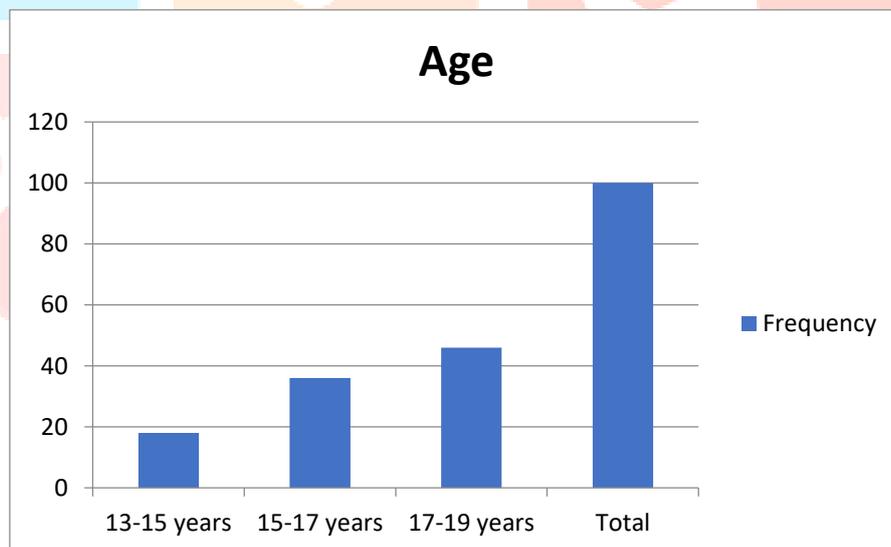
Bronstein, Montgomery and Ott (2013) argued that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are at high risk for mental problems. Therefore, authors aimed to examine the emotional problems among Afghan Children by selecting data of 222 Afghan children. The sample items were interviewed with the help of screening measures in which emotional problems were measured using the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist. Findings suggested that one-third of the selected sample revealed emotional problems. For instance, 34.6 % revealed that they have for anxiety and 23.4 % revealed that they have depression. Compound traumatic events in the pre-migration stages of forced migration have a deleterious association with UASC well-being.

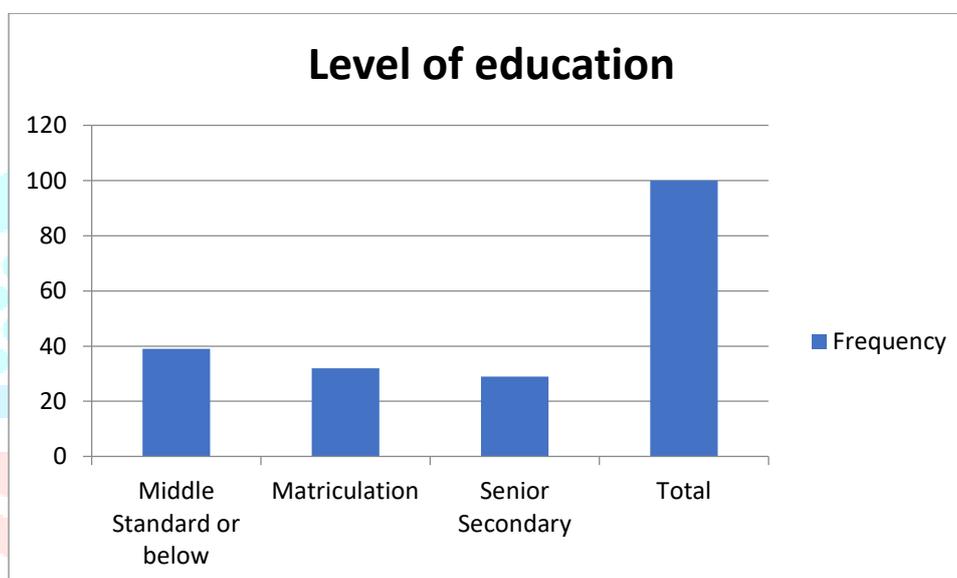
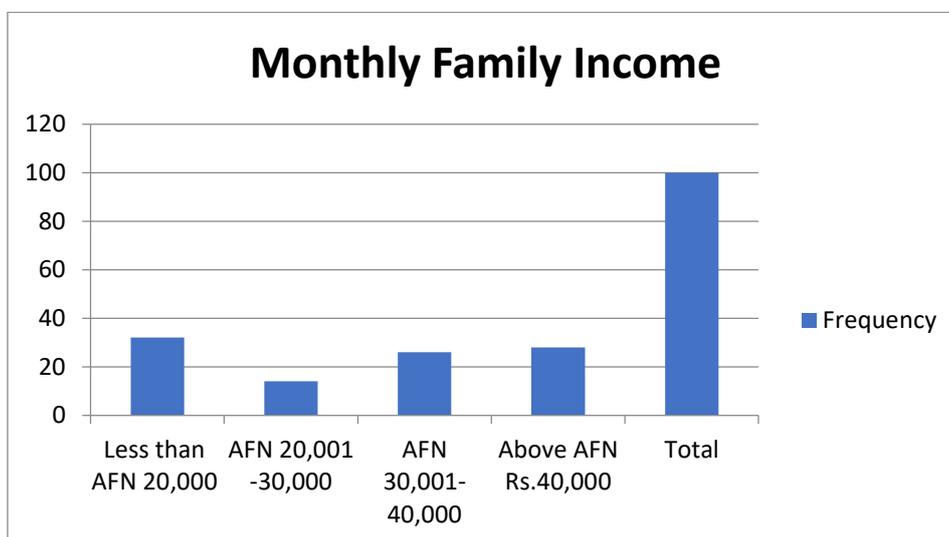
Research Methodology

The present study aims to examine the barriers to women education in Afghanistan. In order to achieve this objective, the present study developed a questionnaire and collected data from 100 Afghan girls/women aged between 13-19 years. The girls/women in the above mentioned age category, were selected from different educational institutions of one of the largest cities of the country- Kabul. The girls between the age 13-19 years were selected from both public and private schools of the selected city. Total, 10 schools including five public and five private schools were selected and 10 students from each selected school were selected to be part of the survey that resulted in total 100 girls/women. The data collected was analyzed using percentage and mean score.

Data analysis and interpretation

Table: Demographic profile		
Age	Frequency	Percentage
13-15 years	18	18
15-17 years	36	36
17-19 years	46	46
Total	100	100
Monthly family Income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than AFN 20,000	32	32
AFN 20,001 -30,000	14	14
AFN 30,001- 40,000	26	26
Above AFN Rs.40,000	28	28
Total	100	100
Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Middle Standard or below	39	39
Matriculation	32	32
Senior Secondary	29	29
Total	100	100

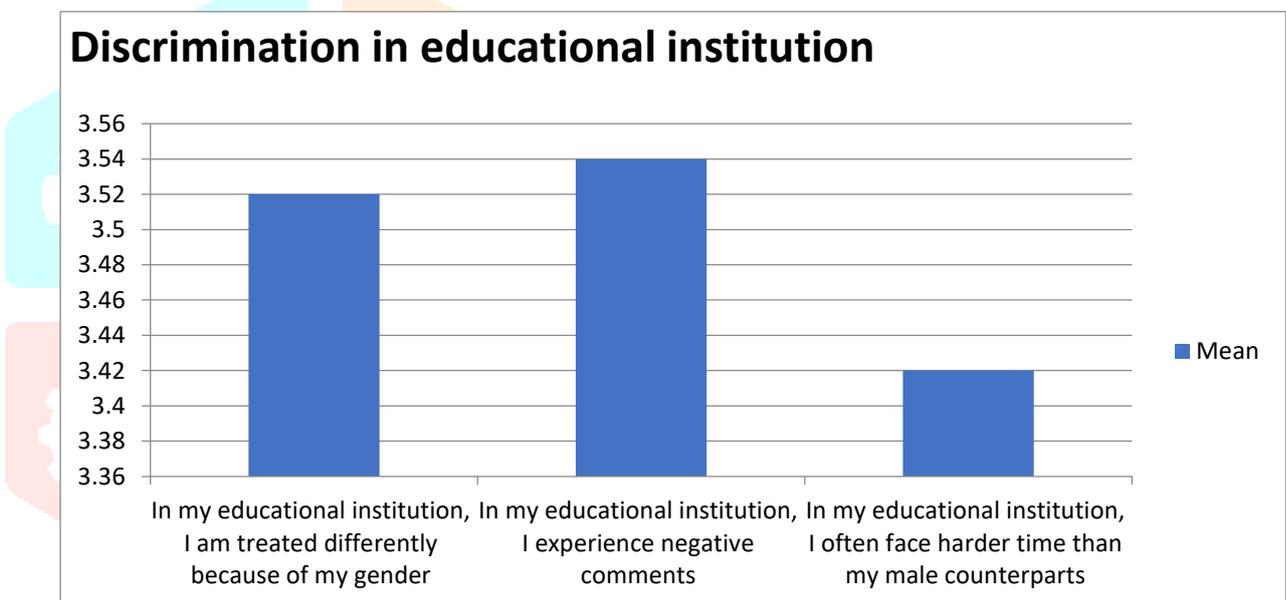




The above table revealed that a maximum of the respondents (46 %) were in the age group of 17-19 years. 36% respondents were between 15-17 years. A sizeable proportion of respondents (18 %) were found to be in the age group between 13-15 years. Further, the above table revealed that maximum number of the respondents (32 %) were found to have monthly family income less than AFN 20,000 per month; followed by 28% were found to have monthly family income Above AFN Rs. 40,000 per month. Further, the above table revealed that maximum number of the respondents (39 %) were found to have education as middle Standard or below; followed by 32% were found to have education as matriculation.

Discrimination in Educational Institution

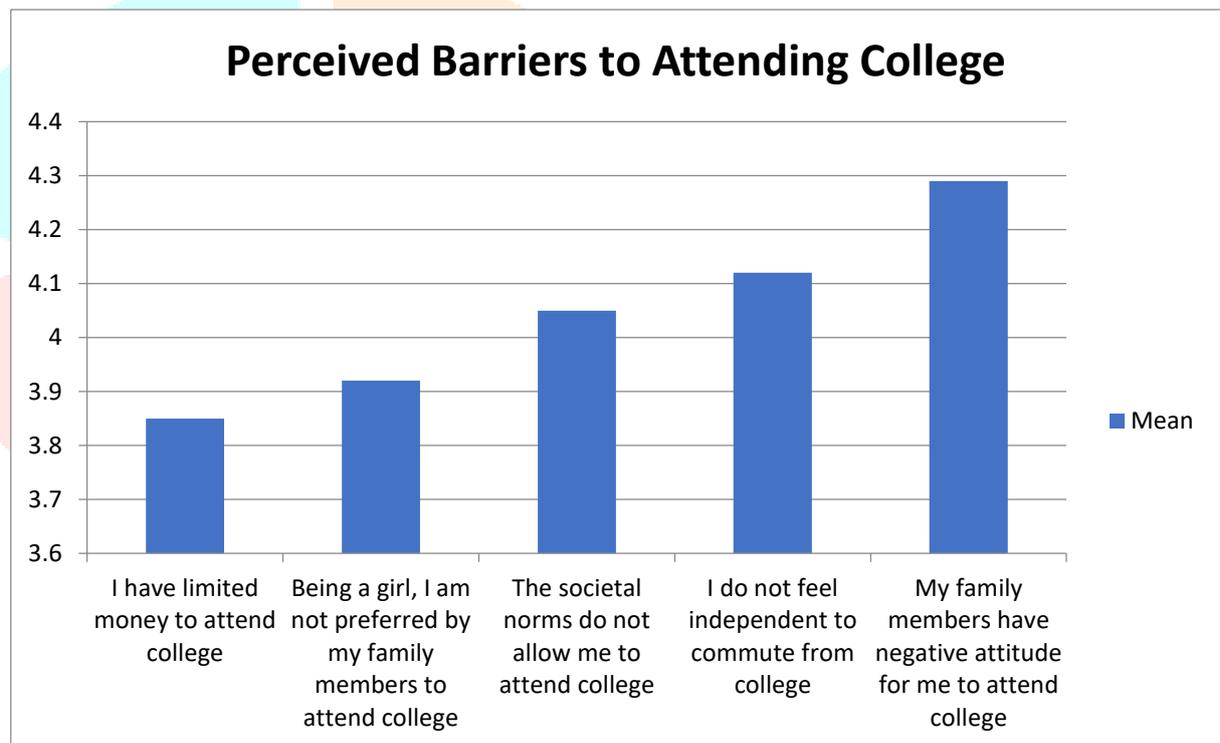
Sr. No.	Statements	Mean
1	In my educational institution, I am treated differently because of my gender	3.52
2	In my educational institution, I experience negative comments	3.54
3	In my educational institution, I often face harder time than my male counterparts	3.42



The above table revealed that Afghan women face discrimination in educational institutions because they are considered to inferior sex in their country. This may happen due to a variety of reasons like an orthodox thinking of Afghan people. For instance, the study found that Afghan women perceived that they are treated differently in their educational institution because of their gender (mean score = 3.52). Further, women also agreed that in their educational institution, they experience negative comments (mean score = 3.54). This finding showed that women in Afghanistan have deeper concerns about the way they are being treated in the schools and colleges of the country. Further, it was found that Afghan women perceived that in the educational institution, they often face harder time than their male counterparts as mean score for this statement was found to be greater than the mid value 'three'.

Perceived Barriers to Attending College

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean
1	I have limited money to attend college	3.85
2	Being a girl, I am not preferred by my family members to attend college	3.92
3	The societal norms do not allow me to attend college	4.05
4	I do not feel independent to commute from college	4.12
5	My family members have negative attitude for me to attend college	4.29



The above table revealed that Afghan women face many barriers to attending college due to a variety of reasons. For instance, the study found that Afghan women perceive that they have limited money to attend college (mean score = 3.85). Further, respondents also agreed that Afghan women were not preferred by my family members to attend college (mean score = 3.92). This finding showed that women in Afghanistan have deeper concerns of their higher education because not only the society but their family members do not like women to attend college. Further, it was found that Afghan women do not feel independent to commute from college as mean score for this statement was found to be greater than the 'four'. This finding indicated that Afghan women have serious concerns of their education as it was found that their family members have negative attitude for them to attend college (mean score = 4.29).

Conclusion

The present study aims to examine the barriers to women education in Afghanistan. It was found that Afghan women face discrimination in educational institutions because they are considered to inferior sex in their country. Afghan women perceived that they are treated differently in their educational institution because of their gender. Further, it was found that Afghan women perceive that they have limited money to attend college and also agreed that Afghan women were not preferred by my family members to attend college. Afghan women revealed that they do not feel independent to commute from college.

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Questionnaire

Age:

- 13-15 years
- 15-17 years
- 17-19 years

Monthly Family Income:

- Less than AFN 20,000
- AFN 20,001 -30,000
- AFN 30,001- 40,000
- Above AFN Rs.40,000

Level of Education:

- Middle Standard or below
- Matriculation
- Senior Secondary



The following statements relate to **Discrimination in Educational Institution**. You are requested to rate these statements on the given 5-point scale:

Discrimination in Educational Institution	SD	D	N	A	SA
In my educational institution, I am treated differently because of my gender					
In my educational institution, I experience negative comments					
In my educational institution, I often face harder time than my male counterparts					

The following statements relate to **Perceived Barriers to Attending College**. You are requested to rate these statements on the given 5-point scale:

Perceived Barriers to Attending College	SD	D	N	A	SA
I have limited money to attend college					
Being a girl, I am not preferred by my family members to attend college					
The societal norms do not allow me to attend college					
I do not feel independent to commute from college					
My family members have negative attitude for me to attend college					