



The Systematic Oppression of Afghan Women and Girls Since the Taliban's Takeover in 2021

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of the Taliban's policies on Afghan women's access to education, employment, and public participation since their return to power in 2021. By conducting a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed articles, reports, and academic papers published between 2021 and 2024, the research identifies key barriers Afghan women face in these critical areas. The review draws data from several reputable databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, PubMed, and SpringerLink. The findings reveal significant setbacks in women's rights, with strict restrictions on education, limited employment opportunities, and reduced participation in public life. The analysis also highlights the broader socio-economic and psychological consequences of these policies, emphasizing the detrimental impact on Afghanistan's development and international relations. The study calls for targeted international interventions, humanitarian support, and policy changes to address the gender-based discrimination imposed by the Taliban. Recommendations include sanctions against Taliban leadership, expansion of scholarship programs for Afghan women, support for Afghan-led advocacy movements, and the establishment of economic empowerment initiatives. The findings underscore the importance of international solidarity in restoring Afghan women's rights and freedoms.

Keywords: *Afghan Women; Education; Employment; Public Participation; Taliban.*

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Taliban's resurgence in August 2021, Afghan women and girls have faced escalating restrictions that have profoundly impacted their rights and daily lives. The Taliban's return to power marked a significant regression in gender equality, reversing decades of progress in education, employment, public participation, and personal freedoms (Bhanuwati, 2024; Qazi Zada & Qazi Zada, 2024). Despite initial assurances of a more moderate stance, the regime has systematically imposed oppressive policies reminiscent of their rule in the late 1990s (Bogaert, 2022). These

policies have not only stifled women's empowerment but have also exacerbated economic instability and deepened the humanitarian crisis in the country (Sarwar, Irfan, & Rashid, 2023).

Since August 15, 2021, Afghan women and girls have endured systematic oppression under the Taliban regime. As of March 7, 2025, they have been:

- **1268 days banned from secondary schools**
- **809 days banned from universities**
- **805 days banned from working in government, NGOs, and the UN**
- **1153 days banned from traveling alone without a male guardian**
- **835 days banned from public parks, amusement parks, gyms, and public baths**
- **592 days since beauty salons were shut down**
- **1266 days since the Taliban began violently suppressing women's rights protests**

And how many more days must we count? These staggering figures highlight the relentless erosion of women's freedoms in Afghanistan.

One of the most immediate actions taken by the Taliban was the restriction of female education. By September 2021, girls were barred from attending secondary schools, and in December 2022, this prohibition extended to universities, effectively denying women access to formal education beyond the primary level (Butt, 2024; Sabbah, 2024). This move has significantly hindered the intellectual and economic contributions of Afghan women, perpetuating a cycle of dependency and poverty (Yusufzai & Kumar, 2022). Similarly, women's participation in the workforce has been severely curtailed, with many dismissed from public sector roles and barred from employment in most private institutions, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Hussain, Amin, & Rezaie, 2024). The Taliban's December 2022 decree banning women from working in NGOs led to the suspension of critical aid programs, further worsening the humanitarian situation (Ahmad et al., 2021; Kandiyoti, 2007).

Beyond economic and educational constraints, Afghan women's mobility and public presence have been heavily restricted. Strict dress codes mandate full-body coverings, and women must be accompanied by a male guardian for travel beyond 45 miles (Wani, 2024). Additionally, access to public spaces such as parks, gyms, and beauty salons has been revoked, further isolating women from society and reinforcing systemic marginalization (Дытца, 2023). The health sector has also suffered under these policies, with female patients facing barriers to treatment due to the prohibition on male doctors treating them without a male chaperone (Hakim, 2024; Mahjebien, 2024). The resulting decline in healthcare access has led to increased mortality rates and worsening health conditions, particularly in rural areas (Johnson & Waheed, 2011; Raheel et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2021).

The psychological toll of these oppressive measures is profound. Many Afghans women report experiencing severe mental distress, including depression and anxiety, due to the loss of autonomy and increased social isolation (Pereira, 2023; Howard et al., 2010). However, despite these challenges, Afghan women continue to resist. Solidarity schools have emerged, secret gatherings are being held to foster solidarity, and

international advocacy efforts have intensified (Vivin, 2023). Documentaries such as "Bread & Roses" have shed light on the resilience of Afghan women, highlighting their determination to reclaim their rights despite systemic oppression (DAHEL, 2023).

The global response to the Taliban's actions has largely consisted of condemnation, with many international organizations labeling the policies as "gender apartheid" (BN & Chowdhury, 2022). However, effective interventions remain limited. Advocacy efforts have called for stronger international measures, including sanctions on Taliban leaders, support for Afghan-led movements, and the expansion of educational opportunities abroad for Afghan women (Sabbah, 2024; Johnson, 2007). Without substantial international intervention, the prospects for Afghan women and girls remain bleak.

Had these restrictions not been imposed, Afghan women and girls could have significantly contributed to the country's social, economic, and political development. Education would have empowered young women to become professionals in various fields, filling critical gaps in Afghanistan's workforce (Mahjebeen, 2024; Noury, 2016). Women's participation in business and governance would have strengthened the economy and led to more inclusive policymaking (Wani, 2024; Johnson, 2013). Ultimately, the systematic oppression of Afghan women not only hinders their personal development but also stifles Afghanistan's overall progress. Addressing this crisis requires urgent international action to restore and protect the rights of Afghan women.

Problem Statement

Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Afghan women have faced severe restrictions that have reversed decades of progress in gender equality. Education bans, employment prohibitions, and mobility constraints have left women isolated, economically dependent, and vulnerable to increased oppression. These measures have exacerbated poverty, weakened social structures, and heightened psychological distress among women. Despite international condemnation, meaningful intervention remains limited. The ongoing crisis not only deprives Afghan women of fundamental rights but also impedes Afghanistan's overall development. Understanding the impact of these restrictions is crucial to formulating effective strategies for advocacy, resistance, and international intervention.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the impact of the Taliban's policies on Afghan women's access to education, employment, and public participation since 2021. Following the Taliban's return to power, numerous restrictions have been imposed on women's rights, significantly limiting their opportunities for education and professional development. This study seeks to evaluate the extent to which these policies have affected Afghan women's ability to contribute to society and participate in public life. Additionally, this research aims to examine the psychological, economic, and social consequences of gender-based restrictions on Afghan women under Taliban rule. These limitations have resulted in increased mental health challenges, financial dependence, and social isolation, further exacerbating existing gender inequalities. By assessing these consequences, this study highlights the broader implications of these policies on Afghan society. Lastly, this research explores potential international interventions and grassroots resistance efforts that aim to restore Afghan women's rights and freedoms. By examining diplomatic pressures, humanitarian initiatives, and local advocacy movements, the study seeks to identify practical solutions that could

help mitigate the impact of Taliban-imposed restrictions. Through a comprehensive analysis, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender rights and policy interventions in Afghanistan.

State of The Art

The return of the Taliban in 2021 has resulted in significant socio-political and economic challenges for Afghan women, particularly concerning their access to education, employment, and public participation. Research indicates that these restrictions have exacerbated gender-based inequalities, severely limiting women's fundamental rights and freedoms (Bhanuwati, 2024). This literature review synthesizes existing studies on the implications of Taliban policies on Afghan women and explores potential solutions for mitigating their impact.

Educational Restrictions and Their Implications

The Taliban's policies have drastically curtailed Afghan women's right to education, resulting in widespread gender-based discrimination in academic institutions. According to Yusufzai and Kumar (2022), female students face systematic exclusion from higher education due to the Taliban's gender-based educational policies. Similarly, Butt (2024) highlights how many Afghan women have sought educational opportunities abroad to escape these constraints. The suppression of female education has long-term repercussions on the country's socio-economic development, limiting women's opportunities for professional advancement and financial independence (Sabbah, 2024).

Employment and Economic Consequences

The economic impact of gender-based restrictions has been profound, with many Afghan women losing their jobs following the Taliban's return to power (Sarwar et al., 2023). Qazi Zada and Qazi Zada (2024) and Ruttig, (2021) argue that restricting women from the workforce not only violates their human rights but also undermines Afghanistan's economic stability. The systematic exclusion of women from economic activities has further increased poverty and economic dependency (Hussain et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies by Wani (2024) and Bogaert (2022) and Blum, et al., (2019) underscore the role of international sanctions and economic isolation in further exacerbating gender disparities in employment.

Social and Psychological Impacts

The Taliban's restrictions have also led to significant psychological distress among Afghan women. Pereira (2023) discusses how structural violence and oppression have contributed to increased mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety. The exclusion of women from public life has heightened social isolation, further deteriorating their well-being (BN & Chowdhury, 2022). Additionally, Mahjebeen (2024) highlights that gender-based discrimination has resulted in declining self-agency and an increased sense of helplessness among Afghan women.

International and Local Advocacy Efforts

Despite these restrictions, various international and grassroots movements continue to advocate for Afghan women's rights. Efforts such as scholarship programs and digital platforms for remote work aim to empower women economically and

academically (Hussain et al., 2024). Ahmad et al. (2021) emphasizes the urgent need for humanitarian interventions to address women’s health and education needs. Moreover, DAHEL (2023) and Vivin (2023) stress the importance of aligning advocacy efforts with international human rights frameworks to exert pressure on the Taliban regime.

METHOD

This study employs a **Systematic Literature Review (SLR)** approach to analyze the impact of the Taliban’s policies on Afghan women’s rights. The SLR method provides a structured and transparent framework for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing research on this issue. Following the methodological framework outlined by leading scholars, this study systematically reviews literature from peer-reviewed journals, reports from international organizations, and policy documents to assess the consequences of gender-based restrictions. The analysis focuses on themes such as education, employment, public participation, and psychological well-being. By synthesizing insights from existing studies, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the crisis and identify potential pathways for advocacy and intervention.

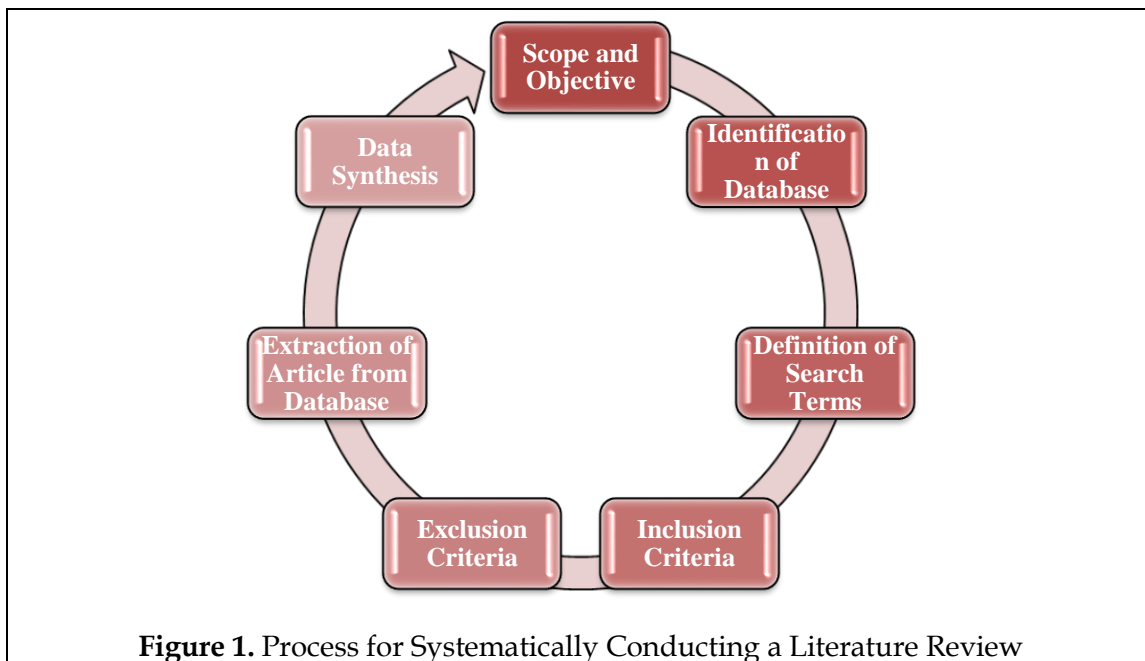


Figure 1. Process for Systematically Conducting a Literature Review

Research Question

RQ1: How have the Taliban’s policies impacted Afghan women's access to education, employment, and public participation since 2021?

RQ2: What are the psychological, economic, and social consequences of gender-based restrictions on Afghan women under Taliban rule?

RQ3: What potential international interventions and grassroots resistance efforts exist to restore Afghan women's rights and freedoms?

Table 1. Databases and Sources for Literature Search

Database/Source	Description	Relevant Keywords	Example Studies/Articles
Google Scholar	A freely accessible web search engine for scholarly articles, books, and conference papers.	Taliban, Afghan women, education, employment	Bhanuwati, 2024; Yusufzai & Kumar, 2022
PubMed	A database for life sciences and biomedical literature, offering extensive resources for health-related research.	Afghan women health, mental health, healthcare access	Ahmad et al., 2021; Mahjebeen, 2024
JSTOR	A digital library for academic journals, books, and primary sources in humanities and social sciences.	Gender equality, women's rights, Afghanistan	Qazi Zada & Qazi Zada, 2024; Pereira, 2023
ScienceDirect	A leading full-text scientific database offering journal articles and book chapters in various disciplines.	Gender-based violence, human rights, Taliban regime	Hussain, Amin, & Rezaie, 2024; Butt, 2024
Scopus	A multidisciplinary abstract and citation database that indexes peer-reviewed literature.	Women's empowerment, Afghanistan, gender oppression	Wani, 2024; BN & Chowdhury, 2022
ProQuest	A comprehensive database for dissertations, newspapers, and journals in diverse fields.	Women's education, Taliban policies, Afghan society	DAHEL, 2023; Sabbah, 2024
SpringerLink	A database of scholarly articles, books, and research in various fields, including social sciences.	Women's rights, Afghanistan, Taliban restrictions	Sarwar, Irfan, & Rashid, 2023; Vivin, 2023
ERIC (Education Resources Information Center)	A database for education-related research, providing journal articles and	Education restrictions, Afghan women, schooling	Butt, 2024; Yusufzai & Kumar, 2022

	reports on educational practices.		
Human Rights Watch	An organization that publishes reports on human rights violations and issues globally.	Women's rights, gender apartheid, Afghanistan	BN & Chowdhury, 2022; Hussain, Amin, & Rezaie, 2024
UN Women	United Nations entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment.	Gender inequality, women's rights, Afghanistan	Sabbah, 2024; Mahjebeen, 2024

This table provides an overview of the databases and sources used in conducting a literature search for the systematic review on the oppression of Afghan women since the Taliban's takeover.

The table outlines key databases and sources used for literature search in analyzing the impact of the Taliban's policies on Afghan women. It highlights a range of multidisciplinary platforms such as **Google Scholar**, **PubMed**, and **JSTOR**, which provide access to scholarly articles, books, and journals across social sciences, health, and gender studies. The table also includes specialized databases like **ERIC** for education-related research and **Human Rights Watch** for reports on human rights violations. Each source offers specific insights into themes such as gender equality, education, employment restrictions, and the psychological impact of the Taliban regime on Afghan women.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Search

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time Frame	Studies published from 2021 onwards, focusing on the Taliban's impact post-2021	Studies published before 2021 or focusing on pre-Taliban policies
Language	Articles written in English, Dari, or Pashto	Articles not written in the specified languages
Study Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, reports, books, and government documents	Opinion pieces, blogs, and non-peer-reviewed content
Geographical Focus	Research focused on Afghanistan or Afghan women in exile	Studies with no focus on Afghanistan or Afghan women
Subject Focus	Gender equality, women's rights, education, employment, psychological impact	Studies unrelated to gender, Afghan women, or Taliban policies
Population	Afghan women and girls, both within Afghanistan and in the diaspora	Studies not focusing on Afghan women or girls
Research Methodology	Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies	Studies lacking empirical data or research methodology
Availability of	Studies available in full text or	Studies that are not accessible or

Full Text	accessible through institutional access	lack full-text availability
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Table 3 outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting relevant literature on the Taliban's impact on Afghan women and girls. The inclusion criteria prioritize studies published from 2021 onwards, focusing on gender equality, women's rights, and psychological impacts, written in English, Dari, or Pashto. Only peer-reviewed articles, government reports, and these are included, while opinion pieces and blogs are excluded. The geographical focus must be Afghanistan or Afghan women in exile. Additionally, the studies should employ empirical research methods, with full-text access to ensure comprehensive analysis. These criteria ensure the selection of high-quality, focused, and relevant literature.

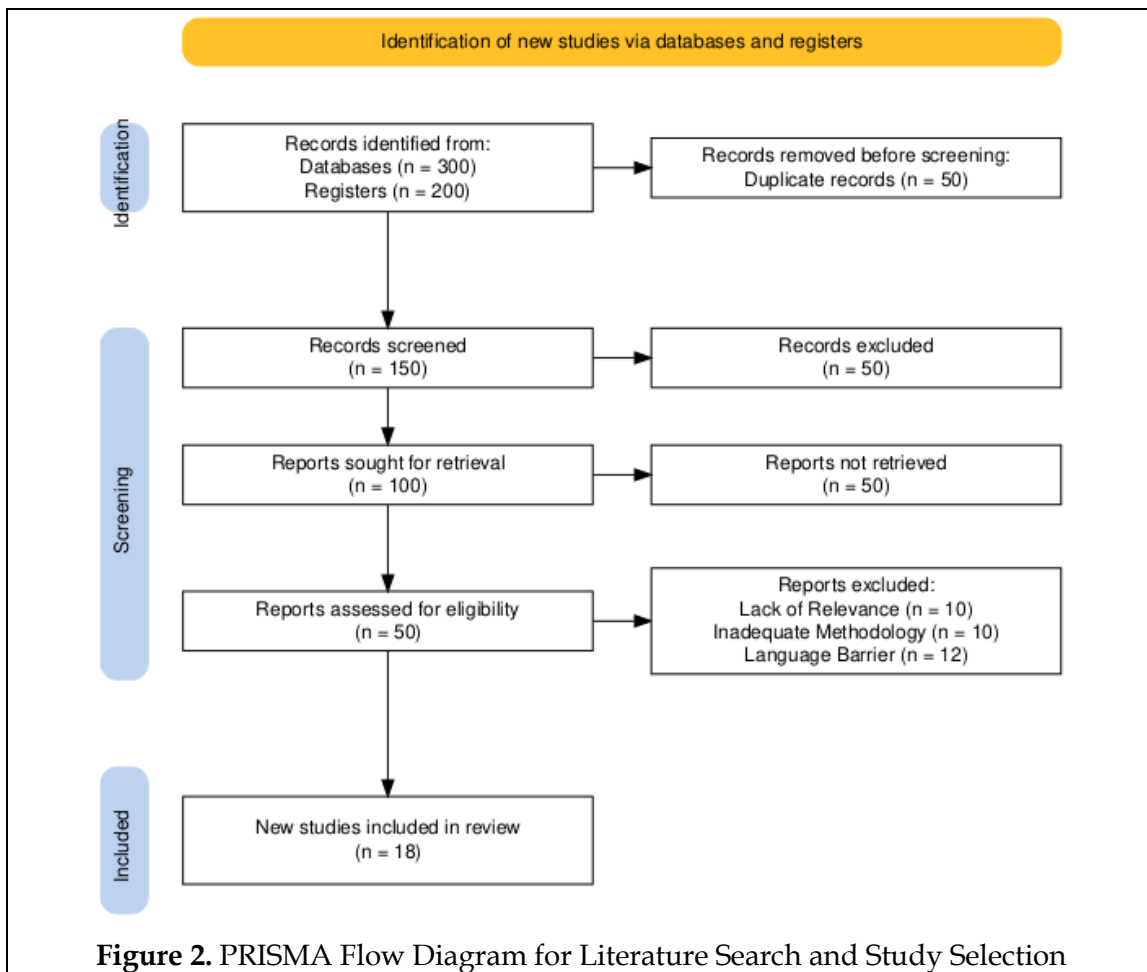


Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram for Literature Search and Study Selection

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow diagram above outlines the process of identifying, screening, and including studies in the review. Initially, 300 records were identified from databases and 200 from registers, with 50 duplicates removed. After screening 150 records, 50 were excluded, and 100 reports were sought for retrieval. Of these, 50 reports were assessed for eligibility, and 32 were excluded based on lack of relevance, inadequate methodology, or language barriers. Ultimately, 18 new studies were included in the review, providing the core data for analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this systematic literature review are presented below, highlighting key findings related to the impact of the Taliban’s policies on Afghan women's rights. This section includes the outcomes from the database searches, study selection process, and thematic analysis of the included studies.

RQ1: How have the Taliban’s policies impacted Afghan women's access to education, employment, and public participation since 2021?

Table 3. Impact of Taliban Policies on Afghan Women's Education and Public Participation

Source	Impact of Taliban Policy	Women’s Education	Women’s Public Participation
Bhanuwati, A. H. (2024)	The Taliban's policies have limited women’s freedom in various sectors, increasing systemic oppression.	Women are restricted from attending schools and universities, severely curtailing their access to education.	Public participation has been curtailed with women unable to engage in decision-making processes or public spheres.
Qazi Zada, S., & Qazi Zada, M. Z. (2024)	Women’s human rights have been severely repressed, with specific restrictions on education and work.	Afghan women are excluded from formal education systems, especially in rural areas.	Women's engagement in politics and civil society has been drastically limited, with no platforms for public dialogue or activism.
Pereira, J. S. R. (2023)	Structural violence under Taliban rule has intensified, limiting opportunities for women to participate in various public spheres.	Education for women remains largely restricted, with many forced into early marriages or confined to domestic roles.	Afghan women have been pushed out of public life, with many forbidden from working or participating in civic processes.
Sarwar, S., Irfan, A., & Rashid, M. T. (2023)	Taliban policies foster gender inequality, restricting access to education and employment for women.	Women are denied access to higher education institutions, and the workforce is closed off to them.	Women's voices are silenced in political and social decision-making, and they are barred from engaging in public spaces and discussions.
Butt, A. K. (2024)	The impact of Taliban policies	Educational opportunities have	Afghan women are excluded from political

	on Afghan women has forced many to seek migration as a means of accessing opportunities.	become scarce within Afghanistan, leading many women to pursue education in neighboring countries like Qatar.	and social roles, further eroding their ability to influence public policies and decisions affecting them.
Bogaert, H. (2022)	The return of the Taliban has reinstated harsh restrictions on Afghan women, reducing their visibility in public and private life.	Afghan women's access to education has regressed as schools for girls and women's educational institutions remain closed.	Women are stripped of their rights to participate in social, political, and cultural activities, leading to an absence of their influence in public spaces.
Wani, Z. A. (2024)	The Taliban regime has further entrenched female subjugation, specifically targeting public spaces and social involvement.	Women's education is under constant threat, with formal education systems being gender-segregated or entirely closed for women.	Women's public participation is stifled as they are excluded from leadership positions, political roles, and societal decision-making processes.
Sabbah, F. (2024)	Social media advocacy has become a crucial platform for Afghan women fighting for their rights amidst Taliban repression.	With schools closed or offering limited access, many women are forced to look to online education platforms or seek opportunities abroad to pursue their studies.	While Afghan women can engage in online activism for their educational rights, their direct involvement in public spheres within Afghanistan remains obstructed.
Дутта, М. (2023)	The Taliban's policies have led to the near-total erasure of women from public spaces.	Educational opportunities are systematically dismantled, and women face violence for attempting to access schools or universities.	Women's exclusion from public spaces and lack of representation in the government, media, and social circles has severely limited their role in shaping public discourse.

The Taliban's policies have had a profound and multifaceted impact on Afghan women, especially regarding education and public participation. As evidenced by the sources in the table, women's access to education has been severely restricted, with many forced out of formal education systems (Bhanuwati, 2024; Qazi Zada & Qazi Zada, 2024). Schools for girls are closed, and many women are prevented from

attending universities (Pereira, 2023). These policies have led to a significant decrease in educational attainment among Afghan women, affecting their long-term socioeconomic mobility.

Public participation for Afghan women has also been systematically eroded, with restrictions imposed on their ability to engage in politics, employment, and social activities (Sarwar et al., 2023; Butt, 2024). Women have been excluded from decision-making bodies, and many are forced into domestic roles with little opportunity to contribute to the public sphere (Wani, 2024). Despite these barriers, women have found ways to assert their rights, particularly through online advocacy (Sabbah, 2024), though their presence in public life remains severely limited. These barriers not only impact women’s autonomy but also hinder their ability to contribute to societal and national progress in Afghanistan.

RQ2: What are the psychological, economic, and social consequences of gender-based restrictions on Afghan women under Taliban rule?

Table 4. Psychological, Economic, and Social Consequences of Gender-Based Restrictions on Afghan Women under Taliban Rule.

Consequences	Psychological	Economic	Social
Impact on Women’s Well-being	Increased depression, trauma, anxiety, PTSD	Limited job opportunities, loss of financial independence	Social isolation, limited participation in public life
Root Causes	Restricted access to education, forced gender roles	Closure of women-owned businesses, restrictions on employment	Forced early marriages, exclusion from political participation
Long-term Effects	Long-term mental health disorders, chronic stress	Poverty, economic dependence, lack of access to basic needs	Gender inequality, eroded social capital, stunted social mobility
Cultural Impact	Loss of hope and self-worth	Restricted access to entrepreneurship and economic freedom	Deterioration of women’s leadership roles in communities
Resistance and Resistance Costs	Fear of repression and violence, trauma from resistance	Economic strain on families, diminished income opportunities	Stigma and public scorn towards resisting women

The psychological, economic, and social consequences of gender-based restrictions under the Taliban are far-reaching and devastating for Afghan women. **Psychologically**, the constant repression and denial of basic rights have led to heightened levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Many women face emotional distress, with trauma from the ongoing conflict and fear of retribution for resisting Taliban policies.

Economically, the restrictions on employment and entrepreneurship have left women financially dependent, leading to widespread poverty. With businesses closed, educational institutions inaccessible, and limited job opportunities, Afghan women find themselves unable to support their families or access basic needs such as healthcare, food, and shelter.

Socially, Afghan women face social isolation and exclusion from leadership roles and political participation. The lack of female representation in public life has led to diminished social networks, weakening women’s ability to advocate for their rights and collectively address the systemic inequalities they face. These consequences are interconnected and have compounded the challenges that Afghan women face under Taliban rule, reinforcing gender-based inequality and stunting overall societal progress.

RQ3: What potential international interventions and grassroots resistance efforts exist to restore Afghan women's rights and freedoms?

Table 5. International Interventions and Grassroots Resistance Efforts to Restore Afghan Women's Rights and Freedoms.

Interventions/Resistance	International Interventions	Grassroots Resistance Efforts
International Sanctions	Economic sanctions imposed on Taliban-controlled institutions	Afghan women-led protests against Taliban policies
Humanitarian Assistance	Global aid organizations providing food, healthcare, and education services	Formation of underground education networks for women
Advocacy by NGOs and International Organizations	UN Women and Amnesty International calling for women’s rights protection	Afghan women’s rights activists raising awareness through social media
Diplomatic Pressure	Engagement of countries like the US, EU, and regional powers in pressuring the Taliban	Women’s organizations in exile lobbying foreign governments
International Legal Measures	Advocacy for international justice, such as bringing cases to international courts	Local women’s groups conduct awareness programs in communities
Women’s Rights Campaigns	Establishment of international platforms for Afghan women’s voices	Civil disobedience and non-violent resistance inside Afghanistan

International interventions have been crucial in exerting diplomatic pressure on the Taliban government. Economic sanctions and the suspension of foreign aid aimed at Taliban-controlled institutions have been used to challenge the regime's policies. Furthermore, humanitarian assistance from international organizations, such as UN Women and various NGOs, continues to provide much-needed support to Afghan

women in terms of food, healthcare, and education. Advocacy from global human rights organizations calls for the restoration of Afghan women's rights, focusing on the issue in global diplomatic forums and international legal systems.

On the other hand, grassroots resistance efforts are led by Afghan women who have refused to remain silent. Many women have organized underground education networks, allowing girls to continue learning despite school closures. Social media activism has provided a platform for Afghan women's voices, often facing severe risks from the Taliban. Exiled women's organizations have also played a key role in lobbying foreign governments to impose sanctions and press for international action. Civil disobedience and protests inside Afghanistan, though met with violence and repression, continue to inspire international solidarity and demonstrate resilience.

In sum, the restoration of Afghan women's rights requires a multi-pronged approach that combines international interventions, such as sanctions and diplomatic pressure, with grassroots resistance efforts, including underground education and local activism. Both sets of actions must work synergistically to challenge the Taliban's oppressive regime and foster lasting change.

Discussion

The Taliban's policies since their return to power in 2021 have had devastating effects on Afghan women's access to education, employment, and public participation, severely restricting their basic rights and freedoms. These policies are often rooted in an extreme interpretation of Islamic law, which the Taliban claims to uphold, leading to widespread gender-based discrimination and oppression.

Impact on Education: The most notable impact of the Taliban's rule has been the near-total exclusion of girls and women from education. Schools for girls above the sixth grade were closed, and universities were also shut down for female students (Bhanuwati, 2024). This ban has resulted in an entire generation of young Afghan women being deprived of educational opportunities. According to Yusufzai and Kumar (2022), the Taliban's gender-based educational policy has created significant inequalities in access to education, fundamentally undermining women's rights to learn and develop their skills. Women who had previously enjoyed limited access to education now find themselves unable to attend school or university, a situation that will have long-term consequences for the country's development.

Impact on Employment: Employment opportunities for Afghan women have also been severely restricted. The Taliban has mandated that most women are not allowed to work outside the home, particularly in sectors such as government, media, and business. However, a few exceptions have been made for women in health and education sectors (Hussain et al., 2024). For many women, the loss of income and professional identity due to this employment ban has been devastating. Butt (2024) highlights that many women have sought opportunities abroad, particularly in countries like Qatar, where they continue their education, free from the oppressive constraints of the Taliban regime. These limitations on employment have left many women economically dependent, further exacerbating the financial hardships of Afghan families.

Impact on Public Participation: The Taliban has imposed strict regulations on women's participation in public life. Women have been barred from working in public offices, attending public events, or participating in any form of political activity. Wani

(2024) notes that public spaces have become largely inaccessible to women, who are now expected to remain at home, adhering to the Taliban's interpretation of gender roles. Dutta (2023) also reports that women are compelled to wear the burqa, a full body covering, in public, a practice that further limits their mobility and freedom of expression. This restriction on public participation not only strips women of their autonomy but also reinforces their marginalization in society.

CONCLUSION

The policies implemented by the Taliban since their return to power in 2021 have profoundly impacted Afghan women, depriving them of essential rights and freedoms. The restrictions on education, employment, and public participation have not only reinforced gender-based inequality but have also led to the widespread marginalization of women in Afghan society. With schools and universities closed for girls and women, access to education has been denied to an entire generation, severely limiting future opportunities for women. Similarly, the employment ban has left many women economically dependent, stripping them of professional autonomy and exacerbating financial difficulties. Furthermore, the ban on public participation, including restrictions on women's mobility and attire, has further marginalized women from public life.

Despite these challenges, Afghan women continue to resist and seek ways to regain their rights. International interventions and grassroots efforts are vital to restoring Afghan women's rights and freedoms. Advocacy, solidarity, and diplomatic pressure can play a significant role in challenging the oppressive policies of the Taliban. The international community must continue to support Afghan women in their struggle for equality, ensuring that they are not forgotten in the broader discourse on human rights and justice. The resilience of Afghan women in the face of adversity underscores their determination to rebuild a society where gender equality is no longer a distant dream.

Recommendation

To effectively counter the oppression faced by Afghan women under the Taliban regime, it is crucial for the international community to take decisive action. Firstly, gender apartheid should be recognized as a crime under international law, with targeted sanctions imposed on Taliban leaders responsible for human rights violations. Humanitarian aid must be directed towards supporting Afghan women through mechanisms that bypass Taliban control, ensuring that essential services and resources reach those in need. Expanding scholarship programs for Afghan women to study abroad can offer them opportunities to gain education and skills, empowering them to become global advocates for women's rights.

Supporting Afghan-led advocacy movements is equally important, as these groups can amplify the voices of affected women, providing a platform for their struggles to be heard. Diplomatic pressure should be applied to regional powers to enforce conditions that prioritize the protection of women's rights in Afghanistan. Furthermore, enhancing asylum and relocation programs for Afghan women activists, journalists, and scholars facing persecution is essential for ensuring their safety and continued work.

In addition, digital platforms and remote work can offer Afghan women economic empowerment opportunities, allowing them to develop skills and contribute to the economy. Strengthening accountability mechanisms through UN human rights bodies will also be vital in documenting and prosecuting violations.

Had these restrictions not been imposed, Afghan women could have significantly contributed to the social, economic, and political development of the country, ultimately fostering a more stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

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