

Women and Taliban Regime, A Content Analysis on Impact of Restrictions on Women in Afghanistan

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Abstract

This in-depth analysis delves into the impact of Taliban governance on Afghan women across various fronts, including economic hardships, displacement, mental health concerns, social dynamics, and perspectives on recognizing the Taliban government. Under Taliban rule, Afghan women, particularly household heads and young females, encounter significant barriers that seem to confine them to a bleak future. Economic opportunities are severely restricted due to strict regulations, safety issues, and the shutdown of women-focused businesses, amplifying financial struggles and hindering entrepreneurial pursuits. The departure of working Afghan women, such as journalists and NGO workers, further disrupts social connections and worsens economic challenges. Mental health issues are prevalent among Afghan women, characterized by feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and depression, aggravated by limited access to support systems and education. Interactions within families and society have deteriorated, leading to increased domestic tensions and decreased interaction between genders. Afghan women advocate for the conditional recognition of the Taliban government, contingent upon tangible improvements in women's rights, including access to education and employment. Current conditions prompt opposition to recognition, fearing it may legitimize stricter policies against women and girls. These findings emphasize the critical need for international intervention to safeguard Afghan women's rights and well-being in the face of Taliban rule.

Keywords: Taliban, Afghan women, social restrictions, female education.

Introduction

“You educate a man; you educated a man. You educate a woman; you educated a generation.”
“Brigham Young”

The rise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has brought forth a myriad of challenges for Afghan women, reshaping their lives in profound ways. This introduction delves into the

multifaceted impact of Taliban governance on Afghan women, exploring various dimensions encompassing economic constraints, displacement, mental health concerns, shifts in social dynamics, and perspectives on the recognition of the Taliban government. Under the Taliban's rule, Afghan women, particularly those heading households and young women, find themselves grappling with formidable obstacles that obscure prospects for a brighter future. This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate challenges faced by Afghan women under Taliban governance, shedding light on their experiences and advocating for international action to safeguard their rights and well-being.



Methodology

The methodology for this research involved a comprehensive review and analysis of existing secondary data sources. Primary data collection, such as interviews or surveys, was not conducted. Instead, secondary data from reputable organizations and scholarly sources, including reports from UN Women, UNAMA, and academic literature, was gathered and synthesized. The selection criteria for secondary sources prioritized relevance, credibility, and recentness to ensure the robustness of the analysis. Ethical considerations involved proper citation and acknowledgment of all sources consulted. The research methodology aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Taliban rule on Afghan women based on existing empirical evidence and expert insights available in the public domain.

Objectives

1. Assess the multifaceted impact of Taliban governance on Afghan women across various domains, including economic, social, and mental health.
2. Examine the challenges faced by Afghan women under Taliban rule, particularly regarding access to education, employment opportunities, and participation in societal decision-making.
3. Explore the dynamics of displacement among Afghan women, analyzing the economic and social implications of migration within the context of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

4. Investigate Afghan women's perspectives on the recognition of the Taliban government, focusing on their demands for conditional recognition based on improvements in women's rights and representation.

Locked Behind Walls: The Imprisonment of Women in a Nation

Afghanistan is a country with a rich diversity of ethnic groups, where local communities have traditionally a strong influence over their own affairs. Everyday matters such as marriage, property division, and justice have been governed by a mix of Islamic law and customary practices, which uphold distinct gender roles for women and men. Despite women's significant contributions to household and rural economies, these social norms, enforced by male-dominated local authorities, severely limited women's independence and involvement in decision-making and public activities. It has been more than two decades that Afghanistan people are facing war and poverty especially women's right is always a struggling issue in the country. Taliban has been the main reason for this misery in the country. Based on Council on Foreign Relation (2022), On 12 August with little opposition, Taliban fighters swiftly capture Kabul, the capital city, and seize control of the presidential palace shortly after President Ghani flees the country. Taliban's leaders' express intentions to negotiate with Afghan officials to establish an inclusive Islamic government. Former Afghan President Karzai and Abdullah, who previously served as chief executive, form a council to help transition power peacefully to the Taliban. This takeover follows the Taliban's rapid advancement, where they took control of almost all of Afghanistan's provincial capitals and border crossings. In certain regions, Afghan security forces reportedly surrender without fighting to the Taliban.

The issue of women's education has been a long-standing concern, yet remains unresolved in many nations. Despite significant strides towards women's empowerment in recent decades, true gender equality is still elusive. Women play a crucial role in society, and their increased participation leads to overall societal improvement. However, the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan since August 2021 has posed a serious threat to women's rights. Their stringent regulations severely curtail women's liberties, including access to education, employment, and freedom of movement, resulting in significant harm. Some members of international organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union, have labelled these actions as gender persecution, potentially constituting crimes against humanity. But nothing affect the Taliban decision and they never come down from their own “donkey”. Meanwhile, international donors like the EU are grappling with how to respond to this crisis while still providing essential aid to the Afghan people. To understand the current situation, it's crucial to look back at Afghanistan's history, where women gained voting rights in 1919, earlier than many Western countries, yet still faced periods of severe oppression. (Shreeves, 2023)

Since seizing power in August 2021, the Taliban have enforced strict rules that greatly limit the rights of women and girls. They forbid women from working in many jobs and prevent girls and women from going to secondary school or university. The Taliban also control what information people can access and have arrested and harmed journalists and activists.

Additionally, groups linked to the Islamic State have carried out bombings, targeting certain ethnic groups and causing many deaths and injuries.

After August 2021, when the US, World Bank, and other donors stopped providing financial aid, Afghanistan's economy collapsed. Now, more than 90 percent of the population doesn't have enough food, and there's an increase in diseases related to malnutrition. (New York Times).

Afghanistan Extremist Group

The Taliban, a Sunni Islamist group rooted in Pashtun nationalism, emerged in the early 1990s in Afghanistan, eventually seizing control of most of the country by 1996. Initially composed of farmers and Islamic students, they enforced strict Islamic laws, particularly harsh on women and minorities, after capturing Kabul and establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 1996. In the years leading up to the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban provided sanctuary to al-Qaeda, allowing them to operate freely. However, after the U.S.-led campaign against al-Qaeda in 2001, the Taliban lost power. In 2015, it was revealed that their reclusive leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had died in 2013. His successor, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansur, took over, continuing the group's insurgency in Afghanistan. (Maizland, 2023)

The Taliban's tactics include regular ambushes, hit-and-run attacks, and occasional high-profile assaults. Their aggressive actions have led to a significant increase in casualties, with devastating attacks in Kabul in August 2015, resulting in numerous civilian deaths. Despite the suspicion surrounding their involvement, the Taliban did not claim responsibility for these attacks. (BBC, 2022).

Taliban's Grip: Women's Rights Strangled in Afghanistan

➤ Step one 2021 August

The Taliban takes over the country: Women ordered to stay at home till the situation gets normal

➤ Step Two September 2021

Secondary education was banned for girls and girls above six grades are not allowed to go to school The Ministry of Women's Affair removed. Any woman who raises their voice for their right were punished to imprisonment

➤ Step Three December 2021

Order on Women's right, but no education and no job Restriction on Women traveling, no woman allowed to travel alone Women banned to go to any place even hospitals without a man

➤ **Step Four March 2022**

Women clothes restrictions, no one allowed to come out without Burqa

➤ **Step Five May 2022**

Closing parks, sports field and public spaces for women

➤ **Step six November to December 2022**

Closing universities for girls and suspending the women to work for NGOs Ban private sectors for providing education for girls or hire them for jobs The Taliban increasing the restrictions on women day by day.

What's happening for Afghan women (2022 – 2023)

- Education is still the most important thing for them, more than anything else.
- Working women, like teachers and journalists, feel less safe now and have fewer job chances.
- Women's mental health is getting worse, becoming a big worry.
- With things getting worse, women just want to make sure they and their families can survive. They need help now and, in the future, to make money.
- Women have less said in making decisions, especially at home, because of more poverty and old-fashioned ideas.
- Women want other countries to put pressure on the leaders in Afghanistan to treat women better and to keep their promises. They say, “Don't trust the leaders until they show they care about women's rights.”

Literature Review

In this section will brows some of the articles that has already published and has investigated the condition of women in Afghanistan and also news reports. Women play significant roles in society, influenced by socio-cultural, economic, infrastructure, and capacity-building factors. These roles include providing coaching, healthcare, counseling, organizing activities, addressing social issues like violence and malnutrition, caring for the elderly, and raising awareness. Factors affecting their performance include financial status, health, education, skills, family background, and interests. Whether in paid or voluntary roles, women contribute to societal well-being through their engagement in various settings like employment, where they must possess knowledge relevant to organizational goals, job duties, working conditions, and teamwork. Their societal roles may be unpaid as homemakers or involve employment in educational, production, or service sectors, where they impart valuable knowledge and skills to benefit others. Overall, women's roles are dedicated to promoting societal well-being. (Kapur, 2019)

Human rights organizations have strongly criticized the Taliban's severe limitations on women and girls in Afghanistan as a form of gender-based persecution, which is considered a serious crime under international law. In a recent report, Amnesty International and the

International Commission of Jurists highlighted how the Taliban's actions against Afghan women's rights, including imprisonment, disappearances, torture, and mistreatment, could be seen as gender persecution according to the International Criminal Court. Amnesty's secretary general, Agnes Callamard, described the situation in Afghanistan as a “war against women” that constitutes “international crimes” due to its organized, widespread, and systematic nature. (Aljazeera, 2023)

United Nation Interview with Afghan Women

United Nation interviewed some of Afghan women, Nasima who was studying on final year for her Master Degree and she was running two businesses saying “Something died inside me on 15 August 2021, or at least that is how I felt: my hopes crushed, my education irrelevant, my investment in Afghanistan gone”. Zarina another young lady who wanted to be an entrepreneur and she moved from a village to City to follow his dreams and she rented a shop and was selling cookies she is saying “I am heartbroken, but hopeful. I recently re-opened my business, and I am working on a marketing plan to keep it running. Now that many households know about my business-and since women need a women-friendly space more than ever-I am determined to make anniversaries, celebrations and family occasions memorable by serving fresh cookies, cakes and pastries. My shop will again be a place for women to come together” she is brave and constant; she doesn't want to give up even in this situation where all sectors are closed for women. Najiba, a 45-year-old mother and former university lecturer, now works as a counsellor helping women in Afghanistan cope with trauma. Despite facing threats and restrictions on her movements, she remains committed to empowering women through education and healing. “Now, I feel like every day new barriers are standing in my way-each time stronger than the previous one. The number of women and young girls who need counselling is increasing. Families are struggling to put food on the table more and more day by day and there are literally no jobs, putting violence at home on the rise. Women who were sole wage-earners have lost their employment-this is impacting their mental health. Schools are closed for girls-they feel like they have been robbed of their hopes. It is also becoming harder to engage men in the community to protect women against harmful practices and social norms”.

During the period under review by (UNAMA, 2022), recorded several instances of civilian casualties, including deaths and injuries caused mainly by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance (UXO) linked to ISIL-KP. There were also reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and detentions, as well as cases of torture and ill-treatment carried out by the de facto authorities. Additionally, there were incidents involving individuals accused of affiliation with certain groups, such as the “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province” and the “National Resistance Front,” which resulted in further violations of human rights. The de facto authorities were also responsible for imposing cruel punishments and using excessive force, while journalists and human rights defenders faced harassment, arrests, and even killings, mostly attributed to the same authorities. The UN mission in Afghanistan has recorded many instances of human rights abuses. The Taliban have intimidated journalists and limited freedom of the press, causing over two hundred news outlets to shut down. They have also violently suppressed protests,

with activists and protesters being closely watched and forcibly taken away. They have revived the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which enforces strict Islamic rules. In November 2022, they instructed judges to follow their interpretation of Islamic law, leading to public punishments like floggings and executions. Women have suffered greatly under Taliban rule. They have banned most girls from going to high school, stopped women from attending or teaching at universities, and prevented them from working. In December 2022, they also banned women from working at local and international NGOs. (Maizland, 2023)

Afghan women fear arrest and harassment due to new Taliban decrees, which have restricted their mobility. Since August 2021, the Taliban has imposed over 50 decrees limiting women's rights, especially regarding the hijab. A recent survey of 745 Afghan women revealed increased anxiety and a sense of insecurity, with over half feeling unsafe without a male guardian. Women also reported a significant decrease in their decision-making influence at both community and household levels. The Taliban's restrictions have reinforced traditional gender roles, affecting boys and girls differently. Many respondents believe international recognition of the Taliban should be contingent on reversing all restrictions on women's rights, while others oppose recognition entirely. Some women are disappointed with international engagement, urging for aid to be linked to improvements in women's conditions and advocating for direct dialogue with the Taliban. United (UN U. N., 2024)

Taliban are liars

Zabihullah Mujahid the Taliban spokesperson on the first press conference

**“We will permit women to pursue education and employment within our guidelines.
Women will play an active role in our society”**

The Taliban declared during their initial press briefing following their seizure of power on August 15, 2021. (Menon, 2023). Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid initially pledged to uphold women's rights in August 2021. However, strict measures have since been reintroduced, including a ban on women attending university announced in December of the same year. Existing restrictions on girls' education beyond the sixth grade were also enforced. Approximately 80% of school-age girls and young women are currently not attending school, as reported by the UN. Furthermore, the Taliban expanded prohibitions to include women working in NGOs and the UN, as well as ordering the closure of beauty salons. Over the period from August 2021 to March 2023, women's participation in the workforce decreased by 25%.

'There will be no production of drugs in Afghanistan...we will bring the production of opium to zero again.'

Shortly after the Taliban gained control, spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid made a commitment concerning opium. Afghanistan has been the primary global source of opium for many years. In April 2022, the Taliban declared a ban on cultivating opium poppies, although no specific deadline was set. An investigation by the BBC in June 2023 revealed a

considerable decrease in cultivation in Helmand, Nangarhar, and Kandahar provinces. Helmand, previously a major producer, saw a reduction from 129,000 hectares in 2022 to 740 hectares by April 2023. Similarly, Nangarhar witnessed a decline from 7,000 hectares in 2022 to 865 hectares in 2023. Nevertheless, satellite imagery indicated ongoing cultivation in more remote regions of the country.

'We are going to be working...in order to revitalize our economy, for our reconstruction, for our prosperity.'

The Taliban's envisioned economic growth, as articulated by Zabihullah Mujahid in 2021, has not materialized in reality. The suspension of international aid and the freezing of Afghanistan's foreign reserves have severely impacted the economy. The UN Security Council approximated a 30%-40% shrinkage in Afghanistan's economy since the Taliban's ascent to power in June of the previous year. Despite some marginal improvements in economic metrics, the UN Development Program (UNDP) maintains that Afghanistan's economic outlook remains highly challenging. There are concerns that the recent restrictions on women's employment in NGOs could exacerbate economic pressures by reducing international aid, leading to heightened exchange rate fluctuations and inflation.

'We are committed to ensuring security.'

With increasing restrictions on women's ability to work, access education, and move freely in public spaces, they have become more vulnerable to assaults. A recent UN survey revealed that 68% of women perceive their safety as either “very bad” or “bad”. These findings underscore the growing challenges and risks faced by women in Afghanistan due to the tightening of social and political controls. Following their seizure of power in August 2021, the Taliban failed to uphold promises of amnesty, women's rights, and press freedom, leading to a violent repression campaign. Over 1,000 incidents of Taliban-inflicted violence against civilians were recorded from August 2021 to June 2023, comprising 62% of all attacks in Afghanistan. Former officials, prisoners, women, and journalists are the primary targets. Despite amnesty assurances, former officials faced continued violence. Civilians in regions with anti-Taliban groups endured collective punishment. Draconian restrictions, including bans on education and work for women, prompted protests met with Taliban violence. Journalists faced censorship and physical threats. Taliban repression fuels instability, allowing groups like the Islamic State to pose further threats. Recognition by the international community is unlikely until women's rights restrictions are lifted. (Asena Karacalti, 2023)

The article by (Belquis Ahmadi, 2023) talks about how life for women and girls in Afghanistan has become very tough since the Taliban came back two years ago. The Taliban are stopping women and girls from going to school, working, and even leaving their homes without a man. They've closed down organizations that help women and changed laws that protected them. Despite this, some Afghan women are still standing up for their rights, but they face a lot of danger. The world needs to keep pushing the Taliban to treat women fairly and help Afghan women who are suffering because of their harsh rules. The Taliban's policies have set back women's rights in Afghanistan, leading to widespread oppression and

suffering. Interviews by (Ahmadi, 2023) show women facing humiliation, harassment, and restricted freedoms, contributing to a rise in suicide attempts. Gender-based violence, including forced marriages and domestic abuse, has become normalized under Taliban rule, with perpetrators often going unpunished. Afghan women urge global action, including sanctions and compliance with international standards, while support for initiatives like the UN Special Rapporteur is crucial. Local religious leaders and organizations like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation play key roles in advocating for women's rights.

Since the Taliban seized power, women have been banned from higher education, resulting in uncertainty for thousands of female students. Additionally, they have been excluded from the workforce, leading to a significant decline in female employment. Restrictions on women's access to healthcare have worsened, with travel limitations and a shortage of female medical professionals hindering their ability to seek treatment. Clothing regulations have become more stringent, requiring women to wear burqas under threat of punishment. Female athletes are barred from competing, and women are forbidden from participating in sports activities. Overall, the Taliban's policies have severely restricted women's freedom and opportunities in Afghanistan. (Thoms, 2023)

Between 2001 and 2018, Afghanistan experienced a substantial increase in educational enrollment, with girls' participation in primary education rising from nearly zero to 2.5 million by 2018. Women's presence in higher education also surged, reaching over 100,000 students by 2021. However, since September 2021, all Afghan girls above the age of 12 have been denied formal education, leaving 1.1 million without access. Currently, 80% of school-aged Afghan girls, totaling 2.5 million, are out of school, with almost 30% never having attended primary education. Additionally, in December 2022, university education for women was abruptly suspended, affecting over 100,000 female students. (UNESCO, 2023) life for Afghan women like Zahra has dramatically changed. Previously able to attend school, socialize, and dream of a future, Zahra now feels confined to her home, unable to pursue education or work. The Taliban's promises of moderation have given way to strict restrictions on women's rights, including banning them from education, employment, and public spaces like parks and gyms. With international attention waning and aid drying up, Afghan women are increasingly isolated and forgotten, while the Taliban seeks to normalize its rule despite widespread condemnation. As a result, millions of Afghans, including Zahra, are considering fleeing the country in search of a better future elsewhere. (Jessie Yeung, 2023) A cross-sectional survey was conducted by (Z Rasekh, 2023) to assess the health and human rights conditions of women in Kabul, Afghanistan, under Taliban rule. The study included 160 women, half currently residing in Kabul and the other half recently migrated to Pakistan. Results showed a significant decline in physical and mental health status among respondents, with many reporting symptoms indicative of posttraumatic stress disorder and major depression. Access to healthcare also declined for the majority of women. Additionally, a high prevalence of war-related trauma and human rights abuses, including detention and abuse by Taliban militia, was reported. Despite these challenges, nearly all women expressed support for women's human rights. The findings suggest that Taliban policies are detrimental

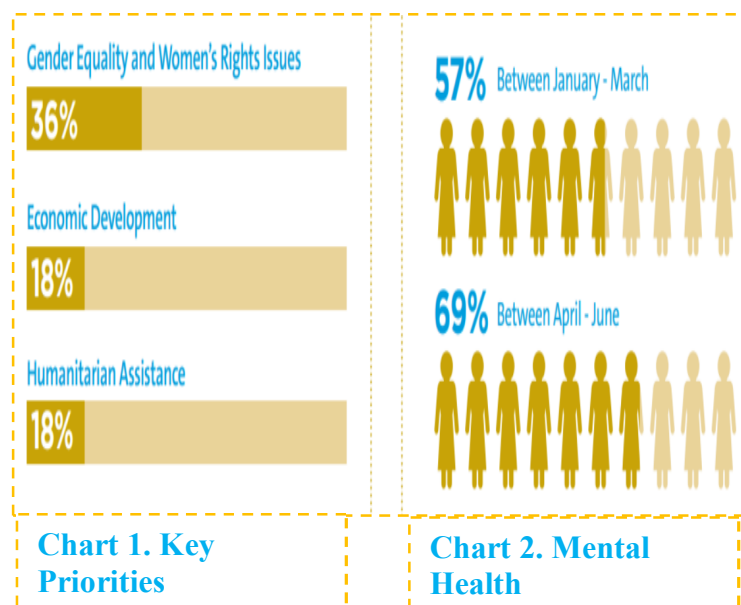
to the health and well-being of Afghan women and are not aligned with their interests and needs.

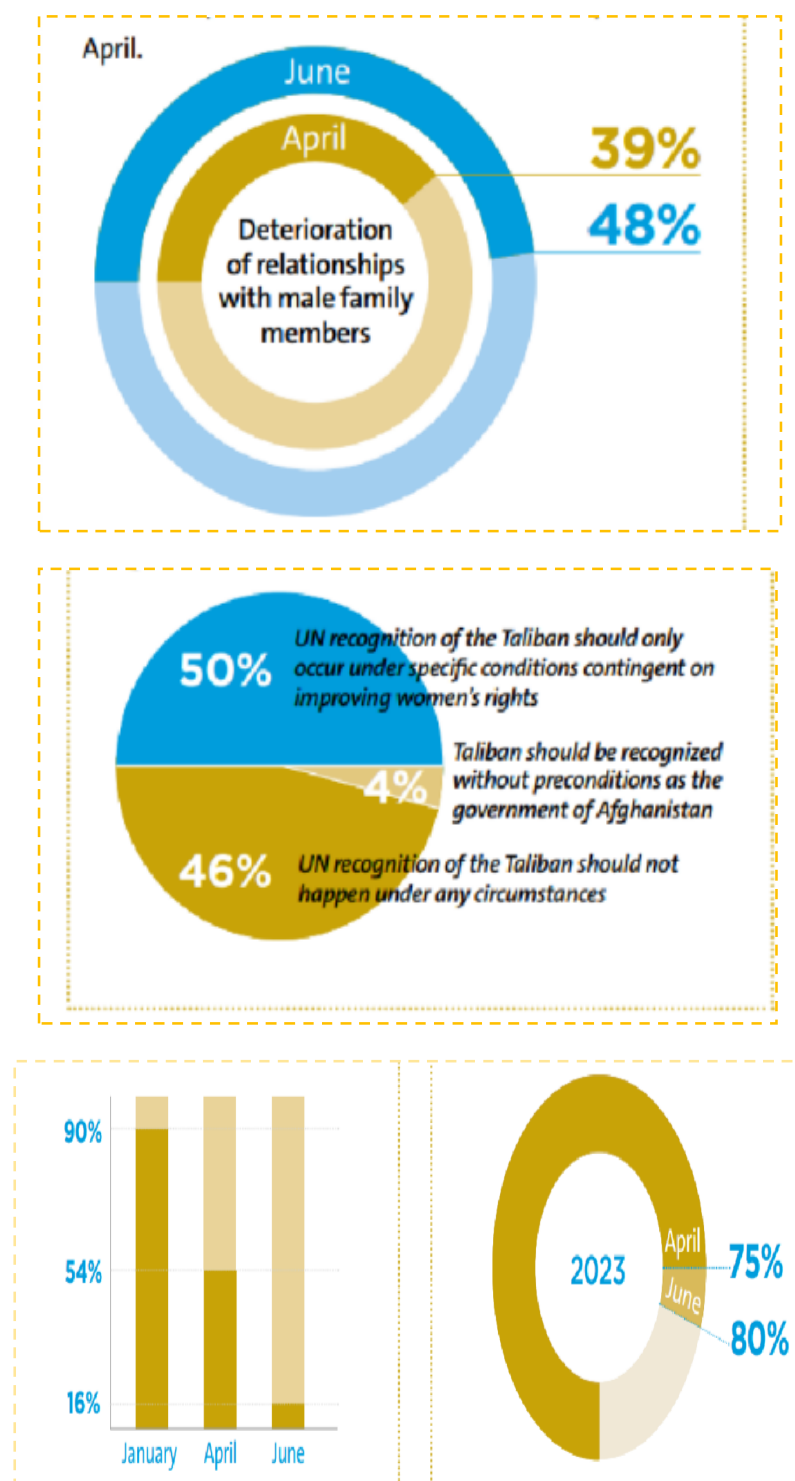
Analysis

The actions by the Taliban have sparked widespread international condemnation, including from Muslim countries. Many international donors have threatened to reduce or stop humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in response to these regressive policies, which could have unintended consequences for women who rely on this aid. Despite this pressure, the Taliban has shown little willingness to change its approach, leaving the international community in a difficult position on how to respond. There are no easy solutions to safeguarding the rights of women and girls or alleviating the suffering of millions under Taliban control. Aid organizations should reassess their strategies if they cannot uphold humanitarian values. Donors must support humanitarian efforts and facilitate the work of development agencies to address Afghanistan's socio-economic crisis.

UN Women, IOM, and UNAMA conducted a survey involving 592 Afghan women from 22 out of 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The survey, conducted both online and in person, took place from April to June 2023. Its objective was to collect information about the women's priorities, their opinions on international involvement, and their suggestions for improving women's rights and well-being. The participants included women who head households, those who have been internally displaced, and those from rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. It also encompassed both employed and unemployed women, as well as women from various age groups, marital statuses, ethnic backgrounds, and educational levels.

The below charts evaluate women priorities and mental health: women were asked about the what are their priorities, as reported 36% of women saying gender equality and women's rights issues are their first priorities from the Taliban government.





Their findings indicate that women were twice as inclined to advocate for increased international involvement in gender equality and women's rights matters compared to economic development or humanitarian aid. According to the data presented in the chart, 69% of the surveyed women expressed those feelings of anxiety, isolation, and depression had notably deteriorated from April to June. This represents a higher percentage compared to the data collected from January to March 2023. (UN, 2023)

Impact: There has been a significant decline in influence over decision-making within households during the first half of 2023. Concerning livelihoods, the percentage of women reporting a decrease in their capacity to engage in income-generating activities rose to 80% in June 2023, marking a further increase from 75% in April.

Social Interactions: The dynamics within familial relationships are experiencing a decline, particularly in interactions with male family members, as noted by women consulted. This deterioration has been reported to have worsened in June compared to April.

Global Recognition: The overwhelming majority of women consulted expressed opposition to UN recognition of the Taliban, asserting that it should not occur under any circumstances, or if at all, it should be conditional upon tangible improvements in women's rights.

According to the charts, women are facing challenges in their social relationships, particularly in their interactions with male family members. Concerning the international recognition of the Taliban, 50% of the women suggest that recognition should be conditional, contingent upon specific terms. Meanwhile, 46% of women oppose UN recognition under any circumstances, citing a lack of trust in the Taliban's promises and their perceived unwillingness to change. Additionally, 4% of women express satisfaction with the existing restrictions imposed by the Taliban and advocate for UN recognition without any conditions. (UN, 2023)

Taliban's social policies for women and its outcomes

The Taliban's strict enforcement of regulations has resulted in increased violence and a strong push to confine women to their homes. They forbid women from going outside without a male guardian (Mahram), closed beauty salons, and disbanded women-focused non-governmental organizations in December 2022. Moreover, female health workers are not allowed to work without a Mahram, leading to heightened harassment outside the home and a sense of insecurity among women. Taliban members partake in street violence, and taxi drivers are prohibited from transporting women without proper veiling (Hejab). Additionally, male relatives are held responsible for ensuring women adhere to the Hijab decree. Afghan women feel compelled to follow these rules as they see no other options available to them.

It should be mentioned that not only women suffer from Taliban social restrictions but even men are not exempted and do not have freedom of wearing clothes, shaving the beard as all men beauty salons have ordered that they are not allowed to shave men's beard.

Findings

This is not the first time that Afghan women are facing tough times because of the Taliban's strict rules, the bad economy, and poverty. If we go back to history Especially, women who are in charge of their households and young women are having a really hard time. They feel like they're stuck and hopeless, like prisoners living in a dark place, unable to see a better future.

Economy challenges for women

Afghan women are having a hard time earning money because of rules set by the authorities. They can't move around freely, and they face problems like harassment and safety concerns, especially in cities. This makes it tough for them to find jobs or start businesses.

Impact on Jobs: Women, especially in cities, are finding it difficult to run businesses because they can't go to public places easily, women-only markets are closing, and they don't have enough money or resources. The recent ban on beauty salons makes it even harder for them to earn money and have safe places to meet others.

Requesting Help: Women are asking for more help to support themselves and their families. They're disappointed that community projects to help them have stopped because the authorities bother them. Many women are still learning new skills, even though it's risky, so they can earn money for their families.

Family Struggles: Rules that stop women from working make it harder for families, especially those led by women. This leads to extreme things like children working, children getting married too young, and begging for money. It also makes violence against women worse and causes problems in families.

Less Say in Decisions: When women lose their jobs, they don't have as much say in important family decisions. This makes gender differences bigger and makes it harder for women to make decisions at home or in their community.

Helping Others: Even though times are tough, most women still help people outside their families. They give food, money, advice, and teach others skills. This shows how strong they are and how much they care about their community.

Displacements

Many Afghan women, especially journalists and those who worked with foreign organizations, have left Afghanistan. A large number of them have moved multiple times, with many recently relocating. This constant moving causes problems like financial struggles and disrupts their social connections. In places like Kabul, more people are being forced out of their homes due to reasons like poor economy and safety concerns. Access to basic needs like water is tough, especially in rural areas where women often have to fetch water and face harassment. Some women find it hard to work in farming because of water problems. Displaced women usually work more, often from home, because it's harder for them to find jobs outside. Their quality of life depends on things like job opportunities, access to services, and the freedom to move and gather with other women. Security checkpoints and military bases nearby also affect their satisfaction with where they live. When families decide to move, women often have little say in the decision-making process.

Mental Health issues

The mental well-being of women in Afghanistan is declining, with 69% reporting increased feelings of anxiety, isolation, and depression from April to June. This percentage has risen from 57% in the previous quarter, with particularly high rates in the Eastern (93%) and North-Eastern regions (84%). Women are experiencing psychological issues like depression, insomnia, and fear, often leading to suicidal thoughts. Sadly, those suffering from poor mental health are more likely to face domestic violence, with little empathy shown towards them. While some seek professional help or informal counselling, many rely on daily tasks or exercise to cope. However, access to social connections and education has become limited due to restrictions imposed by the authorities, raising concerns about the mental well-being of younger women.

Interactions and connections among women and men in families and society

Women's relationships with male family members have worsened, particularly in regions like the Central Highlands and Eastern areas. Increased family conflicts, exacerbated by deteriorating mental well-being, are evident. Interaction between women and men outside their families has decreased significantly, reflecting the Taliban's push to confine women to their homes.

Taliban Government recognition

Women emphasized that recognizing the de facto authorities should be conditional on improving women's rights (50%), including restoring access to education and employment and forming an inclusive government. They cautioned against recognition under current conditions, likening them to imprisonment, and feared it would embolden stricter policies against women and girls. Some proposed appointing a female Afghan leader to represent women at the United Nations to ensure their representation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Taliban's strict policies have deeply affected Afghan women, creating significant hurdles in their daily lives. These women, especially those heading households and young women, find themselves trapped in a cycle of limited opportunities and uncertain futures. Economic challenges, exacerbated by restrictions on movement and business closures, have made it hard for women to earn a living and provide for their families. Displacement adds to their struggles, disrupting social networks and exacerbating economic hardships. Mental health issues are rampant, with anxiety, isolation, and depression on the rise due to limited access to support and education. Family dynamics have suffered, leading to increased tensions and reduced interaction between genders. Afghan women's voices call for conditional recognition of the Taliban government, demanding improvements in women's rights before any acceptance. The impact of these restrictions on women in Afghanistan is profound, requiring immediate attention and support from the global community to alleviate their suffering and restore their dignity and rights.

Possible solutions (Researcher suggestions)

Considering the dire situation facing Afghan women, several measures could be explored to alleviate their plight. Firstly, diplomatic efforts should be intensified to engage with the Taliban regime and advocate for the protection of women's rights. This could involve leveraging international pressure, negotiations, and dialogue to encourage policy changes and ensure the enforcement of existing laws safeguarding women's rights. Additionally, humanitarian aid must be bolstered to provide essential support to Afghan women and their families, including access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Investing in grassroots initiatives that empower women, such as vocational training programs and community support networks, can also foster resilience and autonomy. Moreover, collaborating with local organizations and leaders who champion women's rights is essential for implementing effective and culturally sensitive interventions. Finally, fostering international solidarity and mobilizing resources to address the underlying socio-economic factors contributing to gender inequality in Afghanistan is crucial for sustainable progress. By prioritizing these strategies, concerted efforts can be made to mitigate the challenges faced by Afghan women and pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive society.

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