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Public Perception of the Higher Education System under the Regime of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

A modern, free, and dynamic higher education system is the basic and critical element of a successful nation, and it can contribute to the progress and development of a country. Under both regimes of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan, the higher education system has undergone significant changes to align with the government's interpretation of Islamic principles. This study is important to understand how Afghan society views the changes and policies implemented in the education sector under the current regime. The research study aims to evaluate public sentiment regarding access, quality, and inclusivity of higher education, particularly in relation to gender, curriculum changes, and ideological shifts. This paper focuses on the Taliban's higher education system and investigates public responses to educational policies. This paper will offer recommendations to all stakeholders involved in the Afghan higher education system, aimed at improving its management and development during this crucial period. This work employs non-doctrinal and library research methodology. Non-doctrinal research examines how laws are applied and experienced in practice by collecting data through surveys, interviews, field studies, and observations. In this research study, data was collected through a questionnaire and then analyzed through SPSS. Moreover, in the library research methodology, most of the reputable and trustworthy academic sources such as textbooks, scholarly published and unpublished journal articles, law reports, and online websites related to the research area were analyzed through descriptive, explanatory, and analytical research approaches. The Afghan higher education system, established in the 1930s, has faced continuous political pressures, especially during periods of conflict like the Soviet invasion and civil war from the 1980s to 1990s. Women face major limitations in higher education, including restrictions on fields of study and exclusion from faculty positions, raising concerns about gender equality and access to education.

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan's modern higher education system has a long history, with major hubs of learning located in Herat, Kandahar, and other provinces. Additionally, it has connections to European education dating back to 1919, when King Amanullah sent some students there. In 1932, the Faculty of Medicine was established in Kabul, establishing the underlying principles of today's higher education system. The establishment of the law school in Kabul in 1936, the Faculty of Science in 1942, and the Faculty of Literature in 1946 swiftly followed. Nangarhar University, as a second public university came into existence in 1963. In 1990, the system enrolled 14,600 students, of whom 10,000 attended Kabul University and 60% were female (Samady, 2001).

Afghanistan used to be a regional leader in higher education. In 2011, Afghanistan's ranking among the regions declined due to over 40 years of internal conflicts. From 24,300 in the 1990s to 7,800 in 2001, enrollment decreased. The Taliban prohibited women from serving as faculty members and being students. The Taliban forced out more than half of the teachers, assassinated or imprisoned others, and shut down several universities. Most labs were no longer operational, and some did not have electricity or water. Gradually, quality declined

as many graduates failed to satisfy employers' needs. (Hayward, 2011). The Ministry of Higher Education has been working to fix and upgrade the infrastructure since 2001. In the faculties of engineering, information and communications technology, pharmacy, agriculture, and numerous others, several new laboratories have been established or upgraded; also, new classrooms and residence halls have been built, while many more were still required.

Since the Taliban regained control in 2021, the higher education landscape has undergone significant changes, including the imposition of strict gender segregation policies, limitations on women's participation, and a shift in curriculum to reflect the regime's interpretation of Islamic principles. These changes have sparked mixed reactions among the Afghan population. While some view these reforms as necessary to align education with Islamic values, others express concern about the negative impacts on academic freedom, the quality of education, and the exclusion of women from educational opportunities. (Ahmadi, 2022). Furthermore, a lack of resources and the departure of qualified educators have weakened public confidence in the higher education system's ability to provide quality education and foster intellectual growth. (Rouf, 2023).

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Day-by-Day

Higher Education in Afghanistan, authored by (Roof, 2014), examines Afghan higher education. The paper covers the main problems, difficulties, advancements, and future vision for higher education in the nation based on qualitative research, including interviews with important politicians and stakeholders. It demonstrates that female participation in higher education is one of the most important concerns facing the nation in the post-Taliban era. It also demonstrates the value of alternative higher education options like two-year colleges, private universities, and technical and vocational training. The study also covers the development of quality assurance systems and worldwide collaborations with other universities. The study identifies two main areas of focus for higher education's future direction and vision: preparing students for the job market and the possible impact of education on democratic ideals and social cohesion in a divided nation.

“Conceptualizing quality following conflict: Afghanistan's higher education policy,” authored by (Couch, 2019) this article not only examines the prevalent conception of quality in Afghanistan's higher education strategic planning and policies, but it also considers the potential effects of a more expansive conception of quality in the country's post-conflict environment. These papers align the fundamental policy goal of Afghanistan's higher education sector, fostering economic growth, with the prevalent conceptualization of quality. International entities, on the other hand, actively participated in the establishment of quality assurance procedures that adhered to international standards. While this is critical for validity and legitimacy, local stakeholders may find it delegitimizing, and it may also limit prospects for quality conceptualizations that authentically engage with the unique aspects of Afghanistan's larger social environment affected by the conflict.

“The Struggle for Higher Education Gender Equity Policy in Afghanistan: Obstacles, Challenges, and Achievements” (Fred *et al.*, 2019), stressed that in Afghanistan, the fight for gender equality has been a protracted and challenging one due to the ongoing war. Nonetheless, the past few years have witnessed incredible progress in both the transformation of higher education and the improvement of the situation for female faculty members and students. The degree of success in a very difficult setting is what stands out most about this attempt. As we suggest, the emphasis on gender policy in higher education, which runs in an astonishingly open environment, is one of the reasons for the success. This has made it possible to evaluate conventional perceptions of women and have discussions about them, as well as to implement new policies that further the MoHE's goal of gender parity. With a Higher Education Gender Strategy to continue the process of transformation and a variety of other regulations and initiatives intended to provide an open, comfortable, and equitable environment for

women, the environment for women has dramatically transformed. These improvements are notable because, in our opinion, a procedure that probably would not have been successful if attempted at the national level was narrowly focused on higher education. Nonetheless, it represents a first step towards improving conditions for women more generally in Afghanistan and offers a model for other nations that face major issues with gender discrimination.

“Faculty Incivility in Higher Education of Afghanistan: Students' Perspectives” authored by (Irfan, 2021), investigated and argued that Afghanistan's higher education institutions were looked at for their students' perceptions of faculty rudeness. Students assessed the most offensive faculty actions, as well as how frequently these behaviors occurred. It also looked at how students' replies differed depending on their gender and ethnicity. The findings indicated that students from different degrees rated 30 instructor activities as uncivil. They deemed six actions to be the most uncivil. Students also encountered varying degrees of rudeness from professors. The most common instances were when professors created examinations that were excessively challenging or difficult, and when they evaluated students using Waseta. Gender significantly influenced students' perceptions and experiences of instructor rudeness, according to the inferential analyses. However, their ethnicity did not significantly influence their responses.

“Illusions of improvement: aspirations and realities of quality assurance and accreditation policy in Afghanistan higher education” authored by (Wolayat *et al.*, 2021), argues that the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) modified quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) regulations created in other nations to the Afghan context in order to improve the caliber of higher education in Afghanistan. There are differing opinions regarding QAA's efficacy. On the one hand, the MoHE believes that the QAA policy has changed Afghanistan's higher education landscape. However, the academics and administrators in charge of implementation have voiced misgivings about governmental oversight and control, a lack of funding for changes, and the policy's importation from Western nations. This study investigated the disconnect between the MoHE's efforts to change the QAA policy and its implementation in Afghan universities. The research reveals divergent opinions on whether the QAA policy was truly Afghan-led, whether Afghan institutions were competent to implement the policy, and whether it actually achieved its goal of higher educational quality. This study explores the tensions and challenges of implementing a Western QAA model in developing nations like Afghanistan, thereby advancing our understanding of quality assurance and accreditation. We pay close attention to the moral implications of implementing quality assurance in post-conflict nations. (Couch, 2018) “The Policy Reassembly of Afghanistan's Higher Education System,” authored by (Couch, 2018), explores the potential development of a

national higher education industry based on a narrow ideological framework both during and after the war. The information used in this paper was derived from document analysis and semi-structured interviews with influential policymakers. It cites a neoliberal ideological foundation in higher education policies as the driving force behind the sector's expansion since 2010. He contends that this neoliberal agenda, which is predominantly influenced by global influences, has taken advantage of Afghanistan's backdrop of ongoing conflict to position higher education as a primary engine of economic growth, limiting governmental attention to higher education's non-economic benefits. The article ends by challenging the underlying presumption that this function is adequate if higher education is to play a significant role in Afghanistan's ongoing national development in the wake of a bloody battle. It examines Afghanistan's higher education system and contends that the institution's violent dissolution in the 1980s and 1990s laid the groundwork for its neoliberal reconstruction and development beginning in 2001.

"Higher Education of Afghanistan under the Taliban Rule," authored by (Ahmadi, 2022), a qualitative approach is used in the study's review and analysis of higher education in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime's restrictions on academic freedom, curriculum, and female access to higher education from 1996 to 2001 and starting in August 2021 are the main points of discussion. The goal of the study is to give stakeholders in Afghanistan's higher education system a clear image so they may handle their efforts and support more wisely at this crucial period. To achieve this, the author has thoroughly examined the policies, regulations, and behaviors of the Taliban from 1996 to 2001 and as of August 15, 2021. The author conducted this study during a period when Afghan university lecturers and students were experiencing discouragement, uncertainty, and hopelessness.

"Taliban Attitudes and Policies Towards Education," authored by (Rahmatullah & Ashley, 2021), examines Taliban educational policies and attitudes and contrasts 'the rules' with actual realities. The Taliban's comprehensive education policy, which describes the goals for education, the regulations governing its delivery, and the organizational structure of the Taliban High Commission on Education, is the main document that has been examined. The policy, which resembles a national education strategy, is properly produced, nicely bound, and sent to Taliban officials around the nation. The authors also cite the Taliban's public statements and guidelines, or directions, on several aspects of schooling

History of Education in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's modern higher education system has a long history, with major learning hubs located in Herat, Kandahar, and other provinces. Additionally, it has connections to European education dating back to 1919, when King Amanullah sent some students there. In 1932, the Faculty of Medicine was established in Kabul,

establishing the underlying principles of today's higher education system. The establishment of the law school in Kabul in 1936, the Faculty of Science in 1942, and the Faculty of Literature in 1946 swiftly followed. Nangarhar University, as a second public university came into existence in 1963. In 1990, the system enrolled 14,600 students, of whom 10,000 attended Kabul University and 60% were female (Samady, 2001).

Between 1932 and the late 1970s, Afghan higher education developed as a small group of elite urban public institutions (Baiza, 2013). During this time, the sector's primary objective was to educate males and females for administrative positions in the expanding public sector. According to Hayward (2015), the region's small public sector enjoyed high regard by the 1970s. Given the presence of elites within the system, it evolved into a highly politicized environment on both a national and international level. From the 1950s onward, student movements played a key role in political revolutions, such as supporting the 1973 overthrow of the Afghan monarchy and mobilizing opposition to the subsequent political repression (Hayward, 2015). According to Baiza (2013), this resulted in the Saur revolution in 1978 and the establishment of Afghanistan as a democratic republic (Baiza, 2013). Tsvetkova (2017) documents the Americanization and Sovietization of Kabul's higher education institutions during the "cultural cold war," when the two world superpowers competed for influence. By the middle of the 1970s, USAID withdrew its consultants because American influence failed to stand up to a Soviet campaign that was more successful (Tsvetkova, 2017).

The Soviet invasion in 1979 prompted the need to support Kabul's shaky communist government, and the occupation that followed in the 1980s profoundly affected all aspects of Afghan life. Baiza (2013) found that higher education was no exception. The 1990s civil wars further decimated the higher education system, with less than 7,000 students officially enrolled in the nation's remaining seven higher education institutions following the Taliban's fall in 2001 (Baiza, 2013). None of the students were women. Following the US-led invasion and the subsequent international commitment to "liberal peacebuilding," higher education experienced rapid growth (Rashid, 2009). After private higher education became legal in 2006, a large number of small private institutions emerged quickly. The introduction of private services has increased the sector's focus on quality issues. The 1978 coup, which brought the Communists to power and resulted in the Soviet invasion in 1979, sparked a process of politicization in higher education that led to a period of tension and decline.

This caused severe damage over the following few years. Persecution, imprisonment, violence, and intimidation resulted in the loss of more than half of the faculty and staff during this time. As institutional leaders, advocates of academic freedom, and critics of those who would challenge university autonomy, some of the best faculty members were among those who perished because they

were frequently targets of the security system. Because of this environment, many of the best faculty members decided to work in Europe, the Middle East, or the United States. During the Taliban era, schools and higher education institutions denied admission to women, a move that had a long-term impact on women's education. By 2013, the system consisted of 31 public institutions with more than 130,000 students and over 70 private institutions with more than 70,000 students. France, Germany, the United States, Russia, Japan, Norway, and a number of other nations contributed significantly over the years. The Faculties of Pharmacy and Medicine with Lyon (France), among other faculties, have benefited from international cooperation agreements. The Bonn (Germany) Science faculty, the Russian Polytechnic, Columbia Teachers College, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the University of Nebraska in the United States, along with the faculty of Education and Kabul Education University, have all benefited from international cooperation agreements. According to Fayez (2012), approximately 100 foreign academics once taught in Afghan universities.

The first National Higher Education Strategic Plan was created in 2009 to steer this rapid expansion in the public and private sectors. It went into effect in 2010. In the young higher education sector, the NHESP I established a framework for quality assurance, and a formal policy and handbook for quality assurance were published in 2015. By the time the ministry of higher education was developing the NHESP II, quality assurance had become an essential part of their plans for Afghanistan's higher education sector.

Education System under both Regimes of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996-2001 AND AFTER 2021)

Outside of a few donor circles, there have been far fewer discussions about the future of higher education, despite the fact that the outcry over the exclusion of girls from secondary schools resulted in the suspension of World Bank programs in the country. Significant violations of fundamental human rights, particularly those of women, occurred during the Taliban regime, which lasted from 1996 to 2001. After years of contentious fighting and war with the Soviet Union, the conservative Taliban leadership began to dominate Afghanistan in a middle-aged fashion in 1996. This had severe consequences for both the public and private sectors of life, resulting in the destruction of educational facilities across the country.

The Taliban had a warped ideological understanding of academic freedom, subject freedom, and women's access to education in the 1990s. The Taliban's majority fundamentalist approach to education, particularly higher education, has only resulted in devastation and stagnation. Research shows that the Taliban leadership actively restricted academic freedoms for individuals and institutions in the 1990s while promoting censorship and Sharia. The Taliban, on the one hand, disregarded national and international regulations and standards

governing higher education in Afghanistan. On the other hand, they lacked the ability to enact local legislation or make policy based on science (Ahmadi, 2022).

The implementation of Islam and Sharia as dogmatic paradigms for governing higher education in the twenty-first century was unsuccessful. Research reveals that during their 1990s leadership, the Taliban didn't pass or create any laws or systems for overseeing higher education. The Taliban, on the one hand, disregarded national and international regulations and standards governing higher education in Afghanistan. In contrast, they themselves lacked the ability to enact local laws or make policy based on science. Research reveals that during their 1990s leadership, the Taliban didn't pass or create any laws or systems for overseeing higher education. (Noori *et al.*, 2022).

The Taliban's rigorous and constrained understanding of Islam served as the foundation for their policies in the 1990s. Interviews, personal observations, and desk research support the fundamentalist vision of the Taliban-led Islamic regime. Their policies were founded on religion. Such theocratic politics had unfavorable effects on Afghanistan in general and the higher education sector in particular. Academic independence, academic subject freedom, and female access to higher education (Ansary, 2012).

The sudden Taliban takeover of power in August 2021 sparked waves of anxiety and worry about the future of higher education. We should exercise extreme prudence and political patience in response to early indications that the Taliban will be more moderate and capable of handling politics logically and properly. If the Taliban's claims are true, only time will tell. However, recent Taliban activities, such as the introduction of the cabinet and personal politics in the higher education sector, indicate that there is little hope for a better future. (Center, 2023). The Hollings Center for International Dialogue convened representatives of Afghan civil society, faculty and administrators from public and private universities within and outside of Afghanistan, officials from the Ministry of Higher Education, and experts from international organizations in July to discuss how Taliban policies are rapidly eroding the advancements made in Afghan higher education over the past two decades and the best ways to respond (Center, 2023).

Opportunities and new challenges arose with the reopening of gender-segregated university classes in February. There are legitimate concerns that the reopening of universities by the Taliban will simply increase the number of opportunities for radicalization and the teaching of Taliban orthodoxy. Naturally, there will not be any women in Afghan universities in a few years if girls are still banned from secondary schools. The Taliban have ordered that every district have a government madrassa. Students and faculty who are afraid of the authorities are increasingly practicing self-censorship. However, there are tens of thousands of Afghan teachers and tens of thousands of Afghan students who desire more, and even

insignificant efforts, such as posting forestry courses on Instagram, can provide some hope of genuine scholarly engagement (Mohibi & Coburn, 2022).

The present study examines the responses to the Taliban’s educational policies from different scholars, students, and members of civil society. The study is qualitative in nature, but help has been taken from quantitative tools such as questionnaires to analyze the responses to the policies of the Taliban. For the data collection, primary data has been collected through questionnaires and interviews. Purposive sampling has been applied for interviews, and data has been collected from different scholars, students, and civil society members studying in Afghanistan and in

foreign countries. The questionnaire for interviews was prepared, and structured interviews were conducted. The researcher himself conducts the interview transcription and uses SPSS for the quantitative data analysis.

Taliban’s Educational Policies and Public Response

In the previous section, the new educational policies under the Taliban government were briefly discussed. In this section, the researcher tried to analyze the public response to these policies. We will begin with the data collected through the questionnaire, and then move on to the data collected through interviews

Table 1: Public satisfaction

		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25%	80.0	80.0	80.0
	50%	16.7	16.7	96.7
	75	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s creation through SPSS

In this question, the respondents were asked if they are satisfied with the current education policy. This question was included because the researcher wanted to measure how much people of Afghanistan support the Taliban’s policy of education. The percentage in the answers was included because this was one of the feasible ways to get a suitable response at the ease of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were of the view that they are not satisfied with the policy. 80.0% of the respondents

said that they are satisfied 25% only. It means majority of them were not satisfied from the higher educational policy. Only 16.7% of them were 50% satisfied while only 3.3% were 75% satisfied. It means that a small minority of people are either half satisfied or satisfied.

To confirm support for the policy measures, the researcher asked them if they support the current educational policy of Taliban or not. Public support for a public policy is important for the success of the policy.

Table 2: Public supports to the policy

		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	13.3	13.3	13.3
	No	63.3	63.3	76.7
	Prefer not to say	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s creation through SPSS

As mentioned above, support for public policy is important to be successful. As shown in the figure 03, majority of the respondents, about 63.3%, believe that they do not support the educational policy of Taliban. While a tiny of people, about 23.3%, “prefer not to say”. This is revealing, as these respondents might be vulnerable

to risks in the new government. While, 13.3% of them respondent with Yes. It means that they are supporting the educational policy of Taliban.

Next the researcher wanted to know about the new policy, where scientific and modern education is discouraged. The researcher wanted to know about the public response.

Table 3: View about scientific education

		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	70.0	70.0	70.0
	No	10.0	10.0	80.0
	Prefer to avoid	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s creation through SPSS

To know about their response, the researcher asked them to share their views about the modern scientific education.

70% of the respondents were of the view that they are supporting and they want modern scientific education. It

means majority of the people, were negatively looking at the educational policy of Taliban. While 10% of them were of the view that they are not supporting modern scientific education and about 20% of them prefer “not

to say”. Taliban share a particular policy regarding women education. To know the general Puli response about the women education the researcher asked whether they want women education or not.

Table 4: Women education

		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	76.7	76.7	76.7
	No	13.3	13.3	90.0
	Prefer to avoid	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's creation through SPSS

It was important to understand general response regarding women education. A vast majority of the respondents, about 76.7%, were of the view that they want women higher education. This mean that majority of the people are not happy with the Taliban policy of women education, where they are still not allowed to attend higher education. A tiny people of 13.3% did not want women education and about 10% of them “prefer not to say”.

From the above discussion and data analysis it is revealed that majority of the people do not support or are against the higher educational policy of Taliban. Majority of them know how the Taliban are dealing with higher education, while majority of them are not supporting the overall policy of Taliban and then particularly about the women.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis. Data will be collected through surveys distributed to students, educators, parents, and the general public across Afghanistan, capturing broad trends on education quality, access, gender inclusion, and curriculum changes. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and focus group discussions will provide in-depth insights into individual experiences and perceptions. A purposive sampling strategy will ensure diverse representation from various regions, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds. Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends and relationships, while qualitative data will be thematically analyzed to uncover deeper perspectives. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, will be prioritized throughout the research process. Despite potential limitations such as security challenges and response bias, this methodology aims to provide a balanced and detailed understanding of how the Afghan public perceives the higher education system under the current regime.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study outlines the current state of the higher education of Afghanistan system, focusing particularly

on its transformation under the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan. Key findings include:

1. The Afghan higher education system, established in the 1930s, has faced continuous political pressures, especially during conflict periods like the Soviet invasion (1979-1989) and the civil war in the 1990s. During the Soviet era, universities became politicized, with curricula reflecting Marxist ideologies, leading to a brain drain as intellectuals fled the country. The civil war further crippled the education system, with universities closing, being repurposed, or destroyed, and access to education, particularly for women, becoming severely restricted. These decades of instability left the higher education system struggling to recover and provide consistent opportunities for Afghans.

2. The current government of Afghanistan has restructured the higher education system to align with its interpretation of Islamic principles, imposing strict policies of gender segregation. Male and female students are now required to attend separate classrooms, with distinct schedules and separate entrances in many institutions. These changes are part of broader efforts to enforce a conservative approach to education, emphasizing religious teachings while limiting mixed-gender interactions. This reshaping has raised concerns about access to education, particularly for women, and how these policies may impact the overall quality and inclusivity of the education system.

3. Women in Afghanistan’s higher education system face significant challenges, including restrictions on the fields of study they can pursue and exclusion from many faculty positions. These limitations have sparked concerns about gender equality and access to education, as women are increasingly confined to specific areas of study and are often barred from leadership roles within academic institutions. This narrowing of opportunities not only affects women’s academic and professional growth but also has broader implications for the overall development and inclusivity of the education system.

4. The paper explores the Afghan public’s response to the new educational policies, highlighting widespread concerns about the future of education, especially for women. As gender segregation intensifies and restrictions on women’s participation in higher education increase, many Afghans are voicing fears that these policies will lead to reduced educational opportunities and long-term

setbacks in gender equality. The public's reaction reflects deep apprehension about the potential impact these changes will have on both individual growth and the nation's broader social and economic development.

Discussion

The public perception of the higher education system under the regime of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is a complex and multifaceted issue, reflecting both the political context and the practical realities faced by students and educators. Since the resurgence of the Islamic Emirate in 2021, there has been a significant shift in the higher education landscape, marked by stringent policies and restrictions that impact various aspects of the educational experience.

Firstly, the regime's emphasis on implementing its interpretation of Islamic law has led to notable changes in curriculum and institutional governance. This has been perceived by many as a departure from the more liberal educational frameworks previously in place, which had aimed to align with international standards. The introduction of gender-segregated classrooms, restrictions on certain fields of study, and the prioritization of religious education over secular disciplines have raised concerns among both students and academic staff. The public perception of these changes often reflects a tension between adherence to traditional values and the desire for a more inclusive and diverse educational environment.

Moreover, the impact on academic freedom and institutional autonomy cannot be overlooked. Under the current regime, there have been reports of increased governmental oversight and censorship within academic institutions, affecting the ability of educators to freely explore and teach a broad range of subjects. This has contributed to a climate of uncertainty and apprehension among faculty and students alike, with many questioning the future of scholarly inquiry and the quality of education. On the other hand, the regime's focus on expanding access to education, particularly for marginalized communities, has been viewed positively by some segments of the population. Efforts to increase educational opportunities for rural areas and lower-income families reflect a commitment to enhancing educational equity. However, these positive aspects are often overshadowed by the broader concerns about the overall direction of the higher education system and its alignment with the regime's ideological stance.

The divergence in public perception highlights the broader debate between preserving cultural and religious values and the need to adapt to a rapidly changing global educational landscape. While some support the regime's initiatives as necessary for maintaining cultural integrity, others argue that these policies risk isolating Afghanistan from the international academic community and limiting opportunities for its youth.

In summary, the public perception of the higher education system under the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is characterized by a complex interplay of ideological

commitment, educational reform, and concerns about academic freedom. As the situation continues to evolve, it is crucial to monitor these dynamics closely to understand their long-term implications for the country's educational future and its role in the global community.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the public perception of the higher education system under the regime of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan reveals a complex landscape characterized by a mix of apprehension, adaptability, and hope for the future. As the regime implements policies aligned with its interpretation of Islamic principles, significant changes, particularly regarding gender segregation and restrictions on women's access to education, have sparked widespread concern among the Afghan populace. Many citizens worry that these measures could perpetuate gender inequality and limit the educational opportunities available to half of the population, ultimately hindering the nation's progress. The findings suggest that while there is a recognition of the need for an education system that respects cultural and religious values, there is also a strong desire for inclusivity and equal access to education for all. The public's response highlights a critical tension between adherence to traditional values and the aspirations for modern educational standards that promote gender equality and broader opportunities. This duality underscores the importance of fostering dialogue within Afghan society to address these concerns and identify pathways toward a more equitable education system. Moreover, the research emphasizes the need for policymakers to consider the voices and perspectives of various stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and civil society organizations. By actively engaging these groups in discussions about educational reforms, the regime could work toward creating a higher education system that not only aligns with its ideological framework but also meets the aspirations of the Afghan people. Ultimately, the future of higher education in Afghanistan will depend on finding a balance between tradition and progress, ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to contribute to the nation's development and prosperity.

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