

**A Grounded Theory Exploration of the Educational and Societal
Ramifications Resulting from School Closures Among Afghan Girls Following
the Taliban's Resurgence**

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Glossary

AECS	Afghan Education Cluster Strategy
MoE	Ministry of Education
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
MoWA	Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs
GoIRA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
TC	Theoretical coding
GT	Grounded theory
BSP	Basic social processes
BSSP	Basic social structural process

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my supportive family and appreciative friends that made the burden of this thesis lesser. I extend my appreciation to my supervisor, Jeffery Fink, for his patience during all these months.

Dedication

This thesis is wholeheartedly dedicated to the Afghan school students bravely participating in this research and expressing themselves. Generally, it is dedicated to the 4.5 million girls in Afghanistan deprived of their basic human rights.

Abstract

This study investigates the educational and social consequences of school closures for Afghan schoolgirls, with an emphasis on abstract wonderment in the research field to let the theory emerge from the empirical data. The study investigates the experiences of Afghan schoolgirls in the face of educational interruption induced by ongoing sociopolitical instability and the resurgence of the Taliban using a mixed-method methodology that combines qualitative narratives and quantitative data analysis. The analysis is guided by Glaser's grounded theory framework, with the key phenomena of "social and educational consequences of school closures" being explained by the core category of adaptive coping mechanisms. The findings underscore the severe ramifications experienced by schoolgirls, which is worsened by societal and familial demands. Despite these hurdles, girls' resilience, bolstered by familial and community networks, emerges as a counterweight to hardship.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The reassurance of the Taliban in August 2021 and its subsequent impacts have garnered global attention. The multifaceted impact on people's lives can be measured in various ways; however, the restrictions on women's activities are much more visible. Afghanistan has witnessed a daily and ongoing worsening of the plight of Afghan women and girls. This has affected every aspect of their human rights, including their living conditions and social and political standing. School doors were shut right after the takeover for every single student in the country; later, schools were opened for boys of all ages but for girls only from grades one to six. This level is referred to as the primary level of education for girls aged 6 to 11, excluding the girls from secondary school, aged 12 to 18 plus.

Early appraisals of the Taliban's position on women's education were cautiously optimistic, with some expecting it would be less rigid and oppressive than feared. Time, however, has shown a different reality. Since August 2021, new variations of restrictions have been introduced, decreasing the possibility of opening schools and improving women's access to their basic rights.

This chapter provides a thorough introduction to the research topic at hand, defines the study's objectives, examines its significance in a larger context, and introduces the methodology used to investigate the complex educational and social impact of school closures on the lives of Afghan girls.

1.1 Background of the topic

Education, an essential yet critical human need, has gained multi-fold importance and has been declared a universal human right (UNESCO, 2017), securing an important spot on the SDGs (United Nations, 2015). Governments struggle to ensure the best educational facilities for boys and girls around the world to make sure they are keeping up with the world's technological and economic developments. Education has emerged as a prominent arena for governments to demonstrate their commitment to community development and the delivery of essential services requested by their constituents. However, Afghanistan's educational history includes a rich tapestry of cultural, political, and social forces, as well as various periods of growth and setbacks.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit." (Assembly, U.G. 1948), making education a non-negotiable basic human right that requires every single country to adhere to its principles. Since August 15, 2021, Afghanistan has been the only country in the 21st century that has restricted secondary education for girls. Girls who are not allowed to attend secondary school cannot go on to higher education, and it is difficult to predict a nation's improvement if it does not educate women. September 2021 and the school closures for secondary schools have put Afghan girls, who were just out of the two years of school closures during the pandemic (COVID-19), into a new catastrophe. Despite promises to reform the school system for girls in secondary school and open the schools in the last two years, the schools have been closed to date.

Rauf et al. (2021) state that the justifications for closing and keeping the schools closed are confusing. The authors mention that in the final week of March 2022, which coincided with the starting date of spring and the start of the academic year for students of all ages at schools, universities, and other educational institutions in Afghanistan, an indefinite closure was announced for girls in secondary school. As said, the official response to this closure was to establish an environment where girls could receive proper education and the Taliban could make decisions about appropriate school attire (Rauf, 2021). The definition of the Taliban for a better environment for girls' education and the fact that it is different from the learning environment of boys make it confusing and unclear. The previous school curriculum has also received criticism for not being appropriate for secondary school girls.

According to EPDC Spotlight on Afghanistan (2015), there are four levels of education in Afghanistan's education system: primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and higher education. Grades 1-6 are regarded as primary, 7-9 as lower secondary, and 10-12 as upper secondary. Higher education indicates the university or any institution teaching higher education. The schooling system is also indicated as the 6-3-3 system (EPDC Spotlight on Afghanistan," 2015). According to this system, not completing the necessary educational years in school would hinder students from entering the university and higher education.

During their previous governance in the country from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban 1.0 prohibited women and girls from having the right to an education, and after retaking power in 2021, girls past puberty were once again denied this privilege. Both times, the prohibition on girls attending school was enacted as a short-term solution. However, the restriction hadn't been lifted during the initial period for six consecutive years, and it must be assumed that the Taliban do not contemplate doing so until they keep their pledge to promptly reopen secondary schools and

universities for females ("Afghanistan: Quality education must be equally accessible to all, UN experts say," 2023).

Similar to the Akbari & True's (2022) and Easar et al. articles, here, Taliban 2.0 refers to the Taliban's second incarnation, which took control in August 2021. The Taliban previously ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, which is referred to as Taliban 1.0. Moreover, the study is mainly focused on girls in several provinces of Afghanistan within the scope of this research.

1.2 Applied Research Methodology

The methods used in this thesis are a mix of qualitative and quantitative investigation that bases its data collection and analysis on grounded theory methodology. It bases its research strategy on and adheres to some fundamental principles later discussed in chapter three of this research from grounded theory methodology. The methods and methodology are used to build new knowledge around the impacts of school closures for girls in Afghanistan. Grounded theory, established by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, is a rigorous research strategy that allows for the analysis of complex social settings without making prior assumptions.

Hussein et al. (2014), citing Charmaz (1983), write that grounded theory (GT) emerged in reaction to a widespread conviction among researchers that all relevant theories had already been established and that the primary goal of the research was to confirm these hypotheses using quantitative, scientific procedures. In other words, many researchers at the time were more concerned with testing current hypotheses than developing new ones. As the author mentions, grounded theory, on the other hand, adopted a different approach. According to him, instead of testing pre-existing theories, it sought to develop new ones by extensively scrutinizing and analyzing the data itself, often in qualitative ways. As a result, GT was established as a strategy

that challenged the notion that all of the relevant theories were already known and tried to generate new insights and theories from the ground up, based on research data.

Multiple reasons guided this research into selecting grounded theory methodology to conduct this research, which is related to sociological matters, and according to Elliott and Lazenbatt (2005), grounded theory itself seeks to understand and explain human behavior through the use of inductive reasoning processes. Five essential reasons allow grounded theory to be the preferred methodology for this research:

- I. Due to the limited literature and theories on the current situation of girls and the potential consequences of long-term school closures, using a deductive approach seemed inapplicable where a hypothesis was supposed to be tested. Therefore, through grounded theory, an inductive approach is preferable to come up with developing theories, patterns, and themes that resonate with ongoing.
- II. In-depth understanding of social processes: According to Charmaz (2014), grounded theory lends itself well to investigating complicated social processes. It enables the researcher to delve deeper into the dynamics and interactions that occur within a social context, allowing one to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how these processes develop. This uniqueness helped the researcher use this methodology and further investigate the experiences and challenges faced.
- III. Grounded theory research often provides practically applicable insights (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). According to the mentioned authors, grounded theory has the potential to inform proper interventions, policies, or solutions by recognizing and comprehending real-world events. Furthermore, Miller (2015) has stated four criteria that can be used to evaluate the practical use of grounded theory research, which are: 1) suitability - the theory

must be closely related to the subject under investigation; 2) comprehension - lay people working in the field must be able to understand and apply the theory; 3) generality - the grounded theory's categories must be abstract enough to serve as a framework that applies for evolving situations; and 4) control: the theory must provide enough confidence and clarity to justify its application. The study topic of the current research intends to have a realistic investigation of the short- and long-term consequences of school closures, therefore constructing an emerging theory that addresses the objectives of the study, considering maintaining the above-mentioned criteria throughout the research.

- IV. The emergence of a core category or categories relevant to the study topic is part of grounded theory. This core category arises from the data via a process known as "coding," which is an inductive analytical method based on recognizing and refining data patterns. This method leads to a more comprehensive and in-depth grasp of the research topic.
- V. A final reason that led this study to utilize grounded theory was the flexibility of the mentioned methodology in working with qualitative and quantitative data. Further justification for this point will be given in the third chapter of this research.

As mentioned earlier, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods was selected for this grounded theory analysis, which is thoroughly explained under the title in the third chapter.

1.3 Role of the Literature Review

The literature review in this study consists of two rounds: a preliminary grounded literature review (PGLR) and a comprehensive literature review. The preliminary grounded literature review by [Thistoll et al. \(2016\)](#) argues that PGLR is a notable step as a technique for obtaining and

developing theoretical sensitivity before beginning the empirical research phase of a grounded theory study. Therefore, a pre-literature review of the sources on the topic of this study and the grounded theory methodology itself was done before doing an empirical study and starting with the sampling and data collection. As mentioned earlier, the researcher approached the literature with consciousness and caution to mitigate any chance of bias or prejudice.

In this thesis, the literature plays a unique contributing role rather than a foundational one (Dubois & Gadde, 2002), a distinction influenced by the grounded theory concepts discussed in Chapter 3. Throughout the data analysis, the literature was used iteratively during theoretical coding to improve abstraction levels, validate patterns, and support new data. It provided an additional data source, which was critical for reaching theoretical saturation.

The literature was integrated in accordance with the developing data, ensuring that themes were not overly influenced or forced. Instead, the emphasis was on allowing the study results to direct the literature selection process during coding. For example, when clarifying data-identified terms such as mental 'health' and 'family support', relevant literature was read to contextualize and refine emergent codes.

This method, which was constantly applied throughout theoretical coding, aided in the achievement of a higher level of code abstraction, enriching the analytical process and contributing to the construction of a comprehensive theoretical framework.

1.4 Statement of the problem

The Taliban's current approach to education is filled with inconsistencies and contradictions. Especially, due to the unique educational demands and backgrounds of the various groups that the organization aims to educate. Their primary emphasis is on religious education to

reinforce and promote their ardent beliefs throughout the country. This purpose seems to get much stronger when it comes to female education. In their first period, the group stopped all kinds of education for women and left the country with a disastrous situation where women accounted for zero percent of formal education (citation). With the collapse of Taliban 1.0, the government and international organizations established new routes for girls' enrolment in schools and universities, and access to education spiked throughout the years.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2021), In 2001, only 21 percent of Afghan pupils were enrolled in school, with girls accounting for the majority of those. However, there has been remarkable development during the last two decades. By 2018, the overall enrollment rate had increased to 104%, expanding at a rate of more than 9%

Afghanistan - Literacy rate						
Date	Adult literacy rate female	Adult literacy rate male	Adult literacy rate	Adult literacy rate 15-24 female	Adult literacy rate 15-24 male	Adult literacy rate 15-24
2021	22.60%	52.06%	37.27%	41.59%	71.24%	55.93%
2018	29.81%	55.48%	43.02%	56.25%	74.08%	65.42%
2011	17.02%	45.42%	31.45%	32.11%	61.88%	46.99%
1979	4.99%	30.31%	18.16%	11.14%	45.80%	30.07%

Table 1: Afghanistan literacy rate

per year. As per UNESCO's report, the situation for girls improved dramatically, with an 83% enrolment rate. At the upper secondary level, enrollment was only 12% in 2001 but had risen to 41% by 2018, with girls accounting for 29% of those students. While there is still a significant difference in enrollment rates between boys and girls at all levels of education, this disparity was narrowing down to more girls going to school each year. The difference was much narrower in elementary schools and wider in upper secondary schools. As of now, the gap has become much wider since girls in secondary schools are prohibited from accessing schools, ruining years of effort and endeavors to increase women's access to education for the last 20 years.

Women, the backbone of societies and families, are about to vanish from the visible faces of the Afghan communities. Every day, the Taliban government issues fresh rules and directives aimed at restricting various aspects of their civil life, gradually tightening their grip on the fundamental human rights of women in the country. The major issues created as a result of this decision for the country go far beyond the healthcare sector, where there is a high demand for educated women. It has also affected the labor market and the economy and led to cultural stagnation, which is not the subject matter of this study. Furthermore, a slew of social and psychological issues are supposed to be targeting the girls, thereby deteriorating the situation even further for them.

Providing further insights into the potential consequences of current circumstances runs the risk of authors' perspectives influencing the research process and introducing bias. Consequently, given the sensitive nature of this research, no predictions regarding these consequences were provided.

In the current study, the researcher's personal experiences and observations informed the research topic in this thesis. These firsthand contacts and astute observations have played a critical role in establishing the study's direction and breadth. The researcher recognized this specific area of concern that merited further investigation based on their own contacts and the insights garnered via attentive observations. The desire to add a new perspective to the research and contribute to a deeper understanding of the chosen issue drove this decision. As a result, the researcher's personal connection to the subject serves as a catalyst for the research journey, providing the study with a nuanced and contextually grounded approach.

The primary emphasis here is on the genuine uncovering of the true, underlying impacts of school closures for secondary school females who are denied the opportunity to attend school. This technique differs from the practice of attempting to fit evidence into a preexisting thought or concept, which occurs frequently when researchers develop specific research topics or questions at the commencement of their investigation.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The main objective intended for this thesis is to produce a well-informed understanding of the educational and societal effects of school closures on females in secondary schools in Afghanistan following the closures and develop an argument for action based on the knowledge gained that might help address the problem. This is accomplished by exploring and developing an emergent exploratory theory that uncovers and explains the impacts of school closures grounded in the data, along with the limited literature and the discussion of researcher interpretation, to establish a relevant framework for change. To identify explicit and implicit data, a thorough and iterative study of emerging qualitative and quantitative data, as well as the literature, is performed using coding procedures.

The study has investigated and documented the various lived experiences of Afghan girls who had been directly affected by school closures in the post-Taliban era. Another vivid intention of the author is to fill the gap left by the absence of reliable and readily published English-language information on the experiences of the girls in secondary schools in Afghanistan after the reassurance of the Taliban after twenty years.

Some general and wide questions were formulated to lead the investigation, data collection, and the formation of the exploratory theory:

Abstract wonderment research question:

- What are the immediate and long-term (educational and societal) consequences of school closures affecting female students in secondary and upper secondary schools in Afghanistan?

The formed question acts as the first guide to the research, establishing a starting point for the investigation. It is acknowledged that as iterative data collection and analysis occur, emerging insights and evolving conceptions will form and refine the research topic continuously. This iterative procedure helps the study remain responsive to the intricacies of the data while also ensuring that the succeeding questions are firmly matched with the richness of the empirical context. The two aspects, educational and societal, were kept open to change as the researcher sought to profoundly depend on data to come up with the emerging theory. To sustain the “abstract wonderment” (Stoupe, 2016), the researcher collected data with girls of almost all ages in secondary school and listened. As the issues they raised were tangled and complicated, they did not need to hear the researcher's assumptions; however, the researcher made sure to give them full openness to discuss their issues so that the researcher was able to collect raw and unfiltered data without prior hypothesizing in the process and honored the abstract wonderment phase of the data.

1.6 Significance of the study

The implications of school closures in Afghanistan, particularly for females, have drawn international attention due to their direct relevance and the seriousness of the situation. By delving into the deep network of obstacles that these girls experience, this study approached an important problem that demanded both urgent and long-term answers. There were various aspects of the consequences that needed further attention; however, the current study solely focused on the

educational and societal consequences experienced by girls who were denied the right to go to school for more than two consecutive years.

This study seeks to add to the current limited body of literature by offering a thorough examination of the educational and societal impacts of school closures for girls in secondary school. The mentioned impacts were limited to educational and social aspects due to the highly broad scope of the subject matter and the ability to delve deeper into the mentioned aspects.

The study's findings have immediate implications for politicians, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations working in education, gender equality, and conflict resolution. The knowledge obtained here can be used to build targeted policies and initiatives that meet the specific needs and challenges that Afghan girls confront. Furthermore, this research has a human face that extends beyond the academic arena. It sheds light on Afghan girls' lived experiences in the last two years and emphasizes the humanitarian urgency of ensuring their access to education and safety. It promotes empathy and support for the huge number of disadvantaged groups in Afghanistan.

The study is consistent with improving gender equality and women's empowerment, which are not only essential human rights but also critical for Afghanistan's social and economic growth. Girls and women who are empowered contribute greatly to society's resilience and progress. Though gender inequality is being formalized through direct policies and initiations in Afghanistan, the inequality is not unique to this country and can be traced in almost all of the countries.

This research applies unique mixed method grounded theory analysis tools. The methodology used in this study adds depth and complexity to the qualitative and quantitative examination of

complicated societal issues. The findings of the study contributed to the emergence of a theory that, according to Glaser (2002), has the potential to be directly applied in the field or tested as further study hypotheses.

In the current research, the researcher aims to use the findings as a powerful advocacy tool, raising awareness about the difficulties that Afghan girls confront. It also has the potential to mobilize support for projects that attempt to improve educational possibilities and overall educational well-being for girls in Afghanistan.

1.7 Thesis Structure

The current thesis consists of three main sections:

Research framework sets the groundwork for the overall research and the rules implied throughout the research. Three first chapters, including the introduction, the fundamental literature review, and the research methodology, are in this section.

Data Development and Theory Formulation: This section presents the data analysis process and its preliminary results. The coding processes for both qualitative and quantitative data are described, and the emergent theory has been explained in this section. Worth mentioning that the memo writing process has also happened throughout this section.

Conclusion: As it is evident from the name, this section has presented the conclusion and the researcher's discussion part. This section leads to references and the appendices.

Chapter Two

Literature review

The researcher approached the literature with a certain amount of caution and reservations, using the framework provided by mixed method grounded theory and the restrictions it places on an exhaustive literature review before conducting empirical research.

Grounded theory research and traditional research situate the literature review in different places. However, in this thesis the author adheres to the institutional thesis guideline and places the literature review in the second chapter after the introduction part. Despite placing the literature prior to the data development section, the literature was conducted after the first phase of collecting and analyzing the data. Furthermore, in this research, the grounded theory analysis of conducting empirical research prior to the literature review persists and the author has done a preliminary grounded theory literature review before the empirical research and a comprehensive literature afterwards.

It is worth mentioning that a limited range of studies on school closures are available after the second Taliban takeover in Afghanistan from the past two years. The related literature in this study consists of school closures during the first period of the Taliban's takeover (1996–2001), the COVID-19 pandemic, the first wave, the second wave, the Ebola pandemic 2013–2016, and a narrow literature of school closure from the second round of Taliban takeover.

The literature ranges from concentrating on the educational history and challenges it bore throughout the period highlighting the researched consequences of school closures in the country.

2.1. Critical evaluation of education and women's right to education in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has a long history of cultural diversity and education. However, the country's present (modern) educational system is relatively new (Easar et al. 2023). Following the arrival of Islam in Afghanistan, Islamic education displaced previous pre-Islamic religious teachings (Khwajamir, 2016). Despite the emphasis on religious instruction, the value of education in empirical sciences was recognised. Notably, the roots of modern education were laid in 1875 (Yazdani, 2020); nonetheless, only four schools had been created by 1919. King Amanullah Khan, who reigned from 1919 until 1929, placed a high value on education, establishing the first girl's high school and sending girls to Turkey for education (Khwajamir, 2016). Nonetheless, several Afghan religious authorities opposed his promotion for education, particularly for women (Easar et al. 2023). Besides the short-lived formal education, informal institutions such as home-schooling, mosques, and madrasas, with religious experts and clerics serving as instructors were in place teaching religious contents along with literature, history, philosophy, and ethics (Yazdani, 2020). Historically, Afghanistan's madrasa students were predominantly males, with girls attending mosques until puberty to learn Quran and reading skills, now most of them attend madrasas especially private ones in urban areas up to a certain age.

The several periods of civil wars caused some deep destruction to the education sector, mostly the students that would require years of healing and reviving. As Abawe et al. (2023) exclaimed, Afghanistan's four-decade-long conflict has resulted in the terrible loss of hundreds of thousands of Afghan lives with many children left crippled, orphaned, and vulnerable to continuous conflicts. According to the authors, this prolonged period of warfare has had a profound impact on the younger generation, transforming them from victims of circumstance to actors in perpetuating the cycle of conflict. Tensions based on ethnic and religious differences have played

a crucial part in these conflicts, establishing a social environment that prioritizes religious teachings over values such as peace, fairness, equality, and inclusivity. The authors further explain that following the United States' intervention in 2001, various countries and global organizations attempted to reform Afghanistan's education system. Their goal was to repair the harm done by a conservative educational system that encouraged extremist ideas, emphasizing on changing the curriculum. Soon after, a weak central government highly reliant on foreign aid was established that adopted more of western curriculum subjects and resulted in a politicized and a biased curriculum ([Abawe et al., 2023](#)). Recent events after August 2021, however, show a shift in the use of education for political purposes by the Taliban, as evidenced by the current IEA's Minister of Education favoring religious education over Western science subjects (India-Today, 2021), highlighting the negative impact of regime changes, particularly on the country's educational sector.

[Khwajamir \(2016\)](#), has listed the problems that accumulated to restrict modern educational advancement throughout history in the country mostly for women as follows:

- Obstacles to the establishment of modern education in Afghanistan.
- religious resistance to women's education under Amanullah Khan.
- Girls' schools and foreign-funded institutes were closed during Habibullah Kalakany's tenure.
- The Soviet Union started a war, which has lasted for a long time.
- Under the Taliban, female schools were closed and converted into madrasas.
- Taliban's strong methods to obstruct girls' education, including attacks on teachers and poisoning school students after their first collapse in 2001.
- Afghanistan's economic difficulties.

- lack of infrastructure and school buildings (Khwajamir, 2016).

Despite all these problems and women's education being a problematic subject, the 20-year gap from 2001 to 2021 was the educational reform era (Easar et al. 2023), welcoming hundreds of thousands of students into schools among girls and boys. According to MoE's 2020 Annual Progress Report, around ten million students were registered in schools in 2020, representing a tenfold spike since 2001. Approximately 40% of the students enrolled were female. The greatest increase was seen in primary education. Throughout this period, Afghan women experienced newfound independence, egalitarian rights, and chances for education and employment, particularly among those living in cities. The current occurrence of women risking their lives to actively protest the Taliban demonstrates how much they appreciate the privileges they have gained over the last two decades. Their acts also demonstrate their deep concern about the potential loss of these hard-won privileges (Abawe et al., 2023).

On the other hand, compared to mass international attention to women's education for more than 20 years, the outcome was merely satisfactory. Worth mentioning that only women in the privileged social strata in Kabul and selected large cities such as Jalalabad and Herat experienced significant progress. While the majority of women in rural areas and from lower socioeconomic strata, did not have remarkable gains. After two decades of government support and extensive international financial aid, only 37 percent of Afghan women were literate in 2021, compared to 66 percent of boys (Batha, 2022). According to the 2020 annual report by the United Nations Development Program, Afghanistan had one of the lowest global rankings, placing 169th in terms of women's education (UNDP, 2020). Afghan Education Cluster Strategy (2022) for years 2022-2023 also indicated that in 2022, there was a compelling need for education in emergencies (EiE) for almost 8 million children in Afghanistan, with 3.8 million of them being girls. This represents

a significant increase of more than 172% over the number of children requiring such help at the beginning of 2021. The mere improvements in women's education, mostly schooling, was due to corruption in educational systems which appeared in many forms, Taliban's interventions, geographic problems and traditional viewpoints and culture of people towards female education, restricting women from having full access to their education rights.

Looking at the education system in Afghanistan indicates a non-linear, cyclical structure rather than a constant progression. These changes have impacted both men and women, including girls. Over many years, quick and violent regimes, frequently with opposing ideologies, have politicized education. major changes in political leadership have resulted in major changes to educational curricula as many administrations, each associated with a different ideology, sought to espouse their values through the education system.

Author's Critics: the rapid shifts in educational system both for men and women in formal and informal education systems throughout the history of Afghanistan lacked a social context manifested from the depth of Afghan culture, tradition, and economy. Most of these changes were let by external factors and extremists that either come from a deeply conservative group of people such as the Taliban 1.0 & 2.0 or Habiulla Kalakany, or from extremely western driven culture such the changes brought by Amanullah Khan or Hamid Karzai expecting drastic changes in short period that resulted in resistance and rejection.

2.2. Comprehending the past; Taliban 1.0

At a historic arena, the Taliban came forward with national and international support mostly from neighboring country, Pakistan to “bring order in chaotic Afghanistan and make it a cooperative ally” during the civil wars (Kean & Hamilton, 2004, p.64). The Congressional

Research Service (2021) explains the initial origins of the Taliban as such: The Taliban was founded in 1994 during political turbulence in Afghanistan by a group of Islamic studies students mostly of rural and Pashtun origins demanding an end to the civil conflict, most of them former anti-Soviet Union combatants. The Taliban's rapid rise in military strength, along with international assistance, culminated in their takeover of Kabul in 1996 and subsequent control over Afghanistan. Once in power, the organization proceeded to impose an arbitrary interpretation of Islamic law, enforcing harsh punishments and severely restricting women's rights. Women were confined to their houses, barred from working or attending school, and faced the dreadful potential of execution for any acts of defiance. The Taliban maintained control of Afghanistan until 2001, when the US responded to their unwillingness to give over Al-Qaeda leaders and demolish terrorist camps in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks. Afghan troops, supported by the US, effectively reclaimed control of Kabul on November 13, 2001, marking the turning point in the battle (CRS, 2021a) which put an end to the Taliban 1.0, but it didn't mean they were completely wiped out of the scene as the Taliban insurgency began no later than 2005 (CRS, 2021a).

Starting from the Taliban's first round of government in 1996, they have used the education sector for political objectives. Upon establishing their Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan, they promoted religious education, prohibited girls from attending school, and prohibited publications that they believed violated Islamic norms. Kabul University, the country's top institution of higher education (founded in 1932), was turned into a military setup along with banning theaters, labs, and libraries (Easar et al. 2023). In this period, they enforced a blanket ban on female education, closing all girls' schools except the Kabul Medical Faculty ([Khwajamir, 2016](#)). This medical facility was allowed to continue open since female patients could only be seen by female doctors. As a result, while the Taliban did not prevent women from working as doctors or nurses, they did

forbid them from working in other professions (Khwajamir, 2016). In 2001, the Taliban leadership published an educational decree accepting education as a fundamental right for all Afghan residents in the second article. The third article specified the governance of women's education under a dedicated commission which was never issued in practice (Jarida-e-rasmi, 2001). The Taliban's first administration was the darkest moment of modern Afghan education.

One of the authors that portrays a different picture of women resistance during the Taliban 1.0 is (Povey, 2003), as she denies the conventional narrative of painting women as passive receivers of conflict, brutality, and political oppression. She claims that with few academic exceptions, women are frequently represented in academic works as individuals who require only Western military involvement to be liberated in 2001. As Povey notes, Afghanistan's societal cohesion has deteriorated throughout the course of twenty-two years of conflict and violent turmoil. Nonetheless, her research finding shows that women organized around gender-specific survival methods, producing a heightened awareness of issues affecting women. They built networks, social norms, and mutual trust within their communities through collaborative efforts within groups and organizations. Her arguments focus on resisting coping mechanisms that women held by staying in the country and to empower other women, they worked openly or clandestinely. Running underground schools and building secret networks to be in touch with other women. Her findings show that most of the poor women would turn their houses to schools and get paid by families of students (Povey, 2003). Girls would courageously risk their lives by attending secret schools every day, concealing their books, notebooks, pens, and pencils beneath their Burqas (A long and broad piece of clothing, mandatory to be worn by women during the Taliban 1.0). Besides De Leede, (2014) believes that Women's clandestine networks, which grew during the civil war and expanded throughout the Taliban government, could potentially be used to engage more

women in counterterrorism efforts. These networks, which were critical for maintaining civil society during oppressive regimes, especially the Taliban, were a significant resource for engaging with women across the region. Worth mentioning that majority.

In hopes of resisting activists, it is important to mention the hardships that the regime imposed over women by publicly executing (Editor, 2002), and using other different types of violence against them such as publicly beating the ones that show a small bit of skin or go outside the house without a male company (Povey, 2003). Some of the negative coping mechanisms included becoming sex workers or beggars on the streets or committing suicide (Povey, 2003). 27/7 living behind their house walls and not being able to walk out of the house without a male companion who sometimes doesn't want to or does not have the time was how the lives of women and girls were defined during that period.

2.3. Has the Taliban 2.0 changed?

As soon as the Taliban 2.0 came to power, the new administration promised to address some important issues such as drug manufacturing, the economy, and women's rights to education. In his first news conference in Kabul on August 17th (Aljazeera, 2021), Zabihullah Mojahid, the Taliban spokesperson stated: “We are going to allow women to work and study...women are going to be very active, but within the framework of Islam.” which seemed to be a broken promise as they consecutively refused to lift the ban on female education for the second year in 2023 (Ap, 2023).

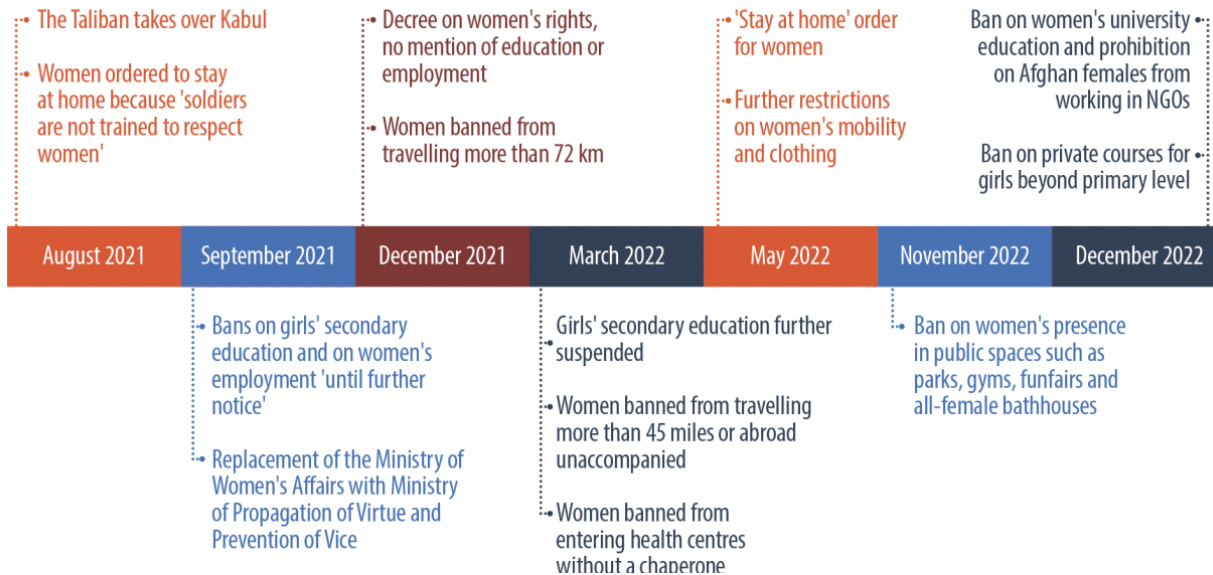
For all practical purposes, education has been stigmatized in the Taliban's newly established Afghanistan (Rauf, 2021). Especially for women and girls, as the space for them in the educational era is shrinking or disappearing. Girls' high schools are closed all over the country,

and women with admissions and scholarships in foreign nations are not permitted to travel outside Afghanistan without a male guardian (Abawe et al., 2023).

Women's rights in Afghanistan, which had grown considerably under the 20-year US occupation, have suffered major defeats since the Taliban reclaimed control of the country. According to UNESCO (2023), the number of females participating in primary education climbed to 2.5 million by 2018. Similarly, the number of women enrolled in higher education climbed from five thousand in 2001 to more than 100,000 in 2021, besides, the female literacy rates increased from 17 per cent to 30 per cent over that period. Despite all the improvements, women were disproportionately underrepresented in the Afghan government prior to the Taliban regaining control. Women currently have some to no representation in the Taliban-led administration and cabinet (Rubin, 2021) as they continually refused to budge in response to calls from the UN and the international community to have women representatives in their cabinet. The Taliban 2.0 has dissolved the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) (Pal, 2021), replacing it with the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice of Taliban as was active during the Taliban 1.0.

The United States' intermediary in this situation cannot be denied as it had claimed to reconstruct Afghanistan after invading Afghanistan in 2001. For the period of 20 years, the U.S had positive development areas including declining rates of child mortality, rising per capita GDP, and rising rates of literacy. However, the U.S. government still had a lot to learn after trying to reconstruct Afghanistan for 20 years and spending \$145 billion (SIGAR, 2021). According to the 2020 peace deal with the Taliban (CRS, 2021b), the US withdrew its last remaining troops from Afghanistan after months of postponing the withdrawal date by President Biden. On August 15, 2021, the Taliban stormed Kabul, the climax of a swift military assault across the country that

startled many in both Afghanistan and the United States, two weeks before that pullout was scheduled to end. The withdrawal of American soldiers left a vacuum that allowed the Taliban to make an impression and rush for power.



Source: European Parliamentary Research Service (eprs)

Figure 1: List of key restrictions on the rights of women under the current Taliban de-facto regime.

Yousaf and Jabarkhail (2022) state that the Taliban's policy in their media announcements after taking power has portrayed a "revised" aspect of their politics. And according to their narrative, despite the massaging, the de facto regime's principles remain consistent with their late ideologies and values of the 1990s. Nonetheless, distinctions exist between the Taliban of 1996 and those of 2021 as stated below:

The Taliban 2.0 has received international recognition from several countries. They were cut off from the outside world and did not earn recognition internationally during their first

administration. But currently they have been acknowledged by a number of nations, including Pakistan, China and Russia, as the de facto rulers of Afghanistan under their second government. Secondly, unlike their first administration, currently they have access to communication and technology which has improved their ability to adapt with global change and utilize them to run the country (Culpan, 2021). Besides, Afghanistan had significant economic sanctions during the Taliban 1.0 administration due to having links with terrorism (particularly Al-Qaeda) (CRS, 2021b). As a result, their economy suffered greatly, with widespread poverty and starvation. During their second term, the group was able to get financial support from a variety of countries, which helped to stabilize the economy to some extent. Lastly, during their first term in power, the Taliban imposed significant limitations on women's rights, including prohibiting females from attending school and working as far as being confined in their homes. However, in their second governance (2021), while women continue to face major restrictions on their rights, they have allowed primary education for women and promised to respect their rights which paves the ground to conversations for international communities in the long run.

Currently an ever-expanding assault on the rights of women is happening in Afghanistan. An onslaught that, with each passing day, brings the Taliban closer to resembling what they controlled in Afghanistan during the 1990s. Community context for girls' education in Afghanistan has forever been a matter of conflicts and debates. A short form of which has been discussed under "Comprehending the past; Taliban 1.0".

Primary barriers to girl's education in the context of Afghanistan according to Frogh (2023) are: poverty, safety (security), shortage of infrastructure and resources (such as female teachers, school buildings and roads), marriage, and socio-cultural factors. Frogh (2023) also found that

girls in Afghanistan have less freedom in deciding for their futures which deems to minimize their authority on the choices of their lives and lower their morals to education.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology; Embracing Grounded Theory Principles

The concepts, standards, and principles of grounded theory methodology serve as the underlying framework for both data collection and analysis in this thesis. The following chapter will explain the fundamental principles, processes, and guidelines that have influenced the design of this research. Theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, memoing, constant comparison, and theory emergence are thoroughly discussed in this chapter, along with the data collection methods and their evaluation criteria. While this thesis may not exactly follow the typical format of a classical grounded theory study in its pursuit of substantive emergent theory, the researcher chose to adopt Glaserian grounded theory concepts as a basic framework for the research process on purpose. The reasons for adopting this version are explained in this chapter.

The data is coded largely to generate and, by extension, propose a theory. If necessary, the theory, which may act as a hypothesis, is subjected to partial testing, often using rigorous quantitative methods used later in the scientific process (Glaser, 1965). The author also highlights the emergent theory as testable for future research topics. The theory may be utilized as a basis for any type of qualitative or quantitative research method.

3.1. Research Materials

This research presents a mixed-methods methodology of grounded theory that is heavily based on qualitative data as the main data and quantitative ones as supporting data. The data was collected through three rounds; in the first round, 68 surveys and 3 interviews were conducted, for the second round, 3 interviews were conducted, and at the end a group discussion of 5 people was

conducted. In initial collection process open codes and core categories were identified and with later round of data collection more open codes were added based on analysis needs. At the end, a group discussion consisting of four schoolgirls was conducted according to the theoretical sampling method. The population for this research includes all secondary school students who, according to the Taliban's new policies since returning to power, are not allowed to attend school and get educated. By respecting the principles of grounded theory, the sampling method for this research followed the theoretical sampling method in three rounds of collecting, coding, and analyzing the data. The results are not presented as separate evaluation rounds; they are presented as one complete results section, and the constant comparison of the received data was documented in the memo part according to the grounded theory principles.

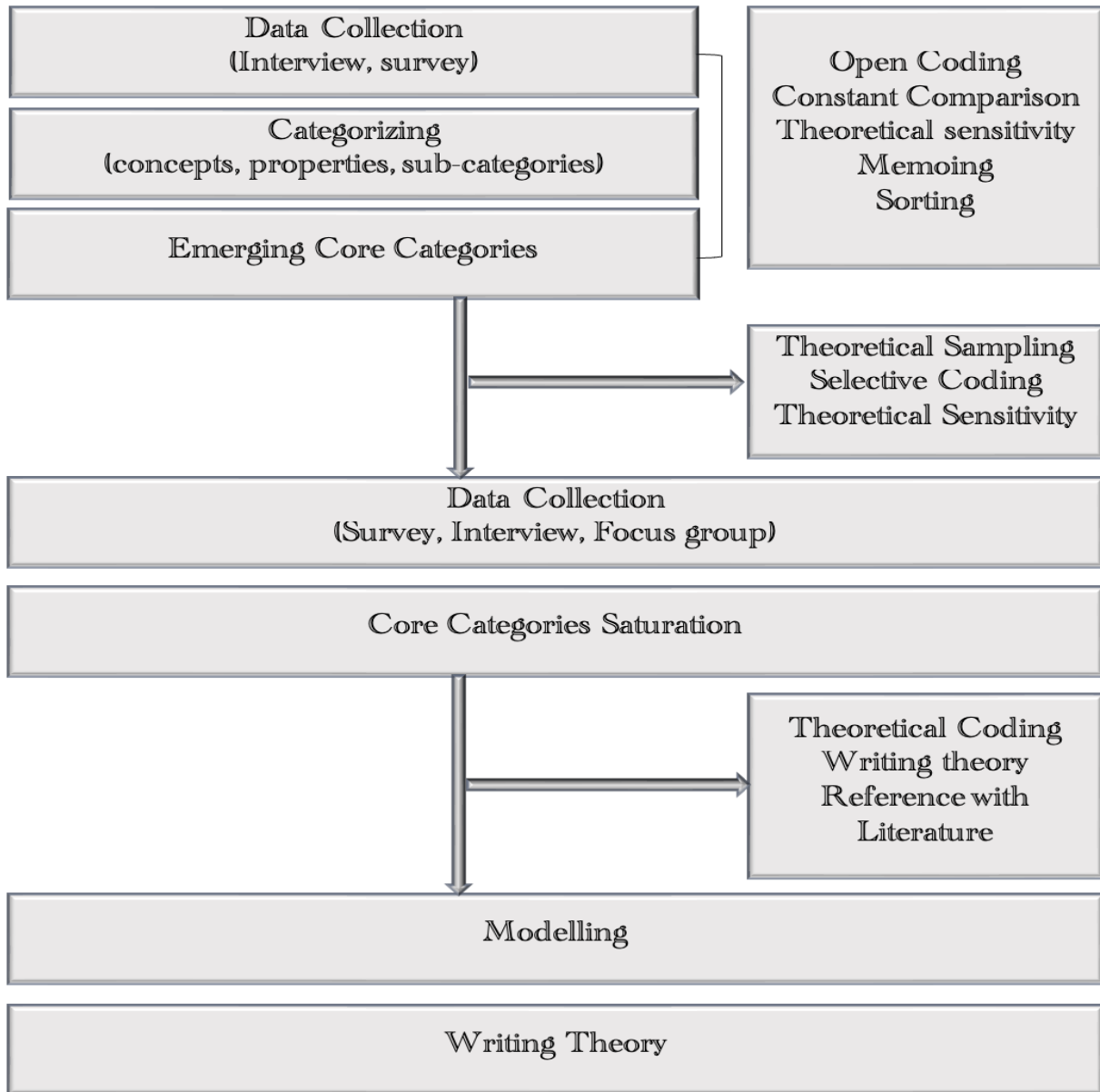


Figure 2: Grounded theory research design framework of this study.

3.2. Grounded theory principles

Important grounded theory principles were considered throughout the research study; not all of them were selected at the beginning of the research, as some of them were opted in after revisions and readings.

Grounded theory's first and most stressed principle is theoretical sensitivity. According to the founders of GT, in their 1967 book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, the capacity to recognize when a data segment is essential to your theory is referred to as theoretical sensitivity. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), theoretical sensitivity is the insight into what is important and significant in evidence for theory formation. In this research, theoretical sensitivity was maintained through memoing of the author's perspective and the change it has perceived through the data collection, coding, and evaluation processes. The author has noted down the perspective the author had before, during, and after the theory emerged and recorded what factors and changes in data have affected it throughout the research process.

An analytical approach widely used in GT for coding and category construction is the process of constant comparison. As Chun Tie et al. (2019) explain, this process begins with the initial data gathered and continues throughout the study process. Incidents are found in the data and coded. The first level of analysis compares incidents inside each code. The initial codes are then compared to other codes. The codes are then categorized. Chun Tie and other authors further build upon this term and state that this procedure entails the researcher comparing incidences in one category to earlier incidents in both the same and distinct categories. The constant comparative technique is divided into four stages (Glaser, 1965): (1) In each category, relevant instances are compared. (2) Combining categories and their associated properties (3) The hypothesis is being refined and defined. And at the end, (4) putting the theory down in writing (Glaser, 1965).

Glaser stressed the importance of using qualitative data collection methods for collecting data that are frequently used in researching “social problems”, deviant behaviors, control systems, and crises. The associated challenges in these problems are their secrecy and sensitivity level, subjects that are taboo, stigma, and morality, which pushes individuals to conceal information in

these situations, making it difficult to gather accurate data merely through traditional means. As a result, Glaser (1965) argues that the optimum way for a researcher in this situation is a combination of techniques, such as observing events, engaging in open and informal talks with the individuals involved, and studying their written thoughts and documents. This highlights the possibility of using both qualitative and quantitative data according to the insights of the researcher, which resonate with the required data and theory emerging for the current topic. Therefore, this research thoroughly investigates and comprehends the various realities that exist within the current situation after school closures for girls in secondary school using a mixed-methods approach, allowing for a more full and accurate study of this research issue. It is worth mentioning that the qualitative data holds more weight than the quantitative data to bring forth the experiences of these students. Some other principles, such as memoing, theoretical coding, and theoretical sampling, are explained in other parts of this chapter in detail.

3.3. Research location.

The return of the Taliban after 20 years in Afghanistan, overtaking the government, and their decisions towards marginalizing women and their activities paved the ground for the inception of this research topic. The main population under this study are secondary school students, who are currently banned from accessing official schooling and education in Afghanistan. The purposeful sampling for this research was done from several provinces in Afghanistan, the majority of whom were displaced to other provinces for better opportunities in life. The theoretical sample of this research was drawn from 17 provinces that responded to the survey, most of whom lived in five central provinces of the country. According to UNICEF (2019), 71 percent of the population in Afghanistan lives in rural areas, 24 percent in urban areas, and 5 percent are nomads ("Afghanistan Education Equity Profile for Adolescent Girls," 2019). The

generated data were mostly from urban areas, with a small number from rural areas and none from nomads, which can be regarded as a limitation of this study.

Regarding the accessibility of the research samples, the first purposeful samples were selected randomly from three online schools that were operating to educate secondary school students after the bans were placed. Later, to access farther places and those students who have no access to online schools or electronic devices, social media platforms and personal networking were used to identify these students and request that they fill out the open-ended survey and give them the option to sit for an interview, focus group, or neither of them.

The respondents and interviewees were mostly from inside Afghanistan, while a few had moved outside the country with their families or for educational purposes.

3.4. Participants

With the return of the Taliban, females above the age of 12 had their return to school postponed, banning 1.1 million current students from accessing a formal education. Including the overall lack of access to education, according to UNESCO (2023), 2.5 million Afghan girls and young women of school age—or 80% of their population—are not in school. In Afghanistan, around 30% of girls have never entered school or enrolled at the primary level (UNESCO, 2023).

The main characteristics of the participants that made them eligible to take part in this research were that they were restricted from going to school after the return of the Taliban. Other factors, such as their religious beliefs, ethnicity, and cultural factors, were considered fixed variables for all the applicants. The sample size changed with each round of data evaluation and coding until it reached the “data saturation” level.

As mentioned above, the samples selected from three online schools and other participants selected through social media platforms and direct networks voluntarily accepted to participate in the research after signing an online consent sent to them in the description part of each survey. The interviewees and focus groups agreed to the consent form read to them at the beginning of online or offline meetings.

Though the population of this research includes a large number of students who are equally disturbed and affected by the decisions the current government has made for them in the early months of 2022, there are some inequalities between them, mostly due to their economic situation, demographic location, and social problems, which restrict them from further accessing the available online schools, materials, and on-the-ground educational services. This research included all of these students to provide a valid picture of their situation.

3.5. Data collection

A mix of qualitative and quantitative data is collected in this research. Though grounded theory is mostly considered to be a qualitative research methodology, it can include any type of data, including quantitative data, as demonstrated by Barney G. Glaser, one of the co-developers of grounded theory, making it open to any kind of data.

Glaser stresses the importance of data and refers to the question of what data is as “all is data”, Here in his book, the author says, “*All is data*” is a well-known Glaser dictum. *What does it mean? It means exactly what is going on in the research scene is the data, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told, and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told. It means what is going on must be figured out exactly for what it is to be used*

for, that is conceptualization, not for accurate description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more data to keep correcting the categories with more relevant properties” (Glaser, 2001, p. 145, as cited in Glaser, 2007) With that being said, since the data in this research was preferred to come from a certain range of school students with different levels, from grade 7 to school graduate students, this research found it necessary to include some aspects of quantitative data. The rationale behind selecting a mixed-method approach (combining qualitative and quantitative methods) is as follows:

The research question of this study inquiries about the immediate and long-term consequences of school closures affecting female students in secondary and upper secondary schools in Afghanistan, which include certain school grades and a range of ages for these students, which requires the researcher to differentiate between the effects of these circumstances over each age group and grade level. The collected statistical data was also associated with the theoretical sensitivity process for the research, as the researcher was able to differentiate between the experiences of each group and code the data accordingly.

This study has utilized method triangulation as a strategy that employs several data sources or methodologies to cross-check or validate a study's conclusions. This method helps improve the credibility, uniformity, and thoroughness of theory while also identifying discrepancies, gaps, and biases. Furthermore, the statistical trends and patterns evaluated through quantitative data helped comprehend the qualitative data and support the substantive and emergent theories.

Using mixed methods also helps understand the depth and breadth of the research scope. The qualitative data allows the researcher to investigate the depth of the topic by diving extensively into affected students' experiences, views, and narratives through in-depth interviews, focus

groups, and open-ended survey questions. Besides, by gathering data from a larger sample, the quantitative component can provide a broader viewpoint in terms of the breadth of this research. As Charmaz (2006) states, grounded theorists collect rich data that would add to the richness and depth of the analysis. The rich data provides the researcher with a tangible and thick fabric to create a full analysis of the data, as well as assisting the researcher in diving behind the surface of the participant's social and subjective lives, understanding “what is beneath the surface” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 19).

3.5.1 Theoretical Sampling

Starting the empirical research for this study, purposeful sampling was conducted to reach the target population of students who are prohibited from attending the schools through students already enrolled in online schools and students known to the researcher with the same situation. Further, social media platforms such as Telegram and Facebook were utilized to reach these students with no access to online schools. After conducting the empirical research, theoretical sampling was adopted to control the process of data collection using emergent theory as guided by Charmaz (1990). Theoretical sampling guides data collection, in which the researcher gathers, codes, and analyzes data collaboratively and determines what data to gather next in order to create a theory as it develops (Merriam S., Simpson E. 2000). Theoretical sampling is ultimately stopped as categories reach data saturation levels.

In this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and semi-structured surveys with both closed and open-ended questions. The questions were designed to collect data on the consequences of school closures that students faced after the

return of the Taliban. The details of the actions undertaken to maintain the professionalism of the research during data collection are described below.

3.5.2 Interviews

A total of 20 questions, which were the detailed form of the survey questions, were identified for the interviews and later condensed to 12 questions after the first round of data collection. The questions were phrased carefully and comprehensively. The interviewer's topics were covered in the questions, and the participants' experiences were considered. During the interview for this study, two guidelines for interview questions were upheld: 1. avoid asking loaded questions that skew the interviewee's response; and 2. do not ask for more than one possible response, which is consistent with the instructions of Charmaz's (1983) interview rules for grounded theory research.

The interviews were audiotaped with the participants' permission and lasted around 30-45 minutes apiece. Within one week following the interview, the researcher transcribed the audiotapes, translated the transcriptions into English, and open coding began.

3.5.3 Surveys

A comprehensive survey with 60 closed-ended and 13 open-ended questions was distributed to a cohort of online school students, as well as those reached through prominent social media platforms including Telegram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. Purposeful sampling procedures were used, including snowball sampling, in which beginning participants helped recruit new respondents. The obtained data, which consisted of 60 questions, was then analyzed using SPSS software, allowing for rigorous investigation and interpretation. The open-ended questions were each distributed into specific Google Sheets and coded manually. The generated codes later were

integrated with the open codes of initial interviews to join categories and further explain the selective codes leading towards theoretical codes.

3.5.4 Group Discussion

Upon conducting the group discussion between school students from three different provinces, a substantial amount of data that further enriched the categories and selective codes were collected. This data gathering phase helped the researcher determine the conclusion of theoretical sampling, confirming that data saturation had been achieved. At this point the researcher affirmed that no new insights were collected for the emerging data and collection process has reached a saturation point.

3.6 Data analysis

As in grounded theory, data analysis needs acute questioning, a never-ending search for solutions, active observation, and memoing. Each of the mentioned points was preserved during the analysis, and theoretical sensitivity was maintained. There are two critical researcher features or attributes that must be acquired and reinforced in order to ensure successful theoretical sensitivity, as accepted within this thesis (Glaser, 1978):

1. A mindset capable of conceptualizing, combining, visualizing, making abstract connections, and developing a theoretical understanding of all implicit and explicit inputs.
2. The ability to identify and eliminate personal biases, accept the possibility of contradicting and confusing data, and avoid logical predetermination or deduction based on data, while emphasizing the need for continual discovery and theory emergence.

To properly analyze each piece of data, the below process was established and utilized for this study.

This study's data analysis follows Glaser's standard grounded theory technique, with an emphasis on manual qualitative analysis to enable the emergence of underlying theory from within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Following Glaser's concepts qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey questions were thoroughly evaluated with a combination of manual and digital approaches. The goal was to immerse ourselves in the data, allowing patterns and concepts to emerge through open and selective coding and constant comparisons.

The qualitative data analysis was carried out manually, with documentation and organization tools such as Google Docs and Google Sheets. This technique is consistent with Glaser's emphasis on flexibility and adaptability in the analytic process (Glaser, 1978), allowing researchers to closely interact with the data and iteratively revise conceptualizations as they develop.

IBM SPSS, version 29.0, was used to enter, cleanse, sort, and analyze the survey data, including both qualitative and quantitative data. While Glaser's methodology is primarily concerned with qualitative investigation, we acknowledge the potential importance of quantitative aspects in enriching theoretical growth in this research. This combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative coding is consistent with Glaser's concept of theoretical coding, in which data from many sources is systematically examined and integrated to generate theoretical insights (Glaser, 2001). Furthermore, the relationship between quantitative data and qualitative coding was significant in this investigation. By linking quantitative findings to qualitative analysis, we sought to improve our comprehension of the educational and social consequences of school closures after

the resurgence of the Taliban and strengthen our grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

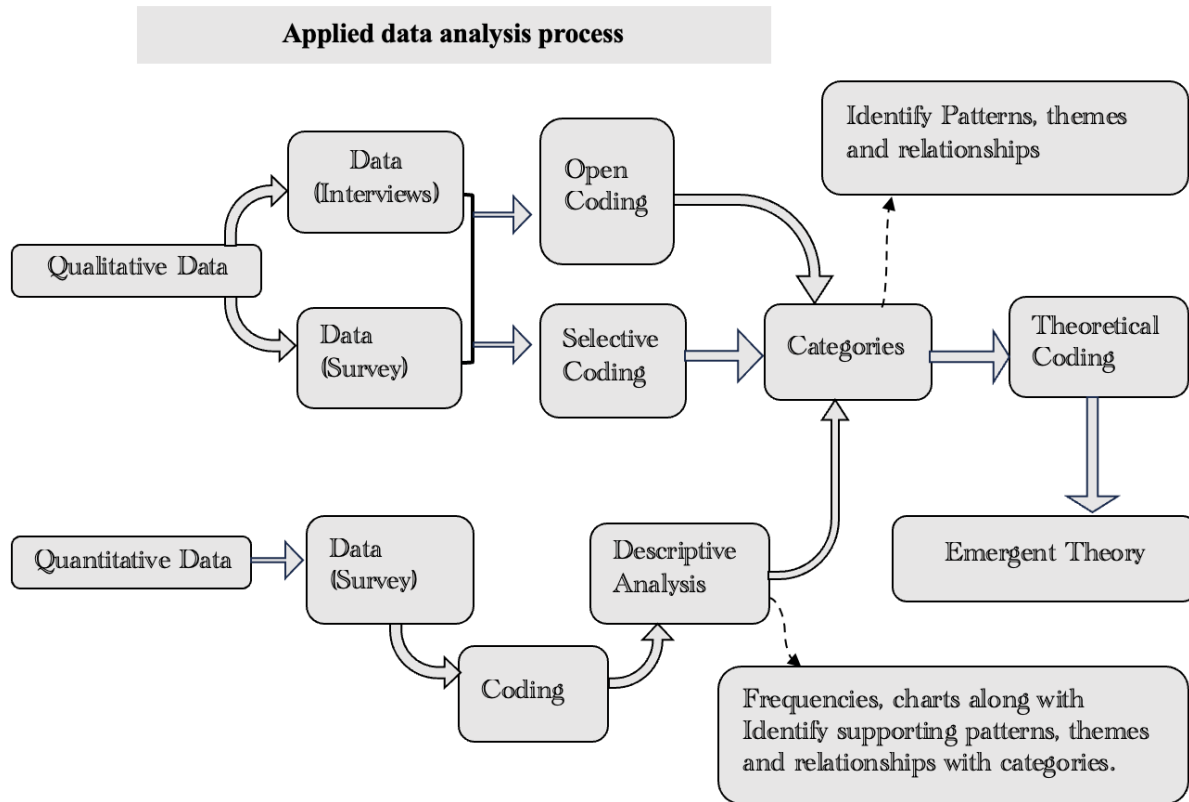


Figure 3: Applied data analysis process.

3.6.1 Applied Coding Process

In coding, the collected data is broken down analytically, and each piece of information is referred to with a code (Glaser, & Strauss, (1967). The coding process in this study included three stages, as illustrated in Figure 1; open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding. Open coding was done by specifying as many codes as possible within each response without any , and the selective coding process integrates many related codes into more significant categories to explore the core category(s). Glaser and Holton (2005) define theoretical codes (TCs) as conceptual frameworks that emerge during the sorting and memoing stages of grounded theory (GT) analysis. The most essential part of writing the codes and memos is that the researcher stays

open to emergent theory. As these authors claim, staying open is not an easy task, and according to them, the purpose is to assist the GT researcher in remaining open to the unforced, unprejudiced finding of emergent TCs. In another stance, Glaser (1978) claims that theoretical codes in grounded theory act as a link between data and emerging theories. They encapsulate the key concepts that explain the underlying patterns discovered in a certain set of data categories.

“Theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes of research may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory. They, like substantive codes, are emergent; they weave the fractured story back together again. Without substantive codes, they are empty abstractions.” (Glaser, 1978). The authors, Glaser and Holton (2005), call the TCs “slippery,” which might end up as jargon for quantitative data analysis and force the theory on the data. They discussed that the ambiguous nature of abstract theoretical codes has a certain strength. Moreover, using a theoretical code is not dangerous; rather, it helps express the difficulties associated with putting grounded theory into written form. This is why there is often a temptation to impose a theoretical code as a hasty solution to problems while waiting for a relevant and well-founded theoretical code to emerge. It is best to let the theoretical code emerge naturally (Glaser & Holton, 2005).

3.6.2 Memoing

Corbin & Struss (1990b) say, “Writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing grounded theory.” The use of memos is an example of a system that easily keeps track of all the categories, attributes, hypotheses, and generative questions that emerge in the analytical process. The researcher started writing memos with the initial coding session and continued the research

until the results section of this thesis was fully written. These notes vary in length and form and can be used as a reporting resource for the writing section of the analysis.

Chapter Four

Data collection and analysis process

This chapter describes the methods used to acquire and analyze data, as well as the emergence of codes, concepts, and patterns. The aim is to depict the process of conceptual growth that leads to the emergence of a conceptual theory. While the techniques are described in a sequential order, it's worth noting that grounded theory data gathering, and analysis are often iterative. This intentional iterative technique allows the collected data to reveal patterns, themes, and complicated linkages. This cyclical process involves ongoing comparison, categorization, abstraction, and conceptualization (Kelle, 2007; Lewis, 2015). Data collection and analysis, including theoretical sampling and coding, continued until theoretical saturation was reached and a theory developed.

Interviews, surveys, and group discussion provided the empirical data, revealing concepts and their relationships. These findings were supported by limited literature available for this topic, covering comprehensiveness of the required data, establishing the foundation for the emergent theory. The empirical data allowed for a multitude of relevant data from participants, which enriched the exploration of the thesis' core theme.

The first half of this thesis provides extensive pieces of knowledge regarding topic initiation, data collection process, and how the findings were integrated with literature. The second half of the chapter dives deeper into the data analysis process and the approaches that the researcher utilized to extract meaning from the data.

4.1 Abstract wonderment, what has changed for girls after the school closures?

The initial stages of this thesis are guided by abstract wonderment, a foundational principle of the grounded theory approach. It aims to provide an overall understanding of the research's emphasis and goal. Abstract wonderment, which is based on concepts such as open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding, helps researchers uncover the research problem. Glaser stressed the need of approaching research with a curious viewpoint, wanting to understand the problem and how to deal with it (Glaser, 1992, p.22).

To initiate this research the following question was asked; what are the educational and social consequences of school closures that took place after the resurgence of the Taliban new regime? This question did not direct the research to a specific result nor it included bias from the researcher's perspective.

The study began with a comprehensive survey designed to assess the larger landscape following school closures, followed by open-ended question interviews. This multifaceted strategy aimed to provide light on schoolgirls' experiences following these closures. This way, the study sought to gain a broad understanding of the numerous issues that this population faces by looking into both quantitative and qualitative data sources. The survey highlighted the crucial perspectives, along with the initial interviews that provided more in-depth insights into individual situations. This was a fundamental step into identifying and prioritizing the most important concerns emerging from the data for the evolution of the questions and theoretical sampling to continue the iterative process. In contrast to traditional research, which often begins with preconceived research questions (Grover & Vriens, 2006), grounded theory approach is based on abstract wonderment, allowing emergent data to steer the research process through ongoing analysis. In line with this

strategy, more precise research questions for this study arose naturally following initial interviews and set of surveys. The questions were constantly modified and adjusted based on the insights gained from interview discussions and memos.

4.2 Executing data collection and analysis.

Using grounded theory's notion of 'all is data,' as described in Chapter 3, any type of data or information relevant to the research topic was deemed important, regardless of its nature—whether vague, objective, subjective, conceptual, prejudiced, or seemingly irrelevant. During the early phases of abstraction, the inclusion of multiple data sources helped to maintain the credibility of the emergent theory. This strategy also opened the possibility of richer, multivariate, and systematic data, urging the researcher to avoid assuming the significance of any particular sort of data or source.

To access potential sources from research sites, the researcher preferred to not focus on only the three mentioned schools and went beyond specific schools, finding data rich respondents from multiple other sources or through participants referring to others. This step allowed the researcher to reach hard-to-reach rural areas where girls did not have access to proper electronic devices. The three sample schools provided permission for the sample students to complete the initial survey and join the initial interviews.

When evaluating the research site to identify prospective data sources that could aid in understanding the topic at hand, facilitating abstraction, and eventually attaining theoretical saturation, gaining access to data sources was critical. Following discussions with management, three key sources were identified: field interviews, observations, and historical records. These sources served as the foundation of the data collecting platform, which was further enhanced to

higher degrees of abstraction. During the final phases of data analysis, a secondary source of published literature was used to supplement and enrich the findings from the primary sources.

4.3 Surveys, Interviews and Group Discussion processes

Interviews following the group discussion were the original data gathering method used to unveil the emergent theory, which occurred in three stages. The interviews were carefully designed to uncover underlying cognitive processes relevant to the research title and the characteristics of the research environment. The cognitive process underlined for the initial stage of building the interview and survey questionnaire covered perceptions of education, the impact on the learning process for girls, social and cultural influence on the lives of schoolgirls after school closures, emotional influence, the change of social norms, coping mechanisms, and dreams and hopes for their future. The survey included both open-ended and closed- ended questions, leading to collecting a vast majority of data that supported and enhanced the emergent theory. The interview and group discussion were structured based on open-ended questions that stressed understanding "why and what" above measurable features like how much or how many (Miles & Gilbert, 2005, p. 66), creating a conversational environment in which participants could freely express their insights.

The whole data collection process for interviews and group discussion took place virtually through safely secured online platforms mostly Zoom and WhatsApp audio and video calls. WhatsApp was used as an alternative option for cases where respondents were not able to join Zoom meetings due to technical issues. One interview was conducted through WhatsApp chat to ensure safe environment for the respondent to express her thoughts and experiences. Participants

were given space to ask questions regarding the research process, data security measures and identity safety to whom reasonable answers were provided before and during the meetings.

The opening interview questions were intended to begin off the interview process, drawing on the aspects of the research's abstract wonderment. These questions were purposefully created to be general and broad to spark discussions on themes that may not be immediately obvious. This method helped to reduce the effect of the researcher's prior beliefs or bias, enabling the emerging evidence to guide the discussion. Starting with open-ended questions, the interviews attempted to elicit varied viewpoints and insights, resulting in a deep and comprehensive study of the research issue.

Stage 1: interviews	Initial Interview Questions
The basis for these questions were an abstract wonderment on the topic	What was your first reaction when the schools got closed? what were you thinking then about this matter? What was your parent's reaction to the school closures when the Taliban took over? How did the school closures influence your short-term and long-term goals? What challenges do you face when you want to interact with people after the school closures? What do you do when you find yourself sad or unhappy?

Table 2: Initial interview question types

Interview questions were later refined, reduced, and evaluated to capture the most prominent aspects of the consequences of the school closures, where each answer could add to the propositions of the theory.

Stage 2: interviews	Initial Interview Questions
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<p>Questions were reduced and evaluated for more narrower focus on the emergence theory properties.</p>	<p>How do you feel about the school closures, and how do you deal with them?</p> <p>Have you noticed any changes in your family's thoughts or actions since the schools closed?</p> <p>Have you noticed people talking differently about girls' education since the schools closed?</p> <p>What's been the hardest part about not being able to go to school for the past two years and this year continuously?</p> <p>What dreams or goals do you have for the future?</p> <p>Have you noticed schoolgirls getting married or engaged since the schools closed?</p> <p>How do you think the lost two years would be amended for the schoolgirls?</p>
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Table 3: Refined interview questions.

The survey questions were mostly skewed towards the most obvious consequences of school closures through literature. Schoolgirls marriage rate, incidents of domestic violence, mental and emotional well-being and experiences of social exclusion were mostly focused on through questions to let the researcher measure these variables as a direct consequence of the school closures as a common knowledge. The survey questions added a substantial amount of

valuable data that supports or extends the core categories while emerging. Later, these questions were dropped in the interviews and group discussion to eliminate the intrusion of bias in the data.

4.4 Data Analysis: the data coding

This section summarizes the data analysis and development process that formed this thesis, demonstrating the conceptual progression that resulted in the emergence of the theory.

4.4.1 Open coding process.

As the initial stage of interviews came to an end, the researcher faced the daunting task of using grounded theory as a framework for data analysis. While the steps and mechanisms of grounded theory were well-defined and known, the shift from basic data description to a deeper level of conceptualization was a substantial challenge. The fundamental impediment that arose was the necessity to raise the obtained data from a plain description to a level of conceptualization that could articulate the true meaning of the data for the underlying social phenomenon. As stressed by Glaser (1998) and explained in Chapter 3, prioritizing conceptualization is critical for efficiently interpreting emergent data. However, the researcher had a hard assignment, as the initial round of interviews yielded multiple pages of transcriptions and memos. This plethora of data created a sense of "impatience" as the researcher attempted to quickly find any underlying patterns hidden within the data. The aim was to identify relevant patterns and insights that could serve as a foundation for future data analysis. The initial codes were applied manually to each response and gathered into one document for the theoretical coding process.

Line by line coding	Open Coding	
	Manual Coding	Analytical Codes

...my family's thoughts and behavior have not changed much, they are supportive...	No change in behavior	Supportive family
...I was so disappointed that, until now...	Disappointment	Emotional distress
I have not been able to regain the hope...	Loss of hope	Despair
... We have no role in the society...	Marginalized from the society	Socially excluded
... my classmates, whose family forced her to marry a guy...	Family forced marriage	Unsupportive family

Table 4: Open Coding Process Example

The researcher embraced as many codes as they emerged during the open coding process to maintain the theoretical sensitivity and stay unbiased towards the collected data. This was yet another challenge because, despite having numerous codes, they seemed to have less connection or, at some point, contradicted each other. For instance, the codes “supportive family” and “unsupportive family” contradicted each other, while the codes regarding “forced marriage” and “marriage as an alternative option” created a sense of confusion for the researcher in understanding the base root of the matter. Despite having doubts, the researcher continued to code each line with extreme consciousness, underscoring the main three questions by Glaser (1978) to guide the coding process on a continual basis.

- What is the essence of the data being studied?
- What category does this incident suggest?
- What exactly is occurring with the data?

As the research topic was easily understandable and relatable to the researcher's personal experience and family situation, extreme measures were taken to include the researcher's thoughts through memos and analyze the relationships and properties of each category.

Memo #8
<p>As we code the data, a recurring pattern emerges: "emotional distress.". This repeated code leads us to evaluate the enormous impact of school closures on girls' emotional well-being, notably in terms of familial support, lost opportunities, and early marriage.</p> <p>It appears that emotional distress comes from a variety of sources, with family relationships playing an important role. However, participants who receive substantial amounts of support from their families, such as “giving hope for their future” and “having agency,” still express a feeling of emotional distress that underscores other factors having an impact on girls’ emotional status. These other factors might be related to other codes emerging from the data, such as “loss and change of goals” and “drastic change in life routine,” “social exclusion,” and “intimidation and coercion tactics.”</p> <p>The survey responses also indicate a high level of “emotional distress,” “feeling sad,” and “feeling depressed,” which further signifies this code as being important in theory emergence.</p>

Table 5: Memo Highlighting Emotional Distress as an Emerging Code

When it came to data analysis, the researcher discovered that memos were useful. These memos served as guideposts, taking the researcher beyond the surface of the data to investigate relationships between instances. Frequently, the codes within the data were not immediately

obvious, posing a substantial challenge. It seemed like chasing elusive patterns that were always just out of reach, which became frustrating. Throughout this process, the researcher realized that grounded theory analysis is not a straight series of steps, but rather a meandering trip that necessitates perseverance and constant improvement. As open coding progressed, the researcher developed a strong respect for the actual application of grounded theory. It was clear that, while theoretical comprehension lays the basis, real understanding derives from hands-on experience and, more crucially, patience.

Throughout the open coding stage, the manual codes were identified and developed into a higher abstraction of analytical codes. These codes created the foundation from which the theory would later evolve.

4.4.2 Selective coding process.

In this grounded theory analysis of the educational and societal consequences of school closures for Afghan females following the Taliban's comeback, through selective coding, an emerging core category was discovered through the initial coding process: "alternative educational options." This category included other physical and online educational opportunities for girls inside and outside the country. The category was very repetitive and apparent during the first set of initial coding in interviews and surveys. As the researcher conducted selective coding, difficulties were encountered in logically combining the fundamental category of "alternative educational options" with the central phenomenon of the consequences of school closures for girls of secondary school. This was a substantial difficulty, especially given that there were no obvious flaws in the approach employed to analyze the data. To address this issue, the researcher spent two weeks reviewing the principles of the coding process and theoretical sampling, allowing the data

to drive the research direction. The researcher recognized that if the emergence of this core category was correct, it was critical to accept it, despite the practical obstacles it brought.

<p>Memo # 7</p> <p>The main concern for the girls seems to be their inability to get educated in other ways than school. Girls expressed more attention to physical learning centers (English, painting, and computer learning centers) while having “fear of security,” “intimidation and coercion tactics of the Taliban,” and “clothing and attire.”. Students studying in online schools are facing “weak internet connectivity” and “high internet prices” to be the major barriers to their education. Though a substantial number of girls mentioned joining physical or online studies, the statistics make them only half of the students participating in this study. This major factor does not allow this core category, “alternative educational options,” to be perceived as a selective concept.</p> <p>After a thorough analysis of what most of the participants have to say around this topic, the “alternative educational options” lack proper justification to be considered as the main consequence girls face after school closures. In fact, the type of alternative option that students preferred the most was in-person schooling inside or outside the country.</p> <p>Therefore, the mentioned category does not represent the core category and can be refined under the “showing resistance” category to maintain the comprehensiveness of the selections for all the participants.</p>

Table 6: Conceptualizing process

The memo notes that, while a core category of “alternative educational options” was initially identified during the open coding phase, selective coding revealed that it did not effectively represent the main phenomena and emergent data patterns, prompting change.

Although this category had relations to many variables such as emotional-distress, communication-absent, fear of security open codes, it failed to adequately depict the underlying phenomenon at higher levels of abstraction.

Diving further into the analytical codes, categories were created for some having above 100+ codes, such as “marriage as an alternative option for girl’s future” and “Emotional distress and psychological impacts”. The 22 categories were further refined and reduced to five general core categories, which cover almost all the categories or indicate cause-and-effect relationships among them. The five core categories include “emotional distress and psychological impacts,” “family dynamics (supportive/ non-supportive),” “social impacts,” “a lack of autonomy over life decisions,” and “resisting the change.” The core categories paved the way for the researcher to start selective coding.

Memo #10
<p>So far, the available codes have been divided into five main categories. What remains is to organize selective codes around the preliminary topic of this research as the subsequent consequences of school closures.</p> <p>Maintaining the prominence of the core category in coding is critical to ensuring its relevance to the research challenge and central phenomena. Subcategories could be a useful method for consolidating codes and categories. It is recommended to continuously emphasize educational and social consequences and avoid irrelevant tangents that deviate from the study problem, such as “increased poverty,” which is deemed to have economic consequences for the study matter. *This point is critical! The goal is to achieve a higher level of abstraction.</p>

Table 7: Understanding Abstract Concepts Through Reflexivity

Four main selective codes were then decided for the five major core codes, which have been explained in Figure (). Each selective code was then analyzed to be in accordance with the educational and social consequences, maintaining the relatability of the selective concepts with the subject matter of this research.

Adaptive coping mechanisms efficiently caught and linked many variables and emergent concepts in the research setting. It was situational and context-specific, as evidenced by its function in the data's sequence of events, as well as historical sources studied using both inductive and deductive techniques.

The core phenomena “social and educational consequences of school closures” have emerged through four major concepts: emotional distress, family, social exclusion, and resilience. These notions effectively capture the thoughts and patterns that emerge from the acquired data. They not only highlight the underlying phenomenon, but also build links between the numerous codes and the five categories. They work together to create an interconnected framework that elucidates the main phenomenon and improves the overall coherence of the dataset. Achieving a higher level of saturation and abstraction through incident conceptualization was critical for effective future substantive theory building.

The theory emerged only when the emergent categories were further abstracted, resulting in four peripheral notions as represented in through selective coding.

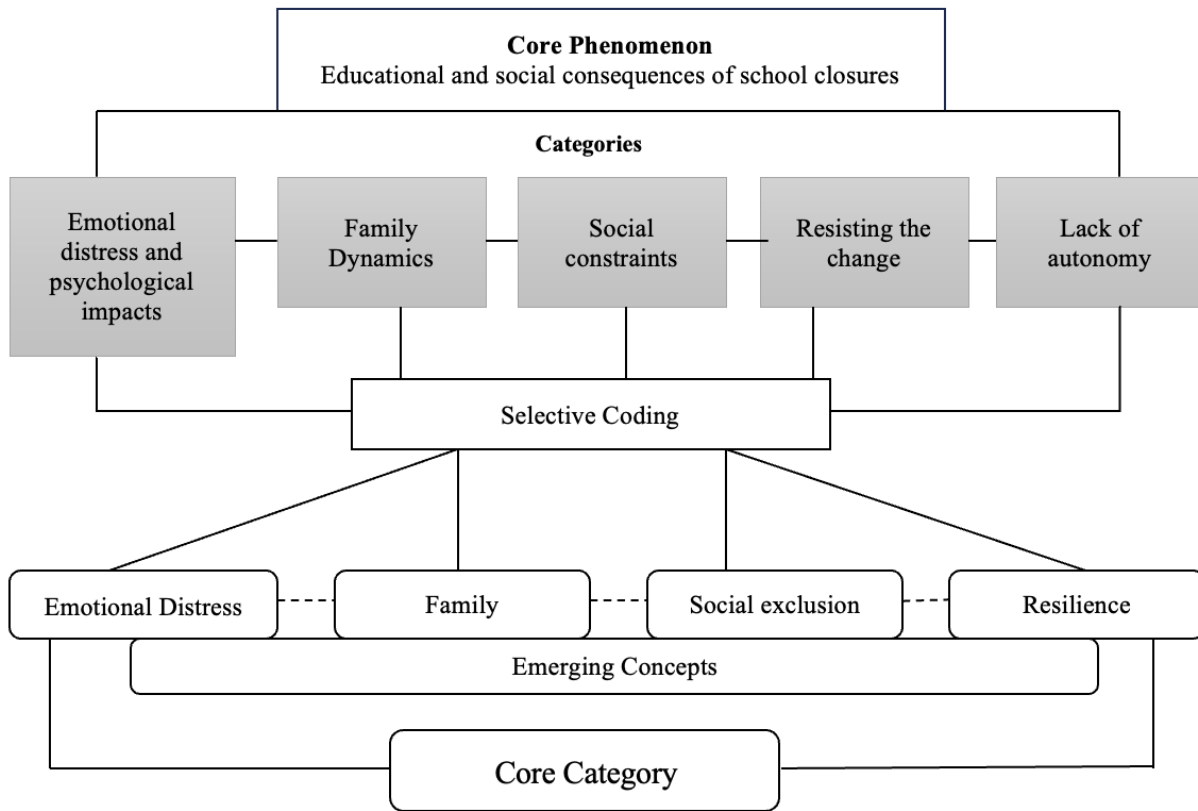


Figure 4: selective coding with concept emergence.

i. emotional distress is considered a central consequence and an inseparable aspect of the school closures. Most of the open codes relied on this concept, making it apparent that students tend to have emotional distress. This concept is important, and its importance became more visible as data relating to family, social exclusion, and resilience materialized.

ii. Family arose because of familial views and behaviors towards the closing of schools for their daughters. Families implied different coping mechanisms that were crucial aspects of their daughter's future. This coping mechanism states positive and negative behaviors towards their daughters, which are discussed in Chapter 5. The family concept was heavily related to the social exclusion concept.

iii. Social exclusion was considered an abstraction of social norms, ideas, and behaviors towards school closures. Like family, this concept examines and represents the different types of ideas and behaviors societies hold towards girls' education and schooling.

iv. Resilience emerged as a notable concept for examining the coping mechanisms of schoolgirls, families, and society.

When theoretical saturation was reached, the selective coding process was declared complete because new data would add little or no value. Each of the mentioned concepts is discussed in Chapter 5, giving explicit measures and examples for each, and explaining the relationship between them.

4.4.3 Theoretical coding process.

Theoretical coding is the culmination of the coding and data analysis processes mentioned in this thesis, and it begins once the emerging categories are saturated. Saturation occurs when data collection produces only previously known claims (Selden, 2005, p. 124). As discussed in Chapter 3, theoretical coding requires identifying conceptual linkages between saturated categories and aligning them with the existing literature. Though the literature for this specific topic is limited, a minimal alignment was possible. This approach tries to elevate hypotheses or propositions to a higher degree of abstraction for incorporation into emergent theory, hence moving research toward a theoretical framework (Glaser & Holton, 2004). According to Glaser (1978, p. 72), theoretical codes offer a broad breadth, new viewpoints, and novel insights into established categories and literature. According to Glaser (1978), the list of coding families he supplied is not exhaustive or definitive. Instead, researchers should investigate theoretical codes in all types of data, including external literature.

One of the main objectives of the data analysis was to discover a pattern that emerged from the data, which would then inform the construction of a theory relevant to the educational and social consequences of school closures. This goal was met by identifying a core category upon which the theory was based. A core category is considered a fundamental social process (BSP) if it accommodates for data variances and incorporates all emergent categories (Glaser, 1978). As described in Chapter 3, Glaser (1978, p.99) defines a BSP as a method that enables researchers to "track changes over time while maintaining a grasp of the overall theoretical process." A BSP may not always exist, however, once established, a BSP can be classified as a social psychological process (BSPP), which investigates individual behaviors connected to the core phenomena, or a social structural process (BSSP), which explores larger social structures associated with the core phenomena (Glaser, 1978).

The core category of “adaptive coping mechanisms,” which was considered to be the BSP, is seen to be the BSPP, which defines the broad cultivated coping strategies towards school closures after the resurgence of the Taliban.

The process of discovering conceptual interactions among the saturated categories resulted in numerous noteworthy relationships, which aided in the construction of the propositions presented in Chapter 5. depicts a selection of the most important relationships and their evolution, using Glaser's (1978, 1998) coding families.

Categories	Theoretical coding		Applied coding families, Glaser (1978, 1998)
Phenomenon: consequences of school closures for girls			
Emotional Distress	Family	Familial support system indicating	“Interaction” (Glaser,1978) "Family Processes" or "Psychosocial Adaptation"

		interpersonal dynamics	coding families (Glaser, 1998)
Family	Social exclusion	The process of social support network around school closures	"Social Processes" (Glaser, 1978) "Social Integration" (Glaser, 1998)
Emotional distress	Social exclusion	The process of marginalization driving to psychologically distressed girls	"Social Processes" (Glaser, 1978) "Educational inequity" (Glaser, 1998)
Social exclusion	Resilience	Adversity coping mechanism	"Adaptation Processes" or "Resilience Strategies" (Glaser, 1998)
Social exclusion	Lack of autonomy	Marginalization based on gender	"Power Dynamics" (Glaser, 1978)
Resilience	Emotional distress	Adversity coping strategy	"Resilience Strategies" (Glaser, 1998)
Lack of autonomy	Emotional distress	Two-way process	"Power Dynamics" (Glaser, 1978)

Table 8: Exploring Relationship Dynamics: Glaser's Theoretical Coding Families

Chapter Five

Research Findings, Unpacking the Emergent Theory

This section describes the research findings and results, unpacking the theory emerged from the data. Despite presenting as a linear outline, the actual process was iterative and cyclical, consistent with the iterative nature of grounded theory methodologies.

This chapter discusses the thesis' conclusions based on the data analysis and coding methodologies used. It consolidates data codes and trends related to the consequences of school closures. It clarifies the current situation in the research domain and combines the emerging codes and categories from Chapter 4 to provide a coherent theoretical framework that explains what, how, and why of existing decision-making inefficiencies. Central to this framework are the core category of “adaptive coping mechanisms” and the core phenomenon of "educational and social consequences of school closures," as well as corresponding peripheral concepts, emotional distress, family, social exclusion, and resilience drawn from data. These aspects are the core pillars of the emergent theory.

5.1 Data analysis results

In this section, the core category of “adaptive coping mechanisms” and the peripheral concepts of emotional distress, family, social exclusion, and resilience are presented, along with how their emergence defines the theory. Bits of literature are also added to the results section as per the grounded theory principles.

The theory is offered in the form of a model and propositions that summarize the key activities and attributes.

5.2 The core category of Adaptive coping mechanisms

Adaptive coping strategies emerged as a prominent and relevant category among the collected data, respectfully addressing data variances and putting insight on the observed social phenomenon. While the analysis might have concentrated merely on "coping mechanisms as a key category, the concept of adaptive coping mechanisms better captured the strong bias toward specific variables that denote the educational and social consequence of school closures rather than a vague coping mechanism phenomenon.

The core category emerged as a ambiguous category among several variables as a non-direct phenomenon and required the researcher's decision making to extract its significance from the empirical data. Adaptive coping mechanisms is apparent through various strategies the participants, participant's family and the society they are living within. The adaptive coping mechanisms schoolgirls employed after the school closures reflect their situation and what the participants were going through in the time of the data collection.

The type of coping strategies for the participants varied in terms of their emotional status, the family support they were receiving and the social network they had. These coping mechanisms were also critical to the resilience strategies they employed to baffle the decisions made by the current government policies in terms of school closures.

The first set of coping strategies is influenced by their emotional status. The emotional status of the participants was divided into two parts, the "initial shock and disbelief," right after the school closures, and "feeling lost," after two years of school closures. The coping strategies that most participants mentioned during the initial phase of emotional status was that they were "waiting for the schools to open soon" which changed to "crying, getting busy with housework and searching for alternative educational opportunities."

Family support has a substantial impact on Afghan girls' "adaptive coping mechanisms" following school closures. Participants from supportive homes depended on family assistance and encouragement to deal with their emotional state. Most of these participants demonstrated a stability in their behavior, they actively sought out other educational possibilities, such as "joining educational centers, painting, reading, exercising." Those from non-supportive families, on the other hand, had little coping resources, felt more vulnerable, and resorted to negative coping mechanisms such as "crying, sleeping all the time, studying but not learning". This emphasizes the importance of familial bonds in mitigating the effects of crises and cultivating resilience among Afghan girls.

Exploring the relationship between "adaptive coping strategies" and "social exclusion" among Afghan girls after school closures reveals that coping mechanisms are inextricably linked to experiences of social marginalization. Participants who felt socially excluded frequently used adaptive coping techniques to navigate their feelings of isolation and alienation from social networks. During the early phase of school closures, many girls described a sense of "waiting for the schools to open soon," implying a positive expectation of reintegration into scholastic and social settings. However, as time passed without access to formal education, emotions of being "lost" were more common, prompting coping mechanisms such as taking consolation in household activities and actively seeking alternative educational options. These adaptive behaviors acted as both a way to manage mental pain and a form of resistance to the social marginalization caused by school closures. Furthermore, the efficiency of these coping techniques was heavily influenced by the level of support received from family and community networks. Girls with supportive networks were frequently better prepared to face social exclusion, drawing strength from familial and communal relationships to continue their schooling and social engagement. Those without such

support structures, on the other hand, had a more difficult time navigating social exclusion, with coping techniques frequently centered on individual efforts to cope with emotions of abandonment and marginalization. Thus, the link between adaptive coping mechanisms and social exclusion highlights the complex interrelation between individual resilience, social support networks, and systemic barriers to inclusion that Afghan girls confront following school closures. Thus, the link between adaptive coping mechanisms and social exclusion highlights the complex interrelation between individual resilience, social support networks, and systemic barriers to inclusion that Afghan girls confront following school closures.

The key category of "adaptive coping mechanisms" among Afghan girls following school closures is inextricably linked with the concept of "resilience." Throughout the study, it became clear that adaptive coping techniques are critical components of resilience, allowing girls to navigate and overcome the challenges presented by school closures. Participants who demonstrated resilience took a proactive approach to dealing with adversity, actively exploring other educational possibilities, and performing home activities to preserve a sense of agency and purpose. As one of the participants said "I made a promise to myself last year that I should display my artworks in the next painting exhibition and this year I was able to proudly display my artworks and I am happy about it. I am trying to convey my voice to the society and the world with the same paintings that I am painting each week." Painting, learning English Language and opening virtual shops was the most obvious options that let enabled the girls to not wait for anyone else and take the matters on their own hands. These adaptive reactions not only helped females cope with emotional discomfort, but also gave them the strength to continue in the face of uncertainty and social rejection. Furthermore, the presence of supportive familial and community networks was critical in promoting resilience among participants, providing them with the resources and

encouragement they needed to face and adapt to the disruptions produced by school closures. Thus, the link between adaptive coping mechanisms and resilience emphasizes the dynamic interaction of human agency, social support, and the ability to survive in the face of adversity.

5.3 The concept of emotional distress

Moscoso et al. (2000) describe emotional distress as sentiments of worry, anger, despair, and demoralization, distinguishing between the expression and suppression of furious emotions. Emotional distress refers to a range of psychological and emotional experiences that occur in response to bad situations or pressures, such as those faced by Afghan girls following school closures due to the Taliban's resurgence. At its heart, emotional distress is defined as a severe sensation of psychological disquiet accompanied by feelings of anxiety, grief, dread, or despair. This sadness is often caused by the disruption of personal and educational ambitions, as girls are forced to confront the loss of possibilities for growth, education, and self-actualization that formal schooling provides.

I feel sad and stressed after the school closures.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	3	4.4
	disagree	1	1.5
	neutral	2	2.9
	agree	17	25.0
	strongly agree	45	66.2
Total		68	100.0

Table 9: feeling stressed after the school closures.

Survey data reveals that majority of the students' feelings are aligned with the interview and group discussion data showing that school closures have caused severe stress and sadness for the students of grade 7 to 12. It's worth mentioning that higher grade students experienced much more stress than lower grades.

School closures have far-reaching psychological consequences that affect every area of girls' lives and identities, in addition to the acute disruption of academic endeavors. The loss of academic and career goals and the rapid change in future paths have caused a significant sense of grief and confusion in girls as they deal with the uncertainties of their circumstances and the destruction of their hopes and dreams. These changes impacted both short and long-term goals for almost all the participants that joined the study.

Emotional distress and future dreams		
Number of times students expressed emotional distress signs regarding future		
1	Fearing for future	10
2	Concerned about future	19
3	Lost dreams	21

Table 10: Emotional distress and future dreams

Furthermore, a lack of proper mental health assistance has exacerbated these emotional issues, leaving girls feeling alone, overwhelmed, and unprepared to deal with the challenges they confront.

According to the empirical data praying helps students when they tend to feel stressed or unhappy.

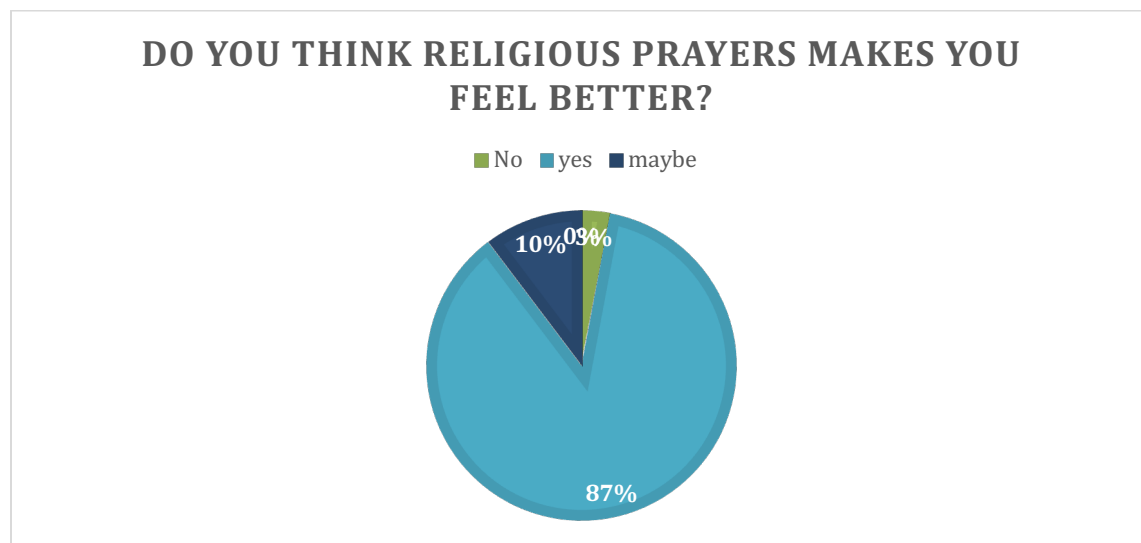


Figure 5: Prayer as a positive coping mechanism.

According to the empirical data, participants mentioned the following explicit coping strategies they are using to cope with the feeling of sadness. These strategies are divided into two parts of positive and negative ones. Positive coping strategies encompassed wider range between the girls and after analyzing the reasons supportive familial environments had the most effect on adopting them.

A comparison of healthy and unhealthy coping strategies among participants:

Healthy Strategies	No. participants mentioned	Percentages
Reading books	21	16%
Listening to music	9	7%
Watching movies	4	3%
Painting	3	2%
Sleeping	8	6%
Exercise	5	4%
Talking with family	5	4%
Talking to a friend	5	4%
Doing chores	3	2%
Praying and reading Quran	8	6%
Journaling	2	2%
Thinking about the good times	2	2%
Sum	75	59%

Table 11: Positive healthy coping strategies when feeling sad or unhappy.

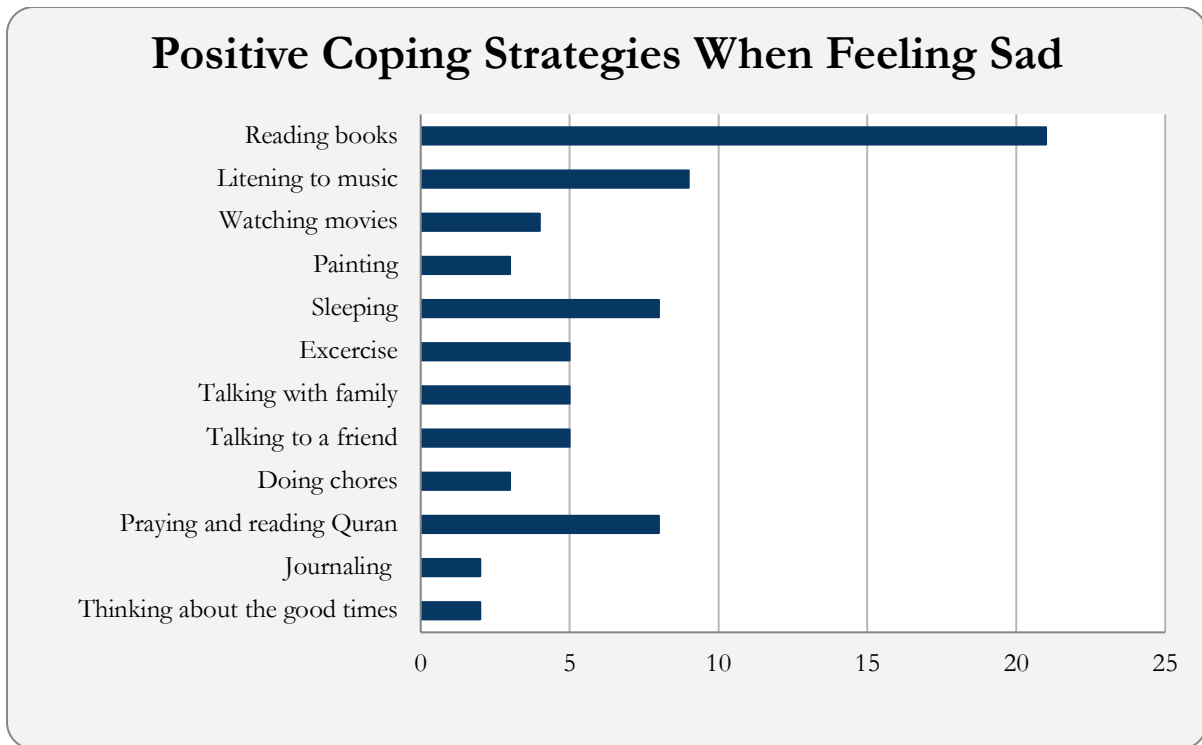


Figure 6: Positive and healthy coping strategies when feeling sad or unhappy.

16 percent of the survey participants and majority of the interview and group discussion participants mentioned that “reading books” made them “calm”, “gives them hope”, and “takes them away from their problems.” “Listening to music” and “doing house chores” as a form of coping strategy was also mentioned plenty of times during the interviews and group discussion to keep them busy and learn housing skills. The survey results, however, showed a different result regarding the hours school students spend on house chores and their level of satisfaction.

How many hours did you spend on house chores before the school closures?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	less than an hour	8	11.8
	1 to 2 hours	17	25.0
	2 to 4 hours	27	39.7
	4 to 6 hours	8	11.8
	more than 6 hours	8	11.8
Total		68	100.0

Table 12: hours spent on housework before school closures.

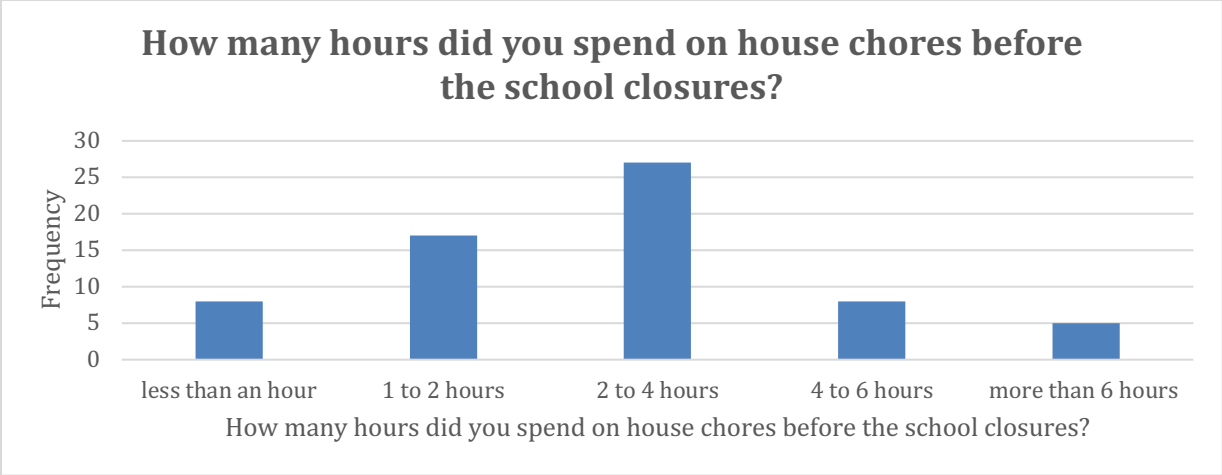


Figure 7: Hours spent on housework before school closures.

Hours spent on housework after school closures.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	less than an hour	6	8.8
	1 to 2 hours	7	10.3
	2 to 4 hours	10	14.7
	4 to 6 hours	17	25.0
	more than 6 hours	28	41.2
Total		68	100.0

Table 13: Hours spent on housework after school closures.

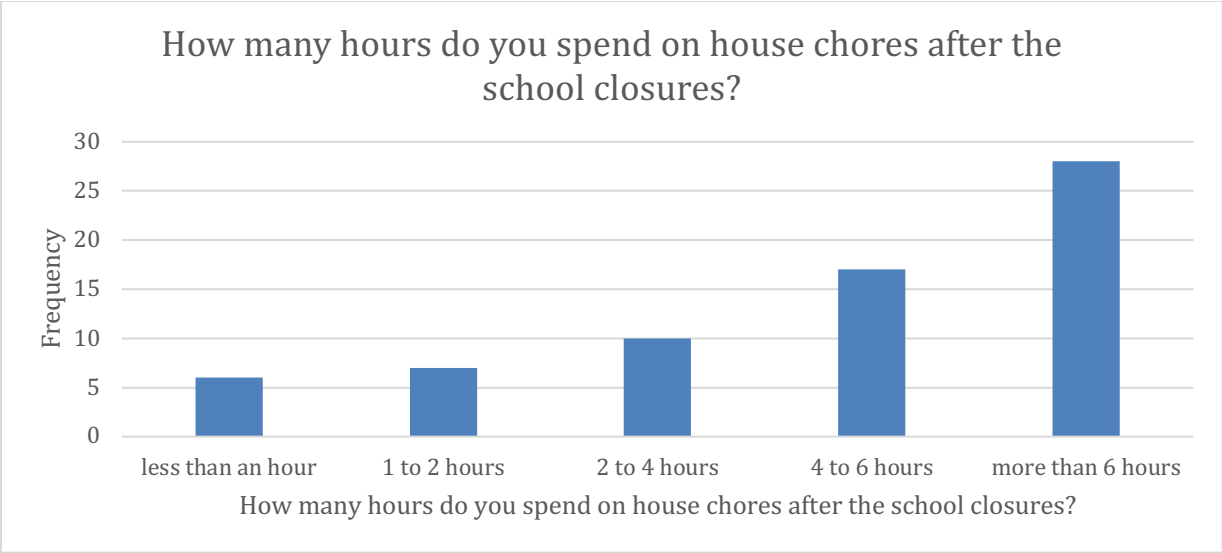


Figure 8: hours spent on housework after the school closures.

I am satisfied with the amount of time I spend on the house chores.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	13	19.1
	disagree	21	30.9
	neutral	11	16.2
	agree	18	26.5
	strongly agree	5	7.4
Total		68	100.0

Table 14: level of satisfaction with doing housework.

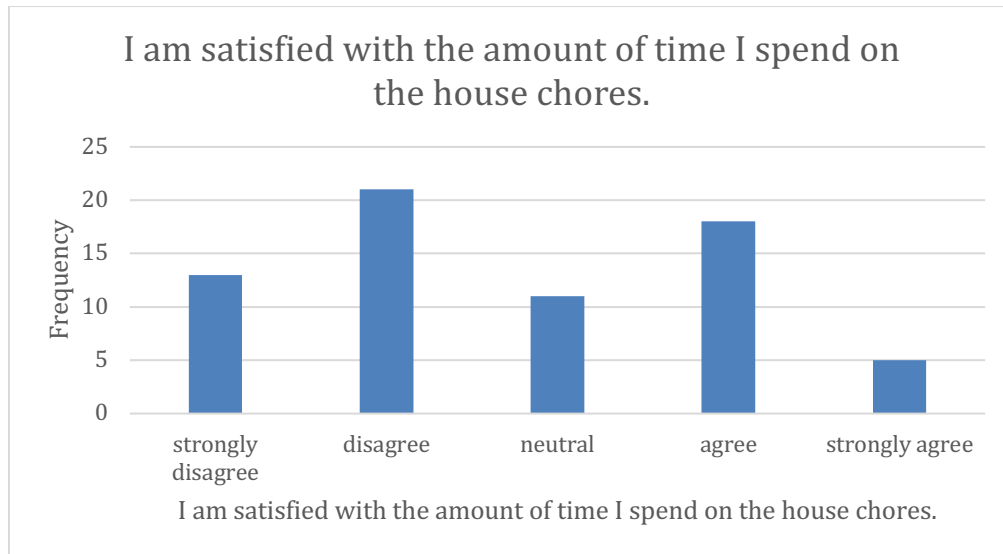


Figure 9: level of satisfaction with doing housework.

As a result, as the researcher wanted to uncover the reason behind this drastic difference between the participants willing to do house chores to keep one-self busy and those expressed dissatisfaction with it. After a thorough analysis, it was revealed that participants with supportive and encouraging families saw housework as a time pass activity while those who were forced to do more housework due to being idle at home expressed dissatisfaction about how their valuable time is being wasted on unnecessary and continuous work life. And the later showed more emotional distress and sadness making majority of those who acquire the negative coping strategies.

Unhealthy strategies	Frequencies	Percentage
Staying alone	14	11%
Becoming silent	12	9%
Nail biting	1	1%
Playing with cloths	1	1%
Breaking things	1	1%
Tearing books	1	1%
Binge Eating	2	2%
Getting in a fight	2	2%
Crying	12	9%
Self-harm	1	1%
Using social media	2	2%
hide my emotions	4	3%
Sum	47	41%

Table 15: Unhealthy coping strategies employed by school students.

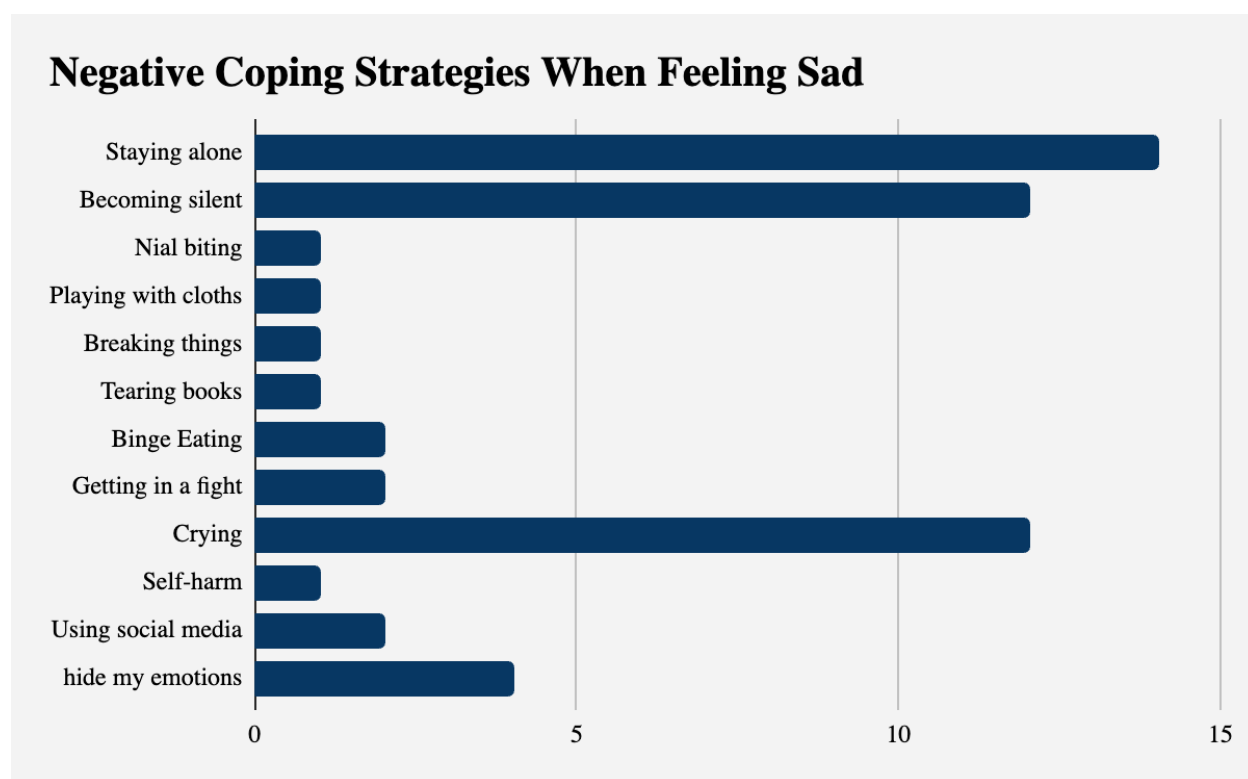


Figure 10: Negative coping strategies of respondents when feeling sad or unhappy.

Student continuously mentioned things they liked about school and how lack of those opportunities makes them miss school even more. Most of the students appreciated their time studying at school which is the most unlavish thing to ask for in today’s modern governments. These girls yearn for spending time at school with their classmates, friends and communicating with them. Girls also expressed their wish for the sense of freedom and clear goals they had while going to school. While almost all participants did not mention a single thing that they disliked about school, only few talked about the hard times they had at school because of having unprofessional teachers, lack of resources and fear of harm.

<i>Things students liked about school (open-ended questions codes)</i>	No. of times mentioned
studying at school	23
Spending time at school	13
Being happy and having fun	8
Communicating with friends	41
Being active and confident	9
Joining sports teams	2
Spending time with friends	41
meeting and talking to teachers	8
Better teaching/learning quality	3
Sense of Freedom	13
Having Clear Goals	12
Being mentally healthy	7
Learning life experiences	7
Discussing future career goals	6
finding new friends	7
Learning about social and human rights	1
Group works	8
Cultural programs	2

Table 16: Important things students liked about school that makes them miss spending time in school.

Things students disliked about school	No. of times mentioned
Lack of resources at school	1
Unprofessional Teachers	4

Fear of harm	1
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Table 17: Important things students disliked about schools.

The Negative experiences girls witnessed after the school closures between their family, society, and relatives.

Negative experiences	No. instances mentioned	Percentages
Stressed and depressed	17	14%
Negative Change in Behavior	7	6%
Unemployment and increased poverty	8	7%
Verbal abuse	13	11%
low self esteem	7	6%
Forced marriages	16	14%
Not valuing schoolgirls	8	7%
lack family attention	10	8%
Pessimist Society	6	5%
Worried about future	9	8%
immigrations breaking social bonding	2	2%
No motivation for study	7	6%
Being called Illiterates	6	5%
Increased Family restrictions	2	2%
Sum	118	100%

Table 18: The negative experiences of girls after the school closures among family, society, and friends.

The extent of which some of the girls expressed their experiences of negative behaviors towards them is upsetting as Halima (given name) one of the survey participants said “No one pays attention to me. They tell me that I am illiterate, I am not valued in society, and when I see and hear these things, I get very upset.” or as Khatera says “Some of my relatives are unbearable, they say that if a girl can't study, she should get married and stay at home. They say, girls do not have the right to study, work outside and be active in sports. I used to go boxing and cycling in the club. After the schools were closed, they were my only entertainment, but unfortunately, we got deprived of sports. I always hear negative words from my friends and relatives.”

Girls attending learning centers outside the expressed concern and getting mentally distressed by the interference of the Taliban militant in their classes.

In essence, emotional distress is a widespread and strongly felt consequence of school closures among Afghan girls, penetrating their lives and impacting their psychological well-being. By identifying and addressing the diverse nature of emotional distress, organizations can gain a greater understanding of the nuances of girls' experiences and strive to create treatments and support systems that promote resilience, healing, and overall well-being in the face of adversity.

5.4 The concept of Family (dynamics)

This concept uniquely focuses on whether the family's behavior towards their daughter is supportive or not. This factor impacts both their emotional state and their coping mechanism towards stress they are experiencing due to school closures.

Supportive families encourage their daughters to have hope and patience and wait for the schools to open as one of participants mentions; "My parents always encouraged us to study and when the schools were closed, my parents always gave me hope that the Taliban would not last forever and that the schools would be reopen, but we have a neighbor who was my classmate and after the school closure she got married at the age of 18." After a thorough analysis of the interview and group discussion data, it was revealed that supportive families are more worried of their daughter future and mental health state as Tahmina says "my father is really worried about me, he always plays with me and says fanny jokes to make me laugh. It is because he wants me to not remember that my school is closed...". Families has found themselves struggling to keep their daughters happy taking them to relatives' houses and encouraging them to go outside the house to get a fresh air.

The shock of school closures made supportive families frightened as most people compared the status of the schoolgirls to the status of themselves during the first regime of the Taliban. “The day the Taliban came, my father was on duty and my mother was at home, we thought that there was no blood left in her body. She was pale white in fear that she did not allow any of us to go out and wanted to protect us at all means possible. She was very frightened...”. Supportive families tend to appreciate their daughters help in housework while letting them to choose whether they want to do housework or not. This has created a better family bonding for these girls giving them a sense of purpose in life. As some of the participants mentioned their parents’ behavior improve towards them as the school got closed. “Spending a lot of time with family” as one of the students pointed, “my family always reassures me to continue my studies as long as I can” are the positive outcomes students mentioned happening after the school closure.

Supportive families have shown a strong dedication towards helping their daughters go to learning centers or admitting them to online education platforms and providing their materials despite the current increasing poverty rate in the country.

Through analysis of the interview scripts, open codes and categories unsupportive families tend to acquire negative coping strategies towards their daughters. They get influenced by the social norms and the Taliban policies against women education and work expecting their daughters to stay at home, do housework, or get married in so many mentioned cases. Adela one of the participants from southern part of the country express her extreme concern regarding schoolgirls’ living status around her close relatives “In my uncle's family, all the sons in the family study, but their daughters are not allowed to go to school or study, and they don't even learn Quran (Islamic book), even though they are the same age as me they can read, because their mothers prefer their daughters to sit at home and learn the housework and my uncle gives her daughters to marriage

before they even become 18, I feel terrible for them...”. As is evident in the survey data majority of the schoolgirls with either supportive or non-supportive families feels unvalued in their house.

I feel unvalued around my family members after the school closures.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	12	17.6
	disagree	9	13.2
	neutral	14	20.6
	agree	20	29.4
	strongly agree	13	19.1
Total		68	100.0

Table 19: feeling unvalued around family members.

A quick review of the responses revealed that girls with supportive parents and strong familial bonding felt less unvalued than others.

Literate, loving and up to date families were more supportive of their daughters. This variable emerged during the interview coding process and was not initially considered to be recognized by the researcher. The more families cared for their daughters, the better they took care of them. As one of the participants mentions: “Because in our family, most people are literate, therefore, I did not see much difference in their behavior and they told us that studying should be the priority in our life and we support you, and they meant this every time with their words and prayers. My family worried about me more than they worried about my brothers...”.

Non-supportive families are glad schools are closed. As per most of the stories, participants brought from their relatives, neighbors or society, families who only sent their daughters to school because of social pressure not because they wanted their daughters to become literate. As Adela says “My family supports me in this process. But there are families who, in addition to not being sad about the closure of schools; They are so happy.” The social norms as the social perception

and attitude towards women’s education has been a predominant variable affecting Afghan families, mostly men to be unappreciative of their daughters to go to school or go outside the house as one of the participants said “Not only mine, but most men and women in our families don't like their daughters to go to school, mothers because they want their daughter to be at home and help with the housework, and fathers because they don't like their daughter to go out of the house. My older brothers don't want us as his sisters to go out because people will say that so-and-so's sister or daughter goes out of the house every day and is a black on family reputation.”

Some survey data that stood out to the researcher and supports the concept of supportive and non-supportive family is discussed below.

Girls expressed more safety at home with their mothers and brothers than they do with their fathers.

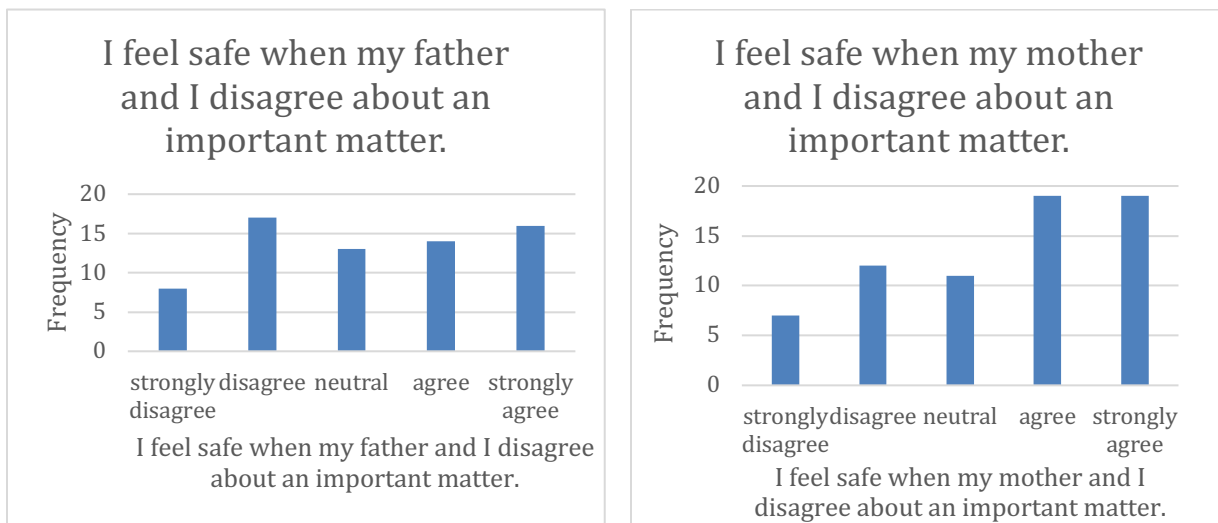


Figure 11: feeling safe while disagreeing with father.

Figure 12: feeling safe while disagreeing with mother.

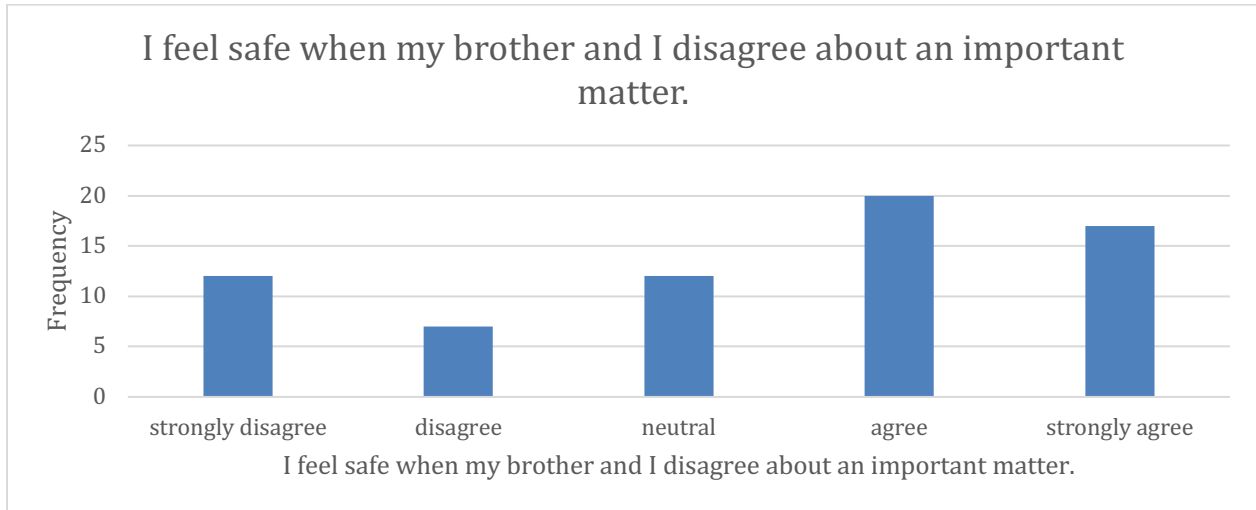


Figure 13: feeling safe while disagreeing with brother.

Majority of the survey participants expressed abusive behaviors coming from their parents. These abusive behaviors include pressure of completing tasks and getting disappointed if they don't even if their daughter is not willing to complete it. This as a serious issue makes families dominant over every decision of their daughters' lives. This also indicate how much the daughter is being appreciated in the house resulting in emotional distress for them.

My parents will be disappointed and angry if I do not complete what they told me to do.

	Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	1.5
strongly disagree	5	7.4
disagree	10	14.7
neutral	6	8.8
agree	34	50.0
strongly agree	12	17.6
Total	68	100.0

Table 20: parental disappointment for not completing a requested task.

I complete whatever task I have been given to from my family (father, mother, brothers, sisters), even if I do not like it.

	Frequency	Percent
Valid	14	20.6

disagree	14	20.6
neutral	7	10.3
agree	22	32.4
strongly agree	11	16.2
Total	68	100.0

Table 21: Completing a requested task while being disagree.

Despite having a drastic difference between the girl’s perspective of their rights inside the house almost half of the participants said that their parents are their sole decision maker in their lives and half other said they are the sole decision maker while stayed in between choosing neither.

An interesting level of balance can be seen between the participants who can easily express themselves among their family members, most importantly father and brothers.

I can honestly speak about my feelings and problems around my family members even my father and brothers.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	13	19.1
	disagree	15	22.1
	neutral	8	11.8
	agree	20	29.4
	strongly agree	12	17.6
Total		68	100.0

Table 22: Being open and expressive around family members.

Marriage in this thesis though being a very important emerging variable was decided to be included as a negative familial coping mechanisms to the school closures mostly affected by the social norms and orders. Almost all participants including interview, group discussion and survey agreed that marriages have increased exponentially after the school closures. Marriages are increasing as almost three years have passed since the schools got closed because girls are becoming of age the economic status of the families are deteriorating.

Do you think the number of marriages of school students has increased after the school closures?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No	4	5.9
	Yes	52	76.5
	Maybe	12	17.6
	Total	68	100.0

Table 23: Increase in number of marriages because of the school closures.

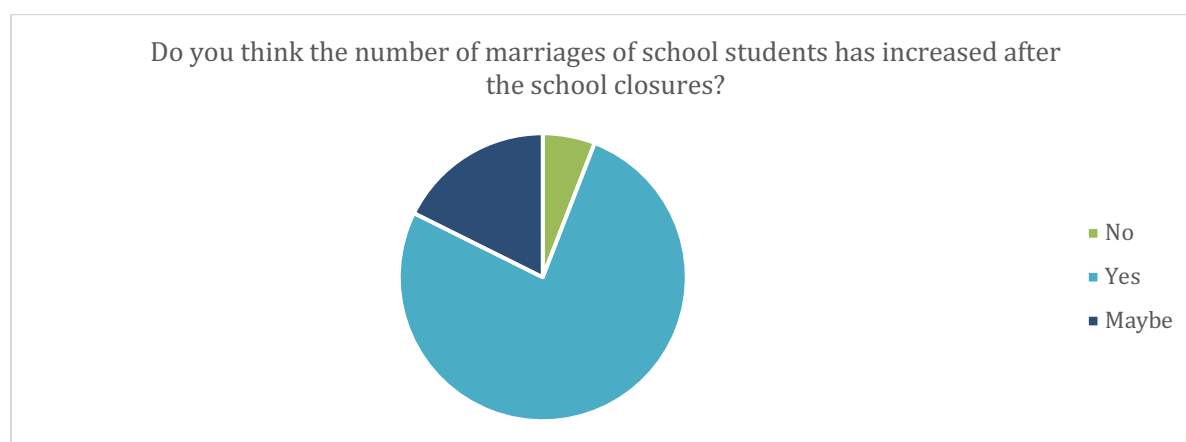


Figure 14: increase in number of marriages as a result of the school closures

Moreover, 72% of the survey participant and all the interviewees with group discussion members believes that marriage is not a good option for the school students. 94 percent of survey participants and all 100% of the interview and group discussion members believe that marriages should be prevented for school students.

I believe marriage is a good option for school students after the school closures.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	40	58.8
	disagree	9	13.2
	neutral	14	20.6
	agree	3	4.4
	strongly agree	2	2.9
Total		68	100.0

Table 24: marriage as an option for school students after the school closures

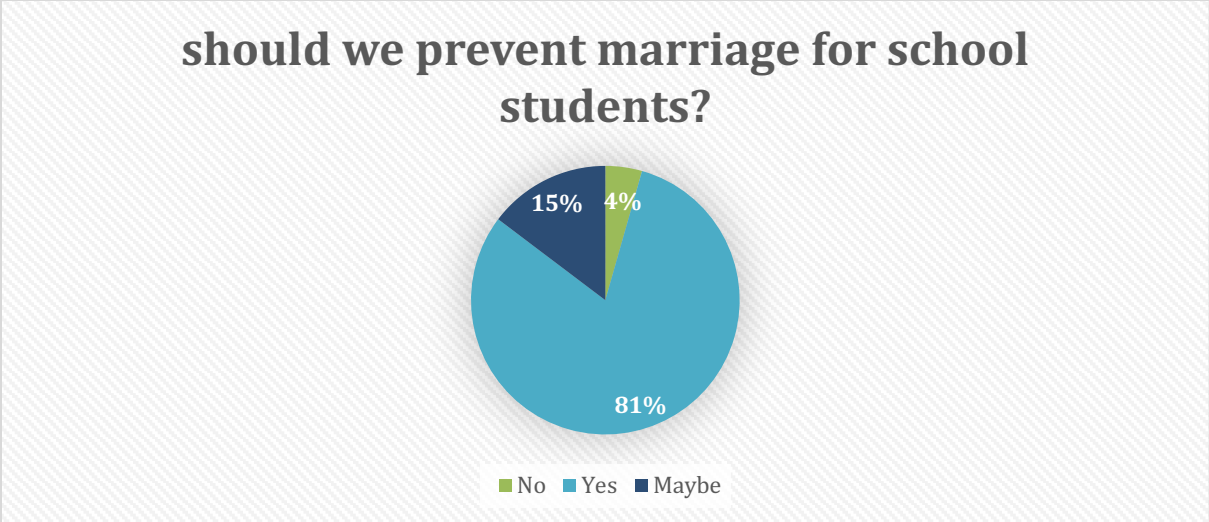


Figure 15: **Should marriages for school students be prevented?**

Marriages as a core coping mechanism for families to either protect their daughters or release their own burden is getting worse. Most families that feel marriage will save their daughters from being depressed and idle in the house mostly look for suitors from outside the country so that their daughter could leave the country and have the freedom of choice. Families wanting to protect their daughters from being taken by the Taliban militants are accepting marriage or forcing their daughters to marriage mostly in provinces other than the capital to keep their daughter away from harm. The latest of actions of the Taliban militants picking up girls from the streets because of their outfits (they claim that these girls are not dressed according to their ordered clothing policies) has awakened another layer of fear in families and girls further restricting them from going outside the house.

5.5 The concept of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a multidimensional notion that refers to the different elements that contribute to an individual or a group within a society feeling marginalized or detached. The subcategories emerging from the open and selective coding process provide a thorough overview

of the issues that has led to social isolation of the schoolgirls after the school closure. Isolation, limited communication, and shifts in society perceptions and attitudes can all impede meaningful social engagement and participation for the girls. Economic problems can compound this isolation by limiting access to alternative physical and online education opportunities and to have social mobility.

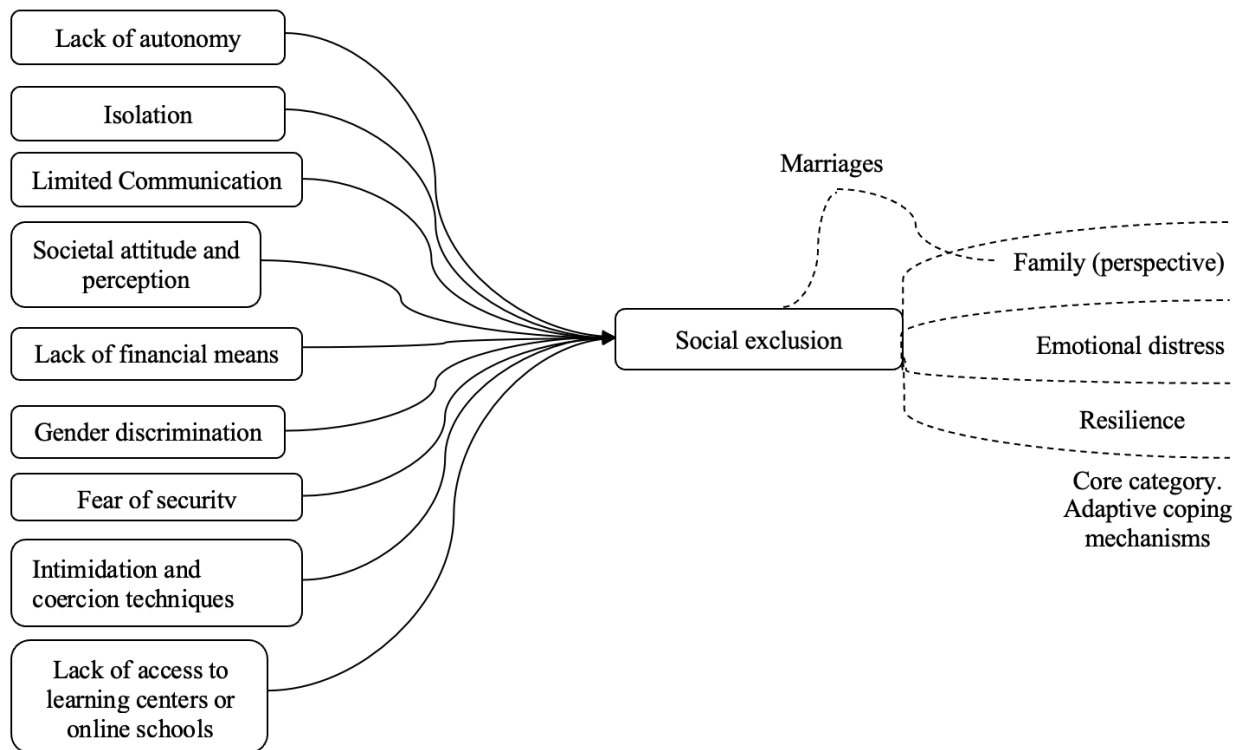


Figure 16: **Emergent codes related to the concept of social exclusion.**

“Gender disparities and discrimination” are systemic concerns that has perpetuate social exclusion for schoolgirls leaving them detached and afraid to even leave the house. There were instances of gradually becoming more socially excluded from society among participants thoughts about the society behavior changes towards them that needs to be addressed. “People think girls are more likely to be forced into marriage without schools”, “Marriages has become a trend now and it’s getting worse different parts of Afghanistan,” “Girls' opinions are often ignored by

society.” “People decide what's best for girls without asking them.” “Gender roles of boys and girls are deepening, and it is concerning to me.” “People are trying to force us to follow Societal norms that girls must establish their own households, regardless of their educational aspirations.” Each of these quotes come from different participants who are trying to express their position in the society and lack autonomy over their lives. The positions most of the participants felt themselves aligned with what Somaya mentioned as “We have no role in the society, we have become women whose only duty is to stay at home, take care of the house, have children and continue the human race.”

The tactics of “intimidation and coercive methods” employed by the Taliban militants, separate girls further from society and erode their sense of safety and well-being. Somaya talks about the intimidation techniques the Taliban militants are using as “recently, since the Taliban took girls from some areas and took them with them, our fears multiplied. Again, I am at home, and it's been three months that I don't go out at all and even when I read a book, I get a headache and I don't like to do anything at all and I just want to sleep. When the girls were taken away by the Taliban, my family took my permission to go to the course, and when I went to the training center again with great insistence, the teachers increased the restrictions and emphasized the clothing (Hijab) more.... One day, the gatekeeper of the learning educational center argued with me that your clothes are not appropriate and if the Taliban were here, I would have told them to take you with them. I don't know how else to dress to make them happy.” Clothing and the lack of autonomy to their clothing was mentioned several times as a barrier to social inclusion for the girls and a great contributor to girls wanting to stay at home.

The prolonged closure of schools has changed people’s perspective about the girl’s education. Participants mentioned their society’s immediate support of girls in the first year of

school closures while changing to being indifferent about the matter today. As one of the girls says “In the beginning, the closing of schools for two years had a negative effect on the morale of the people in the community. The society was more supportive in the beginning, but they changed over time and now they do not care that much.”

Marriage has been consistently associated with the social perspectives and norms which effects parents and families. School closures remain the sole reason for the drastic increase of marriages in social contexts.

Survey responses to why schoolgirls are accepting marriage as an alternative option for the school closures.

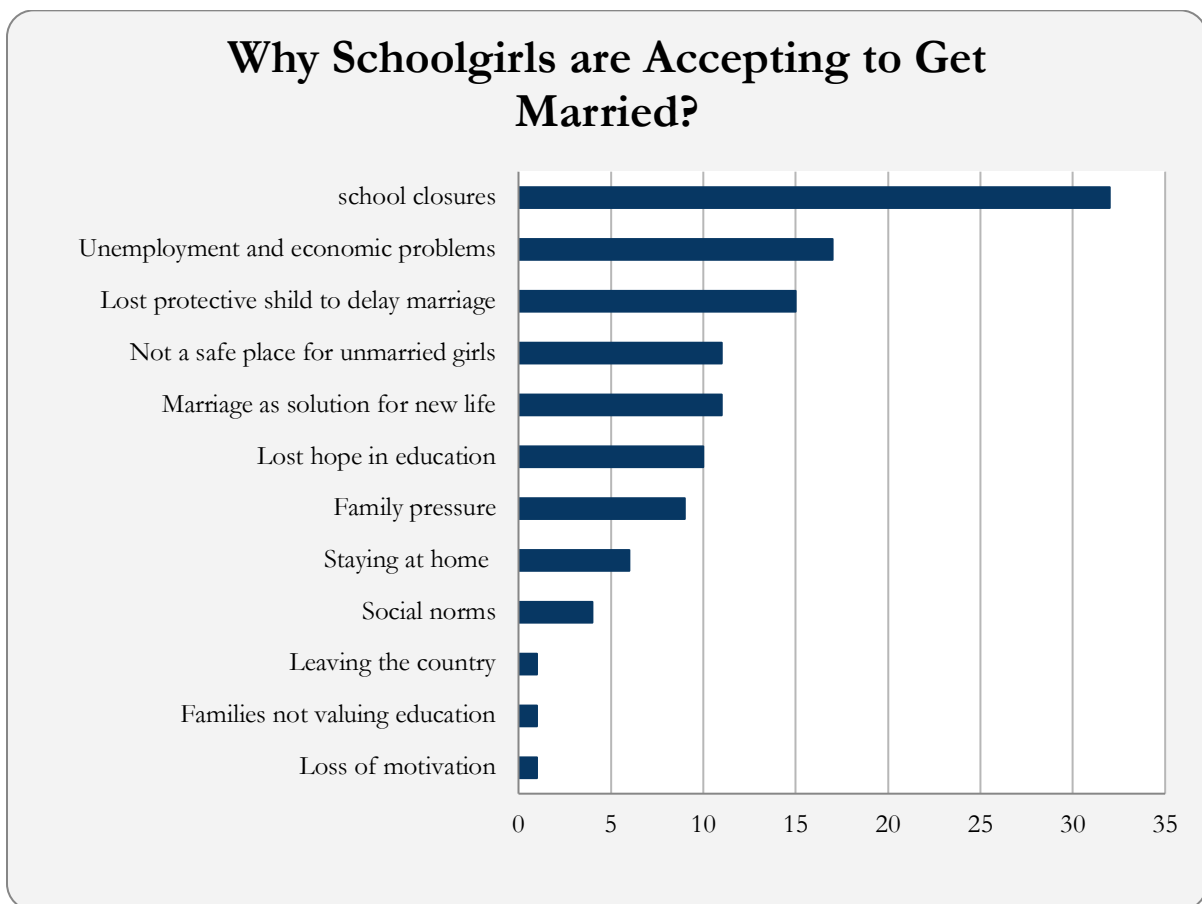


Figure 17: why schoolgirls are accepting marriage as an alternative option to school closures.

As asked about the participants knowledge of their classmates and whether they got engaged/married, an interesting part of data was revealed as majority of them accepted that they have at least one or two to multiple classmates who got married and lost the change to go to school.

Are you aware of your any classmate’s marriage or engagement?	Instances mentioned	Percentages
Yes	35	51%
No	23	34%
I have no contacts with my classmates	10	15%
Sum	68	100%

Table 25: awareness of the classmates’ marriage or engagement.

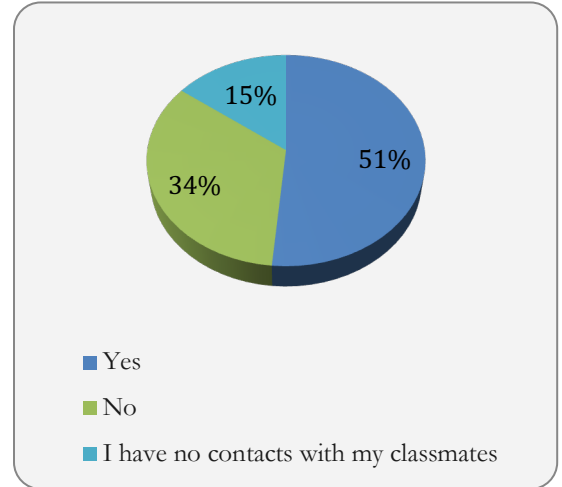


Figure 18: awareness of the classmates’ marriage or engagement.

Hamida in response to the increased rate of marriages said: “in my family, we are three sisters who were going to school. When the school got closed, my father gave my sister away to marry, she cried that I am not getting married, my father did not accept her and gave her in marriage, her education stopped, she cries every time she comes.” In another instance the researcher fixed a date to have an interview with a respondent and when the interview date was due, the phone number of the participant was replied by her brother as she was already married, did not possess a cell phone and her husband did not agree to her interview even after several attempts.

Shiba mentioned one of her friends named Saima as “my classmate’s name was Saima, she is only 16 and has a son, this is a huge crime because she loved going to school and was extremely intelligent.”

Marriage for schoolgirls has become handy to families and societies dealing with the school closures, as to them, this seems to be the optimal option for girls without considering their choice.

5.6 The concept of Resilience

In terms of resilience, Afghan girls have shown amazing agency and tenacity through joining learning centers, joining online schools, learning income-generating skills, and joining hidden schools.

As schools were closed, many girls sought sanctuary and educational opportunities at learning centers. These centers, which are run by people, NGOs, and local activists, offers a supportive environment for girls to pursue their educational goals despite difficulty. Most of these courses provide English language classes, computer, painting ... the operation of these centers is not completely open for girls as some of the girls expressed sorrow for their learning centers closing the doors on them.

Below is the statistic of the students participating in this study who have joined educational centers or online schools or are not enrolled in either.

Enrolled programs	Educational centers	Online schools	Not program
Number of students	30	35	13

Table 26: **students participating alternative educational programs.**

Despite joining the educational centers students expressed concern about not being able to get a proper school certificate to be qualified for international scholarships. Students joining online schools faced below problems:

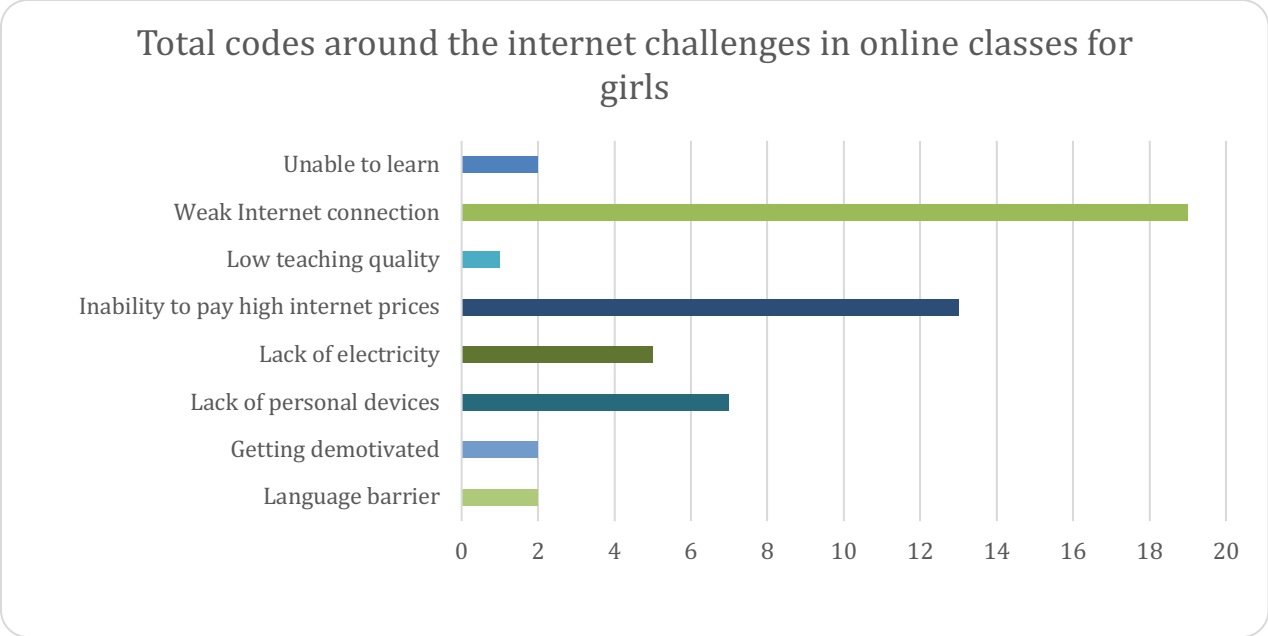


Figure 19: **challenges students face in online classes.**

Despite hurdles such as connectivity issues and digital divisions, girls reiterated their commitment to academic success and personal growth through online schooling. Some of the participants mentioned starting creative income-generating endeavors by themselves or their friends that has proven to be beneficial for them. “I wanted to become a teacher and teach English to younger girls but with many efforts, I could not become a teacher in educational centers. I am learning to paint in a learning center where we have exhibitions every year. Last year, I made a promise to myself that I should display my artworks in the next painting exhibition and this year I was able to proudly display my artworks and I am happy about it.” Or as Saima has encountered many friend “I have noticed that many girls have become more interested in having online shops, and after the closure of schools, I know many girls...” girls are also getting interested in arts and crafts such as painting, sewing, embroidery that can be both a positive coping mechanism and an income generating source.

What should be done right now?		Percentage
Open schools	14	14%
international community intervention	3	3%
Immigration	2	2%
Standardized Online schools and centers	24	23%
Give students Hope	16	16%
Scholarship Opportunities	5	5%
Resist the government policies	7	7%
support women Entrepreneurship	2	2%
Patience and continued education	10	10%
Open & Join Educational centers	4	4%
Provide school materials	2	2%
Open homeschools	3	3%
Read books	10	10%
Help and tutor them in their studies	7	7%
Family Support	1	1%
Sum	103	100%

Table 27: Solution for the girls' current situation

Leaving the country seems to be a priority for most participants with supportive parents about their education abroad. Despite waiting for the schools to open, students do not see their future under the roof of the same regime to be bright or different as one of the students say: “I don't want to imagine my future five years from now in such a way that the same government will remain, and I won't be able to study. I try to apply for scholarships and see myself in a better place in future I don't want to imagine an aimless future for myself... I am very disappointed with the current situation in Afghanistan, and I would be glad to leave the country.”

And here another participant agreeing with the same vision for her future: “I want to go abroad in the next five years to continue my education and achieve my dreams. Because I do not see my future promising here...” According to the empirical data leaving the country is the most favorable option after opening of school.

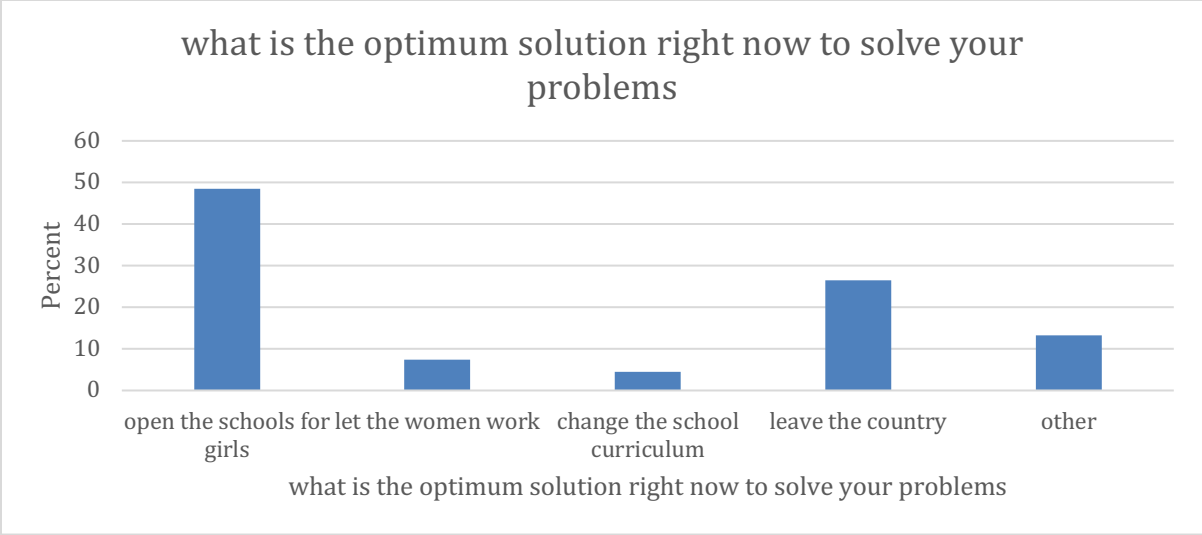


Figure 20: What is the optimum solution to solve students’ problem in a short time.

97% of the survey and all the interview and group discussion participants are willing to complete their higher education after their school. Their hope and resistance stand tall in the face of the current adversity.

Are you planning to complete your higher education?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No	2	2.9
	Yes	66	97.1
	Total	68	100.0

Table 28: students planning to complete their higher education.

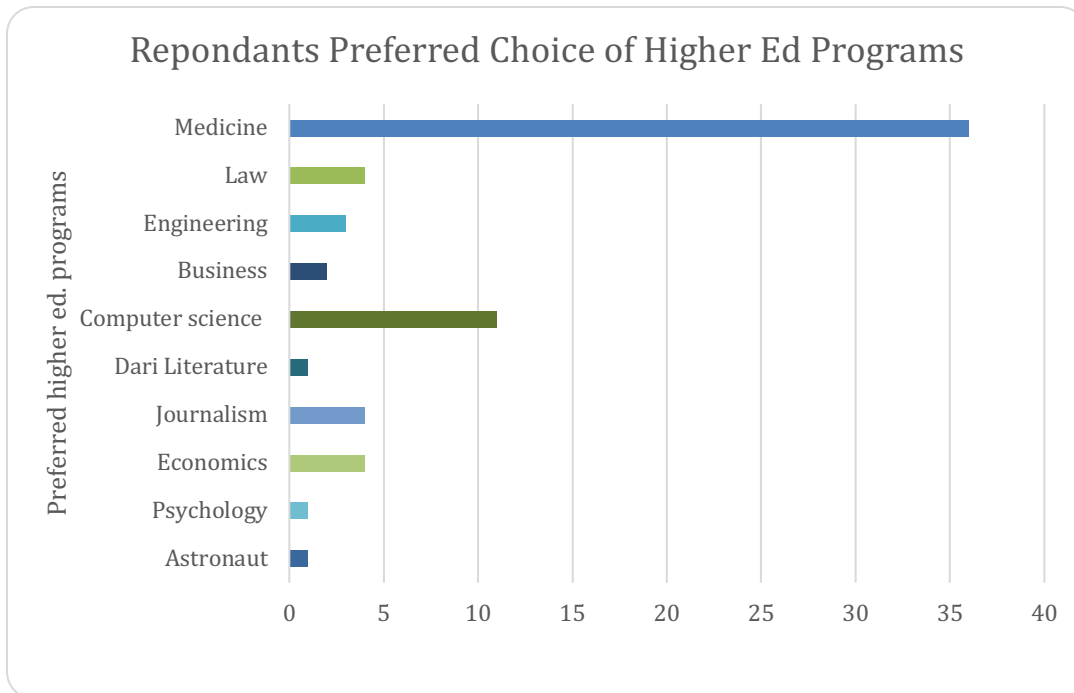


Figure 21: Preferred choice of higher education programs.

A crucial form of resistance that some of the students has mentioned are the hidden secret schools that operate as learning centers or religious schools (Madrassa). As one of the participants mentioned: “On my last month staying in Kabul, there was a learning center taught by foreigners secretly to girls from grades 7 to 12. It was completely free, and no one knew. There was another school a little further from our house where girls from our community went to study. The name of that course was “removed for security reasons” meaning place for learning Quran, but normally, girls were taught school subjects. When the Taliban came, they collected the books and took the Quran we would always wear wide clothes.” Or as another participant share her experience of going to secret schools: “when I go to secret underground learning centers and study in person, learning centers close to our home are better for us in every way. But when we go there, the security is not good although the thefts have decreased, it has become very difficult for women to go out, it is not easy for us. we pay a fee in our secret learning center and the amount is normal.”

5.7 Interrelationships of the concepts

Lack of family support and social exclusion exacerbates emotional distress. Individuals who lack support from their families and feel alienated from social groups are more prone to develop emotional distress, such as sadness, despair and loneliness. In contrast, resilience buffers emotional distress, which means that people with higher levels of resilience are better able to cope with challenges and are less likely to feel significant emotional discomfort even in the face of adversity.

Family support has a significant impact on an individual's resilience. Supportive families offer emotional, practical, and social assistance, which improves people's ability to adapt and recover from challenging circumstances. Non-supportive families, on the other hand, aggravate emotional suffering by failing to give adequate assistance. They may also contribute to social exclusion by making individuals feel alienated within their own family units, exacerbating their emotional distress and lowering their resilience levels.

Social exclusion exacerbates emotional distress by encouraging emotions of loneliness, rejection, lack of autonomy and low self-esteem. Furthermore, social isolation reduces resilience by denying people access to support networks and resources that could help them deal with challenges and disappointments, leaving them more prone to emotional distress. Current extended social exclusion of girls creates a norm for families to adapt and accept gender discrimination and increases marriage rate.

Resilience serves as a shield against social exclusion and emotional distress. Individuals with stronger degrees of resilience can better manage tough situations and recover from failures, minimizing their vulnerability to emotional discomfort. Furthermore, resilience allows girls to

maintain social relationships and seek help when necessary, reducing the harmful impacts of social exclusion and improving their ability to cope with adversity.

Concepts	Positively Influences	Negatively Influences	Buffer Against	Exacerbates
Emotional Distress		Lack of family support	Resilience	Social Exclusion
Family Support	Resilience	Emotional Distress	Social exclusion	
Social Exclusion		Emotional Distress	Resilience	
Resilience	Emotional Distress			Social Exclusion

Table 29: interrelationships of the concepts

5.8 Model Propositions:

Below are the four propositions associated with this model:

Proposition 1: Supportive home situations for Afghan girls contribute to increased resilience and improved coping methods during school closures. While unsupportive homes tend to use un

Proposition 2: Afghan girls' emotional anguish during school closures is aggravated by a lack of supportive family structures, making them more vulnerable to social exclusion.

Proposition 3: School closures cause social exclusion among Afghan girls, leading to mental suffering and diminished resilience, especially in the absence of supportive family and societal networks.

Proposition 4: Resilience protects Afghan girls from emotional distress and social marginalization, reducing the negative impact of school closures on their well-being and education.

5.9 Emergent theoretical model

Using the sensemaking, a newly emerged theory, derived directly from empirical evidence, is depicted as a model in Figure 22

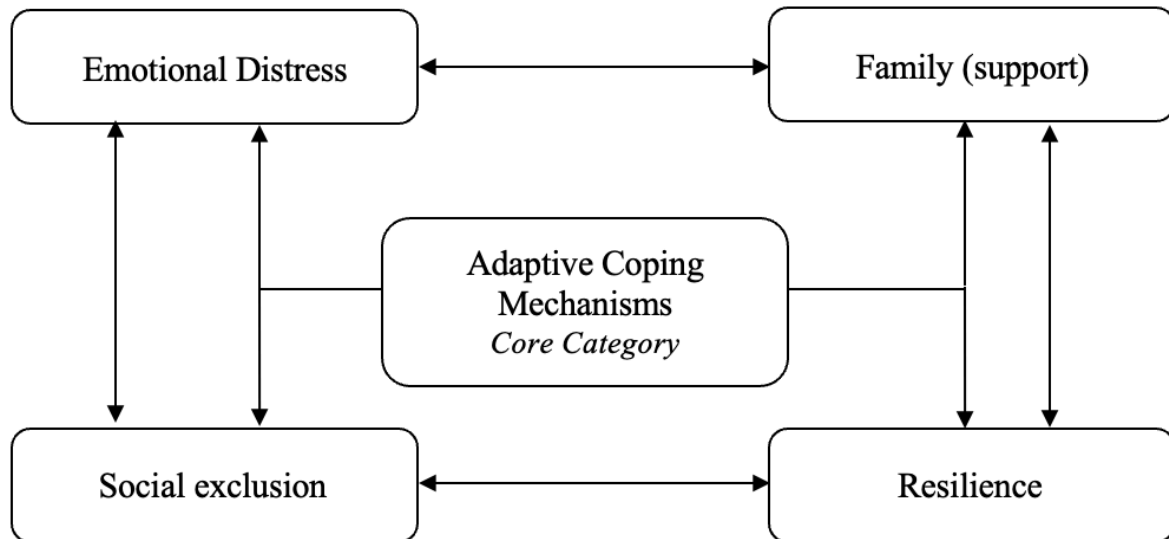


Figure 22: Emergent theoretical model based on empirical data.

The model unifies the numerous categories and notions at a high abstraction level, explaining the emerging theory of consequences of school closures on schoolgirls after resurgence of the Taliban. Adaptive coping mechanism emerged as the core category, connecting the four highly abstracted ideas of emotional distress, family (support), social exclusion and resilience. The model emphasizes that, while adaptive coping mechanism is fundamental to the theoretical model, it both impacts and is influenced by the other four concepts in the model.

Chapter Six

Discussion, Summary, and Conclusion

“The girls who have stopped going to school can understand our feelings and that's it. When I was going to school, we valued ourselves, we thought that we would become an important person in the future and we considered ourselves an important person, but since I left school, I don't value myself because I don't do any activities to achieve my goals” this is how Massooma feels about the school closures. Though school closures have been analyzed through multiple lens of political, social, and economic viewpoints, the schoolgirls as the direct receiver of these policies have been often neglected. Therefore, this research dived deeper into what the schoolgirls are experiencing in this situation and what can be done to alleviate their suffering.

The United States concluded its twenty-year war in Afghanistan on August 31, 2021. Soon afterwards, the Taliban and its supporters took complete control of Afghanistan. As time passed, people both within and outside of the country wondered what the future held for a Taliban-led Afghanistan. As of date, after nearly three, the Taliban regime still holds its place, governing the country and exercising control over every aspect of Afghan lives.

The grounded theory in the empirical data constructed and emerged as the core phenomenon of “social and educational consequences of the school closures on schoolgirls” which basically has affected the schoolgirls, their families and their society. This phenomenon was then explained by the core category of the adaptive coping mechanisms that included all three and both impacted by and affected by the four educational and social concepts of emotional distress, family (support), social exclusion and resilience. The main objective of this grounded theory model was

to approach this topic with an abstract wonderment leading to what specific consequences have emerged after the school closures for the girls and how these students and their families cope with this situation.

Marriage and gender-based discrimination was a mutual subcategory of both family support and social exclusion concepts. They came under these concepts to reveal the fundamental reasons behind the increased rate of marriages and gender-based discrimination and on some instances violence rather than being introduced independently.

6.1 Emergent theory implication

According to the emergent theory, short- and long-term actions has been identified as listed below:

Short-term actions:

1. Immediate Psychosocial Support: Putting in place psychosocial support programs to help schoolgirls cope with their emotional discomfort. Counseling programs, peer support groups, and community-based mental health initiatives targeted at providing a safe environment for girls to express themselves and cope with trauma might all be included.
2. Emergency Educational Support: During school closures, students have quick access to alternate learning possibilities such as distance learning programs, radio broadcasts, and mobile learning applications. Ensure that these resources are available to all girls, including those from underserved communities with limited access to technology.
3. Strengthening Family Engagement: Implementing outreach activities to encourage families to support their daughters' education during times of distress. Providing advice on how families can support learning at home, campaigning for girls' educational rights within the family, and promoting awareness about the long-term benefits of girls' education.

4. **Community Mobilization:** Using community resources to establish safe learning environments outside of regular educational settings. Establishing community-based learning centers, hiring volunteer tutors, and leveraging local partnerships to secure girls' education and social assistance.

Long-term actions

1. **Prioritizing long-term investment in education infrastructure,** such as school construction, teacher training programs, and learning materials. Addressing systemic hurdles to girls' education, such as inadequate facilities, gender-based violence in the classroom, and discriminatory policies.
2. **Policy Reform and Advocacy:** We advocate for policy changes that promote gender equality and highlight girls' education in national development goals. This could involve passing legislation to guarantee girls' right to an education, allocating funds for girls' schools and scholarships, and implementing gender-sensitive curriculum modifications.
3. **Community Empowerment initiatives:** Putting in place initiatives that promote gender equality and girls' rights. Bringing together community leaders, religious institutions, and local stakeholders to promote positive social norms, challenge harmful traditions like early marriage, and develop supportive conditions for girls' education.
4. **Capacity Building and Skill Development:** Giving girls opportunity to learn skills and competences that will boost their resilience and economic empowerment. Investing in vocational training programs, business efforts, and leadership development opportunities customized to girls' specific needs and goals.

6.2 Research Limitations.

While this study aims to provide extensive insights into the effects of school closures on Afghan schoolgirls and make meaningful recommendations, certain limitations should be considered:

Sample Representation: The sample population's representativeness may limit the study's conclusions. The research sample, which was not predominantly chosen from specific locations or socioeconomic backgrounds, rather from three online schools and multiple social media routes may not adequately represent the range of experiences among Afghan schoolgirls. Increasing sample variety may improve the generalizability of the finding.

Distribution of the research participants in rural and urban areas has been the critical limitation to this study as majority of women live in rural areas of the country. In this research more than 90% of the participants lived in urban and city areas which are close to learning centers and most of the urban live facilities.

Data Collection concerns: Conducting research in conflict-affected areas such as Afghanistan poses major logistical and security concerns. Not having access to communication devices mostly in rural areas also restricted the researcher's access to many potential participants. These difficulties may have hampered the researcher's capacity to reach specific places or groups, potentially resulting to data collecting gaps and reducing the depth and breadth of the results.

Social Desirability Bias: Participants may have been influenced to respond in accordance with societal expectations or perceived norms, especially when discussing sensitive themes like gender-

based discrimination and girls' education. This social desirability bias may have altered the validity and accuracy of the data gathered.

Interpretive Bias: The assessment of qualitative data is fundamentally subjective and may be influenced by the researcher's beliefs, prejudices, or theoretical framework. While extreme efforts were taken to reduce interpretation bias by rigorous data analysis methods such as member checking and triangulation, the possibility of prejudice should be recognized.

Generalizability: Given Afghanistan's distinct socio-cultural and political setting, the study's findings may be limited in their applicability to other environments or people. While the outcomes of this study may provide significant lessons for addressing girls' education in similar circumstances, caution should be given when extrapolating results to contexts with distinct socio-cultural dynamics.

6.3 Recommendations for actions

1. The international world should recognize the Taliban on condition that they adhere to ideals of responsible and inclusive governance. The Taliban regime's legitimacy should be related to proven improvements in their behavior and programs, notably in terms of women's and girls' access to education.
2. Funding for education is linked to girls' access to schools: International funders and humanitarian groups should send a clear, harsh, and coordinated message to Taliban commanders. They must clarify that continuous assistance for the education sector is subject on the Taliban's commitment to providing equal and high-quality higher education options for girls. Failure to uphold this level should result in reduced financial support from the international community.

3. Engagement of Muslim Scholars and Leaders: Islamic academics, leaders, and significant persons must publicly denounce the Taliban's decision to ban secondary education for girls. They should actively engage with Taliban leaders to argue for the reversal of these unjust practices. By using religious authority and moral persuasion, these leaders have the potential to significantly influence the Taliban's stance on girls' education and promote more inclusive policies based on Islamic principles.
4. communication and Advocacy through UN Bodies: UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO should aggressively engage in communication with Taliban officials to address the issue of girls' education. These debates should include Muslim academics from Afghanistan and other countries to ensure a nuanced understanding of the relevance of girls' education within an Islamic context. UN agencies may support Afghan girls' educational rights by facilitating positive dialogue and advocacy initiatives.
5. International Organizations Provide Instructional Materials: To alleviate the immediate impact of the Taliban's stance on girls' education, international organizations operating in Afghanistan should equip girls with the instructional resources they need to complete their studies. This includes textbooks, digital learning resources, and other educational materials that allow girls to pursue an education on the same level as boys. By ensuring continuous access to learning opportunities, these groups can assist reduce the disruption created by the closing of girls' schools.

6.4 Recommendation for future research

1. Exploration of Regional Disparities: Investigate regional differences in the effects of school closures on Afghan schoolgirls. Conduct comparative assessments across

provinces or regions to uncover differences in access to education, socioeconomic determinants, and resilience-building methods.

2. **Gender Dynamics within Household:** Investigate the gender dynamics inside Afghan households and their impact on girls' access to education during school closures. Examine how parental views, intra-household decision-making processes, and gendered divisions of labor influence girls' educational experiences.
3. **Impact on Mental Health:** Conduct long-term studies to assess how school closures affect the mental health and well-being of Afghan females. Investigate the long-term patterns of emotional distress, resilience, and coping methods, considering socio-cultural influences and contextual stressors.
4. Investigate how religious groups and leaders in Afghanistan promote girls' education and challenge gender conventions or vice versa. Investigate the possibility for collaborations between educational stakeholders and religious leaders to advocate for inclusive and equitable education policies.
5. **Digital Divide and Technological Solutions:** Evaluate the digital divide among Afghan schoolgirls and how it affects access to remote learning during school closures. Investigate the impact of technological solutions, such as mobile learning platforms and internet connectivity initiatives, on closing educational gaps and encouraging girls.
6. **Community-Based Resilience Building:** Investigate community-based approaches to resilience development and psychosocial assistance for Afghan schoolgirls. Examine the impact of community groups, peer networks, and conventional support mechanisms on resilience and coping during times of crisis.

7. Policy Implementation and Evaluation: Assess the implementation of education policies and initiatives targeted at promoting girls' education in Afghanistan. Evaluate the effectiveness of conditional funding arrangements, policy changes, and lobbying initiatives to promote gender equality and inclusive education.

Appendix

Thesis Questionnaires

Interview/ Group discussion final Questionnaire.

1. How do you feel about the school closures, and how do you deal with them?
2. Have you noticed any changes in your family's thoughts or actions since the schools closed?
3. Have you noticed people talking differently about girls' education since the schools closed? What has changed in their mindset and behavior toward the closing of schools and girls' education?
4. does your family support you in continuing your education despite the closures or after the schools reopen?
5. What's been the hardest part about not being able to go to school for the past two years and this year continuously?
6. What do you think is your place in society right now?
7. Have you seen any differences in how people talk about girls' education since the schools closed?
8. What are your thoughts about what comes next for you, especially regarding your education? What do you think about your future?
9. What dreams or goals do you have for the future? Has this time made you think differently about what you want to do growing up?
10. Have you noticed schoolgirls getting married or engaged since the schools closed?

11. If you could change one thing to make it easier for girls to keep learning during the closures, what would it be?
12. Can you share any stories of resilience or community initiatives that have emerged in response to the challenges of school closures?
13. How do you think the lost two years would be amended for the schoolgirls?

Survey Questionnaire:

Dear respondent, By participating in this research, as, you will help me collect important information for my research and thesis. This information will be used to understand the effects of school closures on female students in Afghanistan. The research findings will be shared in the form of research articles to make the voice of Afghan women and girls heard so that it can be made available to the international community. Your participation also shows our shared responsibility to support women and girls in the youth by addressing the difficulties they face in the education sector.

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any time without having to provide a reason for your non-participation. The said questionnaire is only related to female school students from grades 7 to 12 who have been left out of school due to the arrival of the Taliban, and those who are not included in this category are requested to refrain from completing the questionnaire below so that the result of the investigation presents accurate and reliable information from among the research population.

Please rest assured that all responses will be kept confidential and are going to be used for academic purposes only, all the respondents will remain anonymous and only grouped data will be presented

The questionnaire below is designed to take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your willingness and cooperation to spend this time on the questionnaire below would be appreciated. Thank you in advance for your further cooperation. If you are ready to start the questionnaire, please continue.

Which school grade were you in when the schools got closed?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 6th grade 2. 7th grade 3. 8th grade 4. 9th grade 5. 10th grade 6. 11th grade 7. 12th grade
What type of school were you attending before the school closures?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Private school 2. Public school
Which province of Afghanistan do you belong to?	Open

In which province do you live?	Open
In which point of the province do you live?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural area 2. Urban area
Are you enrolled in any type of physical educational program after the school closures?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. If yes, can you specify what program are you currently enrolled in?
Are you enrolled in any online schools which are currently running for Afghan girls?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No
Do you have access to all the school materials you need?	
What challenges are you facing during your online studies that you did not face when schools were open?	

What is your marital status?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Single 2. Engaged 3. Married 4. divorced
If engaged or married, when did you get engaged or married?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before the school closures 2. After the school closures
How old you were when you got engaged/married?	Can you briefly tell me what circumstances lead to your engagement/marriage?
How much time did you spend on studying when schools were open?	On average, how much time do you spend on studying now?
Was your marriage arranged by your family? (it means your family took the decision of your marriage)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. no
Are you comfortable in your new life with your husband and in-laws?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. If "No", can you tell what makes you uncomfortable?

Would your husband/fiancé and in-laws support you if you are willing to go back to school when schools are open again?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No
When schools are again open for girls of secondary level, are you planning to continue your studies?	

Are you planning to complete your higher education?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. If yes, in which area of study do you want to continue your education?
My family, mother and father believes marriage is a good option for girls now that the schools are closed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
Are you aware of the engagement/marriage of any of your classmates after school closures? if yes, can you tell me the story?	Open
Do you think that the number of marriages of school students has increased after school closures in your community or among your relatives?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No
I believe marriage is a good option for school students after the school closures.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
Do you think marriages should be prevented for school students?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No
If yes or maybe, is there any way that you think would prevent the young girls getting into marriages in young age. (otherwise, you may write "not applicable")	Open
If no, what do you think would be the benefit of getting into marriage at a young age? (otherwise, you may write "not applicable")	Open

I feel safe when my father and I disagree about an important matter.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
I feel safe when my mother and I disagree about an important matter.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
I feel safe when my brothers and I disagree about an important matter.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
My parents will be disappointed and angry if I do not complete what they told me to do.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
I complete whatever task I have been given to from my family (father, mother, brothers, sisters), even if I do not like it.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
I am the decision maker for my future.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
My family is the decision maker for my future.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

I can honestly speak about my feelings and problems around my family members even my father and brothers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
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I feel sad and stressed after the school closures.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
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I feel unvalued around my family members after the school closures.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
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After the school closures, my family behaves with me differently.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Most of the times 7. Sometimes 8. Seldom 9. never
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My family listens to my brothers more than me.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly disagree. 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
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How many hours did you spend on house chores before the school closures? (an estimate of hours you spent doing house work)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than an hour 2. 1-2 hours 3. 2-4 hours 4. 4-6 hours 5. More than six hours
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How many hours do you spend on house chores after the school closures? (an estimate of hours you spent doing house work)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than an hour 2. 1-2 hours 3. 2-4 hours 4. 4-6 hours 5. More than six hours
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I am satisfied with the amount of time I spend on the house chores.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No
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What are some negative results of school closures that you faced inside your family, friends and relatives.	Open
What are the positive results of school closures that you see inside your family, friends and relatives.	Open
Before the school closures, what did you like/dislike the most about your social interactions at school?	Open
What do you do or like to do when you feel sad and unhappy?	Open
Do you think religious prayers makes you feel better?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. Maybe
how much access do you have to a health professional when you feel sad or depressed?	
What do you think would be the best possible solution that can help girls who are restricted from going to school to overcome the current situation?	Open

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