

Women's Education in Islamic World: A Bibliometric Review of Scholarly Discourse on Afghan Context between 1980 to 2024

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the current state of knowledge on women's education in the Islamic world, with a particular focus on Afghanistan. Using a bibliometric and science mapping approach, the researchers analyzed 708 publications from the SCOPUS database to assess trends, key contributors, and the intellectual structure of research in this field. Data analysis was conducted using Excel and R software. Findings reveal that academic interest in Afghan women's education only began to rise significantly after 2001. Notable contributors include Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan and Terence M. Kean, whose work often centers on mental health, gender inequality, and leadership. Leading institutions in this field are based in the U.S., particularly Boston and California universities, while Afghan universities like Kandahar and Takhar are emerging players. The U.S., UK, Australia, and Germany have the most citations, primarily focusing on PTSD and mental health issues rather than educational challenges specific to Afghan women. The body of literature is fragmented, with underexplored themes such as patriarchy and gender-based violence. Additionally, the research lacks presence in high-impact journals and excludes non-Scopus literature. The study highlights the need for more nuanced, locally informed research that considers political, cultural, and economic barriers to women's education in Afghanistan, urging stronger international collaboration.

Keywords: Women's Education, Islamic World, Bibliometric analysis, Afghanistan

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Women's education is a global challenge shaped by challenges that limit access, yet addressing these challenges can contribute to economic growth, enhanced health systems, and the advancement of gender equality through shared collaborations (Nussbaum, 2004). It is also a complex and developing platform of educational opportunities and challenges faced by women in Muslim-majority societies. Stemming from a rich historical context, women's education has undergone noteworthy revolutions from pre-Islamic times to the present day. According to Islamic philosophy, knowledge, its application, and acquisition are key prerequisites for all Muslims to empower

them to think, act, and believe in its principles. Nevertheless, conflicting interpretations of the Quran and other Islamic texts often challenge core principles of Islam. Traditionally, male dominated the interpretation of the Quran, as critiques recognized it as the main cause of the literature that devalued and undermined women's rights in the Quran (Scott, 2009; Wadud, 1999). Truly understanding women's rights in Islam requires differentiating between authentic Islamic traditions and the cultural norms practiced by Muslims in their societies (Abukari, 2014).

Despite the stress on knowledge and learning within Islamic practices, access to opportunities, particularly for quality education

for women in certain Islamic countries, remains a challenge (Alharbi, 2014; Ikhwan et al., 2024; Maulana & Erihadiana, 2024; Najibi & McLachlan, 2023; Sadia, 2021; Wardiana et al., 2024). These include challenges related to societal norms (Ibrahim et al., 2023; H. K. Smith, 2025; Yaqoob, 2012), which are deeply ingrained in certain cultural practices (Ahmad et al., 2014; Andiem, 2021; Dualle et al., 2022; Yewande & Olawunmi, 2023). Socio-economic disparities (Ahmad et al., 2014; Mehmood et al., 2018; Shah & Shah, 2012). These challenges come in various shapes, such as inadequate access to schools, significant dropout rates in higher education, and gender segregation among women. Most importantly, protracted conflict and turmoil in certain parts of the Islamic world have intensified these challenges, resulting in displacement, school closures, and damage to educational institutions.

Afghanistan is a key example of many countries undergoing the profound effects of long-term conflict. Women's education in Afghanistan has a complex and tumultuous history shaped by cultural, political, and social factors (Mings, 2017). A country with multifaceted geopolitical dynamics has been an epicenter of both regional and global politics, marked by a history of protracted conflict within and beyond (Sakhi, 2023). This long-lasting conflict has affected women and girls as primary victims, limiting their access to personal, professional, and educational development (Abdurahimzai, 2023; Hamidi, 2024; Sahar, 2024).

In retrospect, since the 1920s, the educational journey for women was a nightmare of roller coasters transitioning with each political power change. In 1975, 24% of Afghan schools were enrolled in primary schools, and girls represented 30% of the above figure, with an increase of 3% per year in the 1970s in comparison to other Asian countries (Samady, 2001). The enrolment in the following decades declined because of instability though in the 1990s, boys' enrolment accumulated

but that of girls reduced dramatically.

Scholarly discussions highlight systemic challenges to women's education in Afghanistan, mainly under the Taliban rule, banning women to attend school or employment reversed decades of progress (Alvi, 2004; Bukhari, 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2024). These policies, violating universal human rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948), worsened gender disparities in health, employment, and mobility (Mashwani, 2017; Qaderi et al., 2023). More challenges include early marriage, insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, and teacher shortages that further impede access (Pherali & Sahar, 2018; Shayan, 2015). However, post-2001 reforms led to considerable advancements: primary enrolment reached 40% of girls and higher education experienced significant expansion (Easar et al., 2023). This contrast highlights the instability of progress within political shifts, a recurring theme in scholarly discussions.



Figure 1. Adopted from (Najam et al., 2024, p. 4)

Since the Taliban took power again in 2021, females are banned from almost all walks of life in 2022. The Taliban has further restricted Afghan women's voices in public (ABC News., 2024; BBC News., 2024; CNN., 2024; The Guardian., 2024).

Women's education in Afghanistan has faced key challenges, with progress achieved over the past 20 years because of international support in certain areas, while others remain unnoticed due to inaccessibility and protracted conflict. This disproportion has resulted in an under-researched field. The justification for this study lies in the lack of bibliometric analyses of women's education within the Islamic world, especially in Afghanistan,

despite its significant importance amidst political restrictions. Although some studies address broader gender and educational issues, they often neglect the specific concern women face in their education.

Despite the increasing attention of researchers and policymakers to women's education in the Islamic world over the last few years (Abukari, 2014; Ahmad & Tak, 2020; Ahmed, & Yusuf, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Khurshid, 2015; McClendon et al., 2018) limited comprehensive studies on this topic have been conducted in the Islamic world, particularly in Afghanistan. By engaging bibliometric and science mapping analyses, this study aimed to identify the vital contributors, institutions, networks, and countries involved in this field, highlighting the emerging themes and gaps within the existing literature over the last few decades. By offering a data-driven and objective overview, this study provides insights into the field of Afghan women's education and highlights the need for further research in this critical field. The findings of this study will inform future researchers and policy makers to address this critical issue and its barriers in the field of women's education in Afghanistan and in the Islamic World. Considering the aim of this study, it addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the trend in publications and citations on women's education in Afghanistan between 1980 and 2024?
2. What is the research output of authors, institutions, affiliations, and countries towards publications on women's education and associated fields such as mental health and psychological concerns in Afghanistan between 1980 and 2024?
3. Which authors have had the greatest impact on publications on women's education in Afghanistan between 1980 and 2024?
4. What are the most cited sources on women's education in Afghanistan?
5. What is the conceptual thematic map of

keywords that researchers have used in women's education in Afghanistan between 1980 and 2024?

METHOD

This study aims to offer a panoramic view of literature published between 1980 and 2024 on women's education in the Islamic world, with a specific focus on the Afghan context. To realize this aim, this study employed bibliometric and science mapping analyses. A bibliometric review approach is a systematic review method that offers an unambiguous, impartial, and empirically validated approach to study trends of knowledge production in a particular field of study (Aung & Hallinger, 2022). Unlike integrative and scoping reviews, with the intention of synthesizing the findings from a body of literature (Hallinger et al., 2020), bibliometric reviews specifically focus on interpreting and analyzing bibliographic data found within a collection of scientific publications. Bibliometric review enables researchers to thoroughly understand the research topic, identify knowledge gaps, build on novel research directions, and effectively place their contributions within the current body of the literature (Donthu et al., 2021).

The use of analytical tools, such as Biblioshiny, enables us to determine patterns and trends within the literature. Biblioshiny is a web application that offers an entry to the Bibliometrics package of R for non-programmers. Bibliometrics offers many tools that allow researchers to conduct in-depth bibliometric analyses (Rodríguez-Soler et al., 2020). These tools enabled the investigation of networks among key authors, journals, higher education institutions, and countries, in addition to keywords through citations and frequency procedures. This study's analysis incorporates a summary of the existing literature overview, annual article output, citation indicators, and three field plots visualizing the interplay between various fields such as author keywords, authors, countries, cited sources, and affiliations, to identify

interrelated concepts within the dataset.

Identification of Sources

The researcher used the “Elsevier SCOPUS” database to search for publications relevant to this study. Other key bibliometric databases such as Web of Science (WOS), Dimension, and Google Scholar, are broadly used for the evaluation of this research. (Martín-Martín et al., 2018; Sumanth et al., 2024). Nonetheless, this study has only focused on the usage of the SCOPUS database, as it includes 96.42% of its indexed journals, also covered by dimensions. (Sumanth et al., 2024). SCOPUS, which covers many of the publications compared to other databases was selected. Scopus offers a wider range of exclusive journals across all fields than WOS, primarily because of its indexing of a wider variety of journals (Karen & Alexander, 2019; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). Regarding Google Scholar, the researcher did not use Google scholar because of inconsistent search results and its indexing criteria are not as critical (Halevi et al., 2017) as WOS and Elsevier Scopus. The electronic search was performed on February 22, 2024, in the SCOPUS database utilizing the query string as follow:

Search String

The search was conducted using the following keywords in the field, title, abstracts, and keywords: TITLE-ABS-KEY (("Afghan" OR "Afghanistan" OR "Kabul" OR "Taliban" OR "pre-Taliban" OR "post-Taliban") AND ("women" OR "woman" OR "girls" OR "girl" OR "female") AND ("education" OR "culture" OR "educational" OR "access" OR "school" OR "high school" OR "higher education" OR "university" OR "Kankoor" OR "institutions" OR "tertiary school" OR "institute" OR "distance education" OR "Educational technology" OR "refugee" OR "community-based education" OR "early childhood education" OR "primary education" OR "conflict" OR "war")). A total of 53560 articles were retrieved using the search string described

above. Subsequently, the results were filtered, as illustrated in Figure 2, and explicated under the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

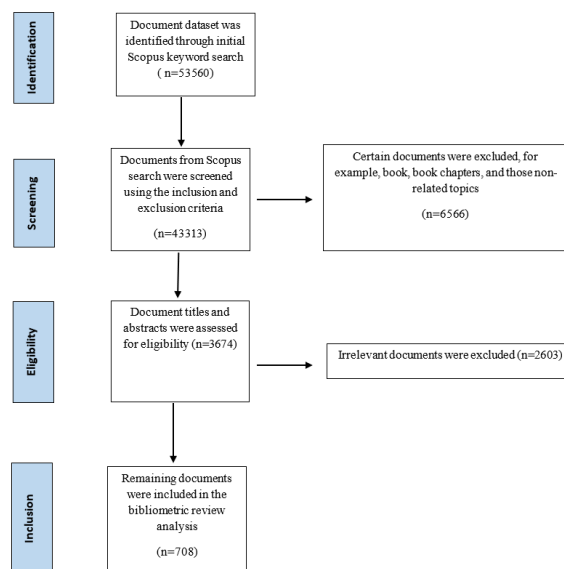


Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram showing the procedures in identifying, screening of the documents on women education in Afghanistan (Moher et al., 2009).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In this study, numerous inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed (see Table 1): books, book chapters, and conference proceedings; non-English; and those on non-related topics. Second, non-English documents were excluded, despite some major parts being in English language. Third, the scope was largely refined to peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings, ensuring high-quality work. Fourth, the study only considered fully published articles written in English and was excluded from the scope of the research. Fifth, other cross-fields focusing on health-related issues were systemically excluded, such as Nursing, Medicine, Immunology, Biochemistry, Pharmacology, Health Science, Neuroscience, Veterinary science, and dentistry. The resulting 3674 dataset was downloaded in csv format. This set of data was then screened by title and abstract for relevance leading to the identification of 708 relevant journal articles.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Details	Type
Source Type: Journal or Proceedings	LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, 'j') OR LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, 'p')	Inclusion
Publication Stage: Final	LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, 'final')	Inclusion
Document Type: Article or Conference Paper	LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, 'ar') OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, 'cp')	Inclusion
Language: English	LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, 'English')	Inclusion
Subject Area: Medical	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'MEDI')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Nursing	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'NURS')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Immunology	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'IMMU')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Biochemistry	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'BIOC')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Pharmacy	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'PHAR')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Health	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'HEAL')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Neurology	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'NEUR')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Veterinary	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'VETE')	Exclusion
Subject Area: Dentistry	EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, 'DENT')	Exclusion

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research critically explores the existing academic discourse on women's education in Afghanistan (1980–2024) using five research questions (RQs). The findings are prepared accordingly, and the first research question unpacks the temporary patterns in academic engagement with relevant topics that indicate publication and citation trends. The second research question maps geographic and institutional contributions including intersections with mental health and psychological concerns, covering the research output of authors, institutions, and countries. The third research question involved citation analysis, highlighting key voices in the field showing influential authors. The fourth research question assesses trace foundational and frequently referenced works that show high-impact sources. Finally, Research Question 5 visualizes the dominant and emerging research foci that portray a conceptual thematic map of keywords.

Table 2. Data Summary

General description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	1980-2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	406
Documents	708
Annual Growth Rate %	3.73 %
Document Average Age	8.41
Average citations per doc	16.5
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	2167
Author's Keywords (DE)	1714
AUTHORS	
Authors	2027
Authors of single-authored documents	219
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored documents	240
Co-Authors Per Document	3.26
International Co-authorships %	19.09%
DOCUMENT TYPES	
Article	700
Conference paper	8

Table 2 summarizes the bibliometric analysis of previous literature on the female education in Afghanistan covering the period from 1980 to 2024. The data encompass a certain period that covers the research published in 406 journal publications. A thorough examination of 406 journals produced a dataset of 708 relevant documents on female education. Analyzing the aforementioned 708 documents reveals the development of research domains in the field with an annual expansion of 3.73%. The average document was cited 16.5, with an average time span of the documents is 8.41 indicating a considerable academic impact.

With regard to document content, this research found that a total of 2,167 keywords plus (ID) displayed the vital topics along with 1,714 author keywords (DE), demonstrating their research focus. Collectively, 2,027 authors have contributed to the field and 219 authors have published a single author document. This research also acknowledges the production of 240 documents independently by a single author. Collaborative research is also evident by the authors, with an average of 3.26 per documents. Moreover, the authors' international collaboration was also noticed and underscored by 19.09% of co-authorship, which is an indication of beyond country and beyond continent interest in this area of research. An overwhelming majority of this dataset is published as articles of 700 out of 708 documents, with minimal fraction of only eight conference papers. In short, the data provided a thorough summary of the active research on women's education in Afghanistan, signifying steady growth, diverse authorship and paramount collaborative partnership.

Volume of publications and citation

The first research question identifies the volume, citations and geographic distribution of publications on women's education in Afghanistan published between 1980 and 2024.

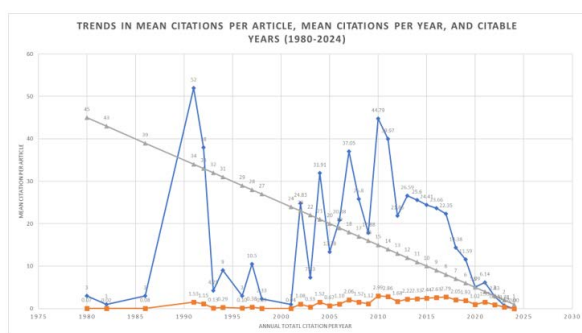


Figure 3. Analysis of annual article and average citation per article

The dataset focused on three main metrics: Mean Citations per year (MeanTCperYear), Mean Citations per article (MeanTCperArt), and Citable Years. The MeanTCperArt metric varies considerably, with noteworthy peaks in 1991 (52 citations per article) and 2010 (44.79 citations per article), demonstrating the time of exceedingly cited publications. The growing citation impact from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s has increased scholarly attention, with MeanTCperArt exceeding 20 citations per article over numerous years. Nevertheless, a decreasing trend was noticed from 2018 forward, reducing to single-digit standards in 2020 and beyond, indicating either a change in research focus, decreasing citation windows, or a general decline in article impact.

MeanTCperYear followed a parallel pattern, reaching its highest point in 2010 at 2.99 and portraying a descending trajectory over the last few years. The highest values between 2007 and 2017 indicate a period in which published articles received constant annual citations, indicating the significance and longevity of the research during that period. Citable Years demonstrate that the number of years a research article remains cited naturally declines, as more recent publications have had less time to get more citations. Earlier articles from 1980 and 1982 remained citable for over four decades, whereas recent articles from 2020 have shown considerably shorter citation lifespans. This trend is in line with bibliometric principles, where earlier foundational research is likely to

accumulate long-term acknowledgement, whereas recent studies compete in a developing academic landscape with unstable citation dynamics (Feijoo et al., 2014).

The fluctuating illustrations and the number of articles published each year in figure 3 portray the time of high-volume publication followed by the time of relative stagnation. On the one hand, a noticeably high point in publication indicates socio-political events or international aid aimed at improving women-related initiatives in Afghanistan. This improvement has also been highlighted in other studies (Baiza, 2013; Burde & Linden, 2013; Najam & Johnston, 2023). However, in years when there is little publication, there is turmoil, conflict, and lack of funding that could not accelerate publication output especially before 2001. In addition to the volume of articles, the average citations per article offer new insights into the impact and relevance of the research produced. Data variation indicates that in some years, there are a high number of articles published that have no strong influence on women education's in Afghanistan.

Next, in the research question one, we investigated the most cited countries for women's education in Afghanistan. Figure 4 and table 2 show two crucial bibliometric indicators for each country.

Table 3. Most cited countries

Country	TC	AAC
USA	5613	24.70
UK	1043	24.30
AUSTRALIA	600	18.20
GERMANY	320	18.80
NORWAY	236	18.20
AFGHANISTAN	168	5.40
SWEDEN	124	17.70
AUSTRIA	100	20.00
NETHERLANDS	90	10.00
CANADA	78	5.20

Total Citations (TC) and average article citations (AAC). The former (TC) reflects the general scholarly influence of a country's research on a particular area, whereas the latter (AAC) shows the typical impact of the individual article published by researchers from that specific country. These metrics provide an understanding of the quality and quantity of research articles produced across various nations. The USA States has the highest number of Total Citations (5613), which reflects its dominant presence in this field. Given its large academic infrastructure and extensive research output, American scholars have had a significant influence on the discourse around veterans, PTSD, military, trauma, and mental health, rather than on women's education in Afghanistan. The USA has a high Average Article Citation (24.70), which means that, on average, each article published in the United States has been cited nearly 25 times.

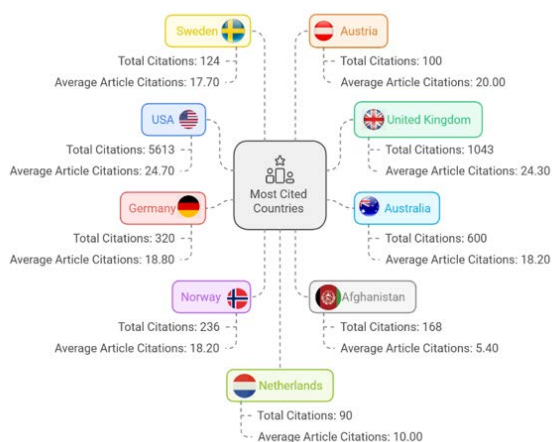


Figure 4. Most Cited Countries

The United Kingdom also shows robust performance with 1043 citations, an average of 24.30 citations per article. Australia, Germany, and Norway had moderate levels of both TC and AAC. For instance, Germany “320 citations, average 18.80” and Australia “600 citations, average 18.20” have respectable citation counts and article impact, although their research output and citation rates are not as extensive or influential as those of the USA or the UK. However, countries like

Afghanistan, Sweden, Austria, and Canada show more varied results. Afghanistan, with only 168 citations and an average article citation of 5.40, appears to have relatively low visibility in the global research landscape on this topic. This could be due to a variety of factors, including a smaller body of research being produced, limited access to international academic networks, and challenges in the academic infrastructure within Afghanistan.

Similarly, Canada “78 total citations, 5.20 average” and The Netherlands “90 total citations, 10.00 average” exhibit lower levels of both total citations and average article impact, suggesting that while these countries contribute research in this area, their work does not have as much international reach or citation influence as those from larger or more established research hubs. Overall, this figure and table reveal the discrepancies in research productivity and impact among countries. The USA and the UK lead in terms of both TC and AACs, indicating their strong scholarly assistance to the field. Conversely, Afghanistan, Canada, and the Netherlands have lower citations and averages, signifying that their research contributions are less often cited with lower visibility in global academic network.

Authors' Production over Time

To address research question 3, this study explored the publications trends of the top 10 authors that reveal different patterns considering the research output and citation impact, indicating the reach and recognition of their research within various fields. Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan, an Afghan author, stands out for his growing influence in the fields of leadership, administration, and equity and justice with a key increase in research output over the past three years, publishing four papers and receiving 18 citations, which resulted in an average of 9.000 citations per year (TCPY). This shows a rise in his work compared to his previous work, where he received a total of 38 citations in 2022 per two articles, with a higher TCPY of 12.667. In 2021, he received 15 citations

with a TCPY of 3.750. Seven papers and 71 citations, his total impact has witnessed steady growth, highlighting the increasing relevance of his research contribution to his field of study.

Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan's interest lies in the academic areas of leadership, administration, power dynamics in higher education, gender inequality(Orfan, 2023c; Orfan, 2023a) and equity and justice (Naqibullah Orfan & Niazi, 2022; Orfan & Samady, 2023). His work also explores Afghan female undergraduate married female students in higher education (Noori & Orfan, 2021), sexual harassment of female student in higher education (Orfan et al., 2022), gender voices in Afghanistan at the school level (Orfan, 2023b), addressing women by their given name in public in Afghanistan (Orfan & Rahimi, 2022), gender differences (Hashemi et al., 2022), and female students' challenges in Taliban-run universities (2024).His research mostly addresses Afghan female students academic, social, and family related challenges that they confront in Afghanistan.

Table 4. Authors' Production over Time

Author	Country	Field of Study	Year	Number of publications	Total Citations TC	Normalized TCPY
Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan	Afghanistan	leadership & administration, Equity and justice	2023	4	18	4.500
Terence M. Keane	American	PTSD	2022	2	8	2.000
Brian Marx	American	PTSD	2022	2	8	2.000
Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan	Afghanistan	leadership & administration, Equity and justice	2022	2	38	9.500
Terence M. Keane	American	PTSD	2021	1	1	0.333
Brian Marx	American	PTSD	2021	1	1	0.333
Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan	Afghanistan	leadership & administration, Equity and justice	2021	1	15	5.000
Abigail H Gewirtz	American	Psychology	2020	1	7	1.750
Bryann Baker DeBeer	American	Suicide Prevention	2019	2	61	6.100
Abigail H Gewirtz	American	Psychology	2019	1	13	2.600

The second author in line is Terence M. Keane, an American author who is famous for his research on PTSD. He experienced a modest increase in his research publication trends. In 2022, Keane published two papers that together garnered eight citations, giving him a TCPY of 2.667. Similarly, Brian Marx, another American similar to Keane's within the field of PTSD, published two papers in 2022 that garnered eight

citations, achieving a TCPY of 2.667. Abigail H. Gewirtz, an American psychologist, has had a limited number of publications. She authored one paper in 2020, which garnered seven citations, resulting in a TCPY of 1.400. Bryann Baker DeBeer, known for his work in suicide prevention is a strong academic whose work focuses on suicide prevention and shows a strong academic presence, particularly in 2019. DeBeer published two papers that year, which together garnered impressive 61 citations, resulting in a TCPY of 10.167. Her total citation count was 61, which reflects significant academic recognition within the first year of publication. These trends highlight the diverse paths to academic impact, whether by increasing publication volume, high citation rates, or the significant influence of a few well-received papers.

Most Relevant Affiliation

To answer research question two in relation to affiliation, this study indicates global and local engagement in this bibliometric analysis which reveals the contributions of academic institutions to research. 1381 total publications are associated to numerous affiliations, out of those, 245 article are the contributions of top 15 institutions, stressing the focus of research within a few entities. Boston University School of Medicine (N=43 articles), University of California (N=34 articles), and Boston University (N=29 articles). Research is always geographically diverse, with notable key contributions from universities in the U.S. such as Duke University and Baylor College of Medicine).

Table 5 Most Relevant Affiliation

Affiliation	Articles
Boston University School of Medicine	43
University of California	34
Boston University	29
Duke University School of Medicine	18
Durham VA Medical Centre	18
UNITED STATES (other affiliations)	18
University of Minnesota	18
University of Vienna	15
Baylor college of medicine	14
Duke University Medical Centre	14
Kandahar University	14
Medical University of South Carolina	14
Western Sydney university	14
Oregon Health and Science University	13
Takhar University	13

Contributions from international institutions, such as the University of Vienna, were also witnessed. In Afghanistan, Kandahar and Takhar University have also contributed, indicating increasing attention in the discourse. This geographically diverse contribution underscores international collaborations, with key intersections among health, psychological issues, and medical perspectives. This analysis demonstrates the significance of both global expertise and local engagement in advancing this vital area of research. Based on the above-mentioned data, it is conceivable that research and studies on women's education in Afghanistan from 1980-2024 on have been minimal. In addition, there has been no research on women's education in Afghanistan from 1980-2024 period in Scopus indexed journals, as shown in table 5.

Visualizing Collaboration Patterns Through Sankey Analysis

To answer Research Question 2, the Sankey diagram demonstrates the thematic progression to visualize the flow and distribution in scientific research (Lupton & Allwood, 2017). In this case, the Sankey diagram employing Biblioshiny systematically visualizes the interplay between various fields, such as author keywords, authors, countries, cited sources, and affiliations, in aiding the identification of interrelated concepts within the dataset. DE stands for descriptors, AU_CO for country affiliations, and TI_TM stands for Title and terms or keywords.

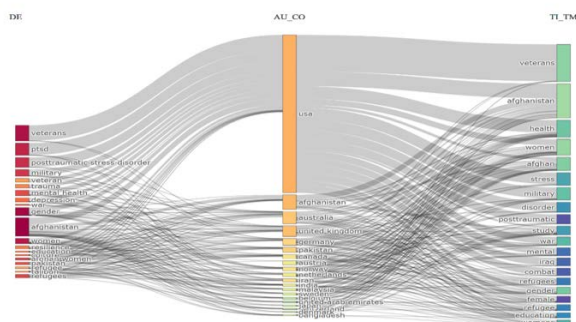


Figure 5. Three Field Plots

This diagram illustrates the fundamental disparities in scholarly research contributions in various fields. The diagram's limited number of descriptors (DE) illustrates inadequate research output related to women's education in Afghanistan, which indicates a lack of extensive research on women's education in Afghanistan. Certain terms related to women education are "gender", "women", and "education" are less prevalent or underrepresented when compared to more commonly research area such as "PTSD" and "veterans" of foreign troops. This disparity underscores a fundamental gap in academic and scholarly discourse focusing on women's education which is especially concerning in the context of Afghanistan in the 21st century.

Depriving women from education by the Taliban has drastically restricted access to education and other opportunities to broaden their horizons, requiring academic attention to this matter direly. Given the key role of education in empowering women and advancing gender equality, the inadequacy of scholarly research is alarming. Addressing this pressing concern is paramount for Afghan women and their upcoming generation. Several studies highlighted the importance of education for Afghan women highlighting the fact that education empowers women to make informed decisions, enhances gender inequalities, opens up economic opportunities for better employment, foster social development, advances inclusivity and equity, and resists oppressive practices and norms (Lemmon, 2012; Hussain & Amin, 2018; Moravej, 2022; Hamed, 2023; Najam, 2024)

The diagram's Country Affiliations (AU_CO): While Afghanistan is the center of attention in this study, especially in the field of women's education, the volume of scholarly research does not reflect the fundamental nature of this pressing issue. In contrast, countries with a high volume of research publications on PTSD and Veterans, such as the USA and Australia, indicate a dominant academic portion that focuses on mental health

issues affecting their military personnel. Despite the multifaceted challenges faced by Afghan women, scholarly research does not match the gravity of this problem. Looking at the highest contributing countries like USA, UK, Germany, their research efforts paid attention veterans, PTSD, military personnel and their health issue, as opposed to Afghan women education. This shows that combat and mental health receive more attention and funding in comparison to the big challenge that women's education confront and their access and equity remains disproportionately low in research output.

The diagram's titles and themes (TI_TM) demonstrates the lowering position of the terms such "Education," "Women," "refugees" indicates a substantial lack of research output as compared to "veterans" and "health." This underrepresentation underscores a critical gap in attracting the attention of scholars in the field of education to engage in and prioritize this pressing issue in future research endeavors.

Most Relevant Sources:

To answer research question 4, the most relevant cited sources in this Scopus literature search came from the fields of psychology and social sciences and provided significant insights into various aspects of health, trauma, and gender studies.

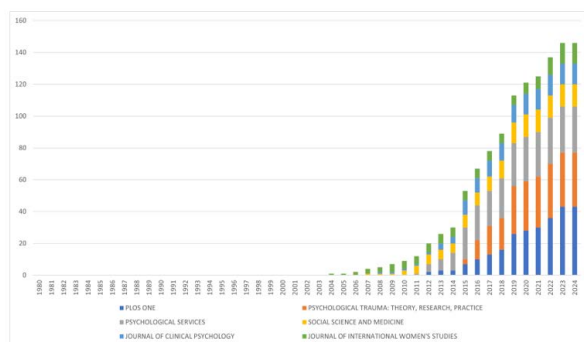


Figure 6. Most relevant source

PLOS One, a non-profit open access publisher, has an impact factor of 2.9 and aims to advance scientific research communication. Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, with an impact factor of 2.7, is a journal affiliated with APA Division 56 and focuses on trauma psychology. Similarly, Psychological Services, with an impact factor of 1.9, addresses the intersection of psychological services and public policy and is published by the APA Division 18. Social Science and Medicine, which boasts an impact factor of 4.9, serves as an interdisciplinary forum for research on the social determinants of health. The Journal of Clinical Psychology, with an impact factor of 2.5, covers clinical psychological science, including research, assessment, and practice. Finally, the Journal of International Women's Studies, though with a lower impact factor of 0.655, is an open-access feminist journal that explores critical gender and sexuality theories and their intersection with activism and organizing. These sources collectively contribute to diverse, high-impact research across multiple domains of the psychological and social sciences.

Conceptual map of keywords

3.6.1 keywords Frequency

Next, this exploration answers research question 5 regarding most frequent keywords extracted from the search in bibliometric analysis reveals a solid stress on the gender aspect in Afghanistan, as shown by the frequent manifestation of the word "Female." The name "Afghanistan" and "War" emphasizes the multifaceted socio-political situations which shaped the educational opportunities in the country. The presence of the "United States" indicates the health implications of war and conflict on female American veterans (Ames-Chase, 2010; Breyer et al., 2016; Koo & Maguen, 2014; Mohanty et al., 2015; Newins et al., 2019). While comparatively low frequency of "mental health" underscores a potential scholarly research gap, it is highly important to highlight the

limited scholarly research on women education in Afghanistan by the western countries, amplifying the voices for women education in every recognized international platform including UN secretary General, world leader's, Amnesty international, various media outlets, and concerned UN Agencies (Aljazeera, 2022; MyNEWS, 2024; Reuters, 2022) and it remain just words "Action speaks louder than words". A more in-depth investigation of the corpus is required to understand the nuances and intricacies of emerging opportunities in research on women's education in the Afghan context.

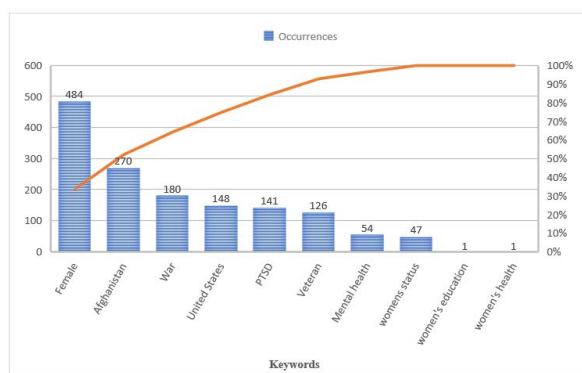


Figure 7. Most Frequent Words

Words Frequency Over Time

This section explores Research Question 5, regarding words frequency over time. The frequency of words over time shows how the frequency of specific keywords evolved from year to year. Keywords such as Afghanistan, Gender, Veterans, Women, PTSD, Mental health, etc., represent the main themes of the research. First, the frequency of Afghanistan in the available literature has increased from zero occurrences from 1980 to 2003, with the peak occurrences in Afghanistan, with the highest recorded frequency appearing in 2024 with 135 occurrences. This means that global research interest has increased in different spheres of Afghanistan, particularly since 2001.

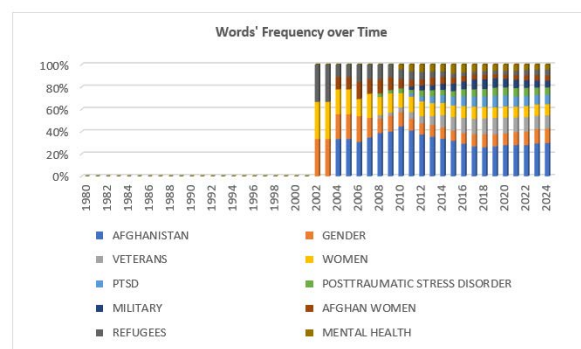


Figure 8. Words' Frequency Over Time

Another key term is gender, which follows the same trajectory as Afghanistan, with zero occurrences since the 1980s and gradually increasing in 2000, with a peak increase in 2024, reaching 59 occurrences the highest among the rest of the key words which shows growing attention to gender related concerns in Afghanistan including gender inequality, women's rights, and the status of women in educational and social contexts. The surge after 2001 is likely connected to the worldwide discourse on women's empowerment, and the stress that the international community placed on gender within the educational and social context.

The next term is veterans although it is relatively low, yet reaches to its peak occurrences of 54 times. This term is associated with the context of female international security forces that have suffered psychologically during war, such as PTSD (Armenta et al., 2018; Castillo et al., 2021; Peterson, 2022; Peterson et al., 2021). Consequently, research on female veterans has increased and attracted attention to health-related issues such as trauma, mental health, and post-war rehabilitation ((Ames-Chase, 2010; Breyer et al., 2016; Koo & Maguen, 2014; Mohanty et al., 2015; Newins et al., 2019). Another key term is the word women, which also attracts attention in research output, reaching 45 occurrences, probably within the army and military personnel. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) appeared more prominently in the literature after 2010,

with a noticeable rise after 2015. By 2024, the cumulative frequency reached 38 occurrences. Military is another term in the literature that is connected with the last 20 years of wars, foreign interventions that reach the peak of 28 occurrences are seen in 2024. It could also reflect research on the role of military women and female soldiers and their involvement in post-conflict rebuilding.

Afghan women's literature in this Scopus search started to appear around 2004 and grew steadily thereafter, reaching 22 occurrences by 2024. Despite its wide range of media attention, there is limited scholarly research on women's education in Afghanistan. Refugees are another frequent term that appeared in 2002, reflecting the growing number of Afghan refugees due to conflict, which rose gradually, peaking at 22 occurrences by 2024 (Adelman, 2016; Monsutti, 2008; Qazi Zada & Qazi Zada, 2024; Varghese et al., 2024). The refugee situation, particularly for Afghan women displaced by conflict, may be closely tied to the broader literature on women's education, as refugees often face significant barriers to education (Khan et al., 2024; Sharifian et al., 2021).

The growing frequency of this term reflects the research on the challenges faced by Afghan refugees, including issues related to schooling and reintegration into society. Mental health is also highlighted in the literature which shows gradual growth over time, particularly post-2001, with a peak 21 occurrences in 2024. This has become an increasingly important area of research, especially in conflict zones. The rise of this term reflects growing concerns about the psychological effects of war and trauma in Afghanistan, especially among military personnel, who face unique challenges in accessing mental health care and education (Adler et al., 2017; Bergmann et al., 2019; Schreiber & McEnany, 2015; R. T. Smith & True, 2014).

3.6.3 Thematic Map

To answer research question 5 regarding the

conceptual thematic map according to the authors' keywords, this research plotted a conceptual map (See Fig.9) using the two main dimensions. The first dimension is density, which indicates the degree of development the themes measured by the internal connection among the keywords, or density determines the extent of articles' development according to the network's internal strength (Alsmadi et al., 2023).

The centrality dimension, shows the relevance of the themes measured by outsider links among the themes. Centrality (degree of relevance) indicates the significance of a theme in the entire research field (Hu, 2024). The map has four quadrants: First, the motor themes are located in high density and centrality. Second, basic themes are located at low density and high centrality. Third, the niche themes are located in high density and low centrality. Fourth, merging/declining themes are located at a low density and centrality (Bretas & Alon, 2021).

This portion of the analysis displays representation that provides authors with visualization of dominant research topics, highlights the research topics' proximity and relationships, and presents patterns and trends. These research topics were drawn from the keywords used by the author at the initial stages of this research. The representation in figure 9 consists of four quadrants, each portraying a unique degree of density and centrality of the research topic.

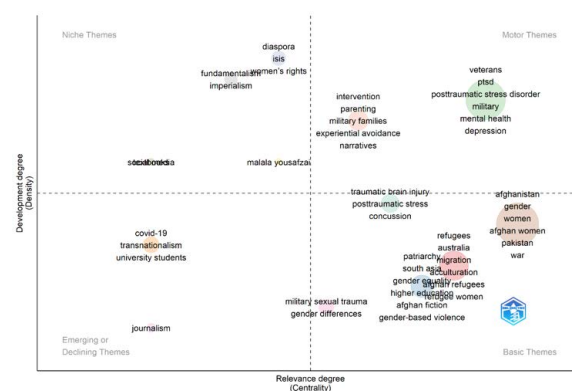


Figure 9. Conceptual thematic maps (Source: Biblioshiny)

As we can see in (fig. 9), the basic themes quadrant placed topics with a high centrality degree but not significantly high density, indicating critical research topics that are overwhelmingly discussed in the existing literature. This quadrant consists of many critical issues: gender-based violence, higher education, refugee women, patriarchy, gender equality, migrations, acculturation, and refugees in Australia. The absence of women's education in Afghanistan, as shown in the basic theme quadrant in the conceptual map above indicates that this topic is underrepresented in the existing literature. This shows that the discussion on women's education in Afghanistan is fragmented and scattered in subtopics, rather than being addressed as the main theme. This underrepresentation and fragmentation highlights the need for more scholarly research that addresses the dynamics of women's education in Afghanistan. The largest node in basic themes indicates surrounding topics such as Afghan women, gender, and women, demonstrating the existing literature focus.

The motor theme quadrant included research topics with high centrality and density signifying areas with an extensive research focus. This highly researched topic is attributed to the protracted conflict, which is a highly researched area due to the conflict and international security forces in Afghanistan. The second largest nodes in motor themes indicate topics that include veterans, PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health, and depression of the military presence (Harper et al., 2022). This scholarly discussion attracted researchers from several countries to conduct research on the psychological and social impact of conflict on military personnel (Dyball et al., 2022; Phillips & Albanesi, 2022). This indicates a focused scholarly discussion on the mental health consequences confronted by military personnel, reflecting the dire need to address challenges within the context of longitudinal conflict and its aftermath. These themes highlight the significance of longstanding research and

intervention strategies to advance the well-being of veterans and those affected by PTSD and other psychological concerns in the battleground.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this bibliometric study yield valuable insights that require in-depth engagement and reflection among practitioners, policy, and academics. This study's research questions predominantly indicate the fragmentation and evolution of scholarship on women's education in the Islamic world, with a particular focus on women's education in Afghanistan, revealing a critical gap that calls urgent attention. The purpose of this bibliometric analysis is to examine the intellectual structure of women's education in Afghanistan by employing a bibliometric analysis from 1980 to 2024. The findings highlight the urgent need for a contextually grounded, more inclusive, and sustained approach to addressing the barriers facing the Afghan women's education system.

Publication and citation trends from 1980 to 2024 demonstrate a delayed but growing scholarly engagement with Afghan women's education, particularly in the post-2001 era. This trend highlights the significance of strengthening policy frameworks that advance sustained academic inquiry, especially in contexts affected by conflict and fragility. As research production in such a context is frequently sensitive to political transitions and external interventions, there is a dire need for more funding mechanisms and protection to exercise academic freedom. Scholars are encouraged to examine how international assistance, security conditions, and geopolitical interests influence research priorities in post-conflict contexts.

There is an uneven distribution of research contributions from Western countries, with Afghan scholars and institutions playing a minimal role in academic scholarly discussions in reputable journals such as Scopus on women's education in

Afghanistan. This skewed representation indicates a critical gap in local scholarly engagement and calls for certain initiatives within Afghan higher education institutions to build capacity. Policymakers and international funding agencies should prioritize collaborative research activities, provide training opportunities, and develop an infrastructure that permits local researchers to participate in global research networks.

It was also found that there is a limited circle of scholars, mainly from the United States and its allied nations, who lead citation networks when it comes to Afghan women's education. This concentration highlights the inadequacy of diversity in authorship and scholarly influence, potentially reinforcing externally imposed interpretations. To address this concern, academic institutions and networks should incorporate inclusive authorship by mentoring Afghan researchers and amplifying their perspectives in global discussions. Promoting collaborative authorship and regional academic exchange can also assist in redistributing academic influence and improving the field with locally grounded insights.

The most cited sources of Afghan women's education are predominantly published in journals focused on psychology and trauma, while targeted educational journals have limited visibility. This finding posits a disciplinary gap that might limit the visibility of education-specific insights in large-scale academic and policy debates. Therefore, journal editors and academic hubs should consider launching special issues or thematic call that concentrate on women's education in conflict-affected contexts to amplify this marginalized area. Concurrently, it is imperative that scholars explore an interdisciplinary publishing strategies that bridge education, political science, and gender studies.

The conceptual analysis demonstrated that emerging but critical themes such as gender-based violence, refugee education, and acculturation were insufficiently represented despite their high

contextual relevance. These thematic areas signify a fertile ground for future inquiry, particularly in understanding how displacement, conflict, and sociocultural shifts shape women's educational access and outcomes. Prioritizing this intersection can expand the theoretical and practical knowledge of educational equity in fragile contexts.

We suggest that future research examine specific barriers impeding women's education, such as the root causes of political deprivation of women's education, cultural norms, security concerns and the impact of poverty on women's education in Afghanistan. Future research should assess the impact of international policies and aid on women's education in Afghanistan. Similarly, researchers could examine advanced strategies to promote girls' education, particularly community-based initiatives, scholarship programs, professional development and teacher training.

In short, the implications of this bibliometric analysis highlight the dire need for a more inclusive, context-driven, and supportable research ecosystem of Afghan women's education. Promoting this agenda requires a planned transition toward raising local scholarly voices, endorsing regionally driven collaborations with interdisciplinary perspectives that replicate the complex nature of women's educational barriers in fragile contexts. By prioritizing local agencies, enhancing global partnerships, and aligning research objectives with the lived realities of Afghan women, academic initiatives can genuinely contribute to transformative educational policies and practices.

This bibliometric review has some limitations. First, full literature search yielded a database of 53560 English sources. However, this review focused only on journal articles, thus limiting the size of the dataset to 708 journal articles in English. Therefore, this review's findings may not represent the full female education literature, especially from unpublished work, either master's or doctoral literature. However, we believe this review portrays

a rational representation of women's education in the literature and offers a solid foundation to begin (e.g., authorship, citations, and themes keywords), to identify future directions for the development of women education in the Islamic world.

Although we tried our best to surface all English journals on women's education in Afghanistan, our search does not cover all the literature/databases. Scopus, an international research database, often prioritizes English-language publications and chiefly incorporates Western literature. Therefore, certain journal publications along the way might be missing while searching the literature. Consequently, future research on women's education should incorporate Afghan local databases in both national languages to add more perspectives from the eastern and local perspectives.

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