

Rural Education of Girls and Poverty in Afghanistan: Implications for Social, Political and Economic Welfare

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of poverty on rural education of girls in Afghanistan. The study employed the Randomized control trial in a field experiment which is structured to include two groups namely the treatment and control groups. Variables used include; the level of individual wealth, village based school as the treatment group, the interaction of being poor in a village-based school. The findings showed that girls from poor homes do not have access to education when compared to girls from rich homes. When schools are established in rural areas, girls from poor homes still cannot be enrolled in schools. Also, from the results, it was observed that girls who are enrolled in schools often score more than boys in class test. To policy makers, this research recommends a shift from pursuing only boy child education to also include the girl child in education policies either by allowing girls to join the boys in same school or create a separate girls' school for the girls. Achieving this balance has

huge implications for the social, political and economic welfare of the citizens.

Keywords: Poverty, Rural Education, Gender, Afghanistan

JEL Classification: J16, I21, I24, O18

1. INTRODUCTION

For several decades, people of Afghanistan were subjected to conflict and devastation. Women have been the worst victims of the conflict. Under the Taliban rule, several restrictions were imposed on the female gender of the society that resulted in the low rate of girl's participation in primary education (Utsimu, 2022). The gender gap is prominent and only 37 percent of the primary school children attended these village schools regularly (Burde and Linden, 2012). The government has recently engaged in

promoting girls education and has focused on improving the condition of village-based schools to encourage education of girls from the poorer background (Inayatullah, 2022 and Olson, 2005). It has also been shown that Afghanistan has been experiencing different degrees of social and economic instability. Over the past few decades, the country has been reported to develop different schools, colleges, and educational institutions, although the discriminations for women have remained constant. In comparison to the rich girls in rural areas, the social norms regulations, and jurisdictions do not favour the poor girls in the Afghanistan social environment (Tareen & Muhammadi, 2021 and Lundahl & Wadensjo, 2015). The absence of proper resources in the villages of Afghanistan has started to pose a serious threat to the future of the poor girls of Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, there are different activities that are involved in increasing the status, position and conditions of women in the Afghan society. However, there are different factors that have been the major causes of discrimination against women in the country. Afghanistan has engaged strict male biases, tribal norms and regulations for women, religious extremists, poor law and jurisdictions (Tareen & Muhammadi, 2021

and Selod and Zenou, 2006). These factors coupled with strict laws and norms for women have been increasing women's discriminations in the country. In Afghanistan, the women and girls have also been facing issues for educational participations against males in the country. According to Rahimi (2015), the girls from poor family face more problems in the society in respect of rich girls of the society. The girls from the poor family may be more brilliant but they do not hold any influence over the schools whereas, the rich family has influences which help them to get their children's marks better even if they do not perform well in their exams. The society is biased not only against girls but also mainly against poor girls (Mashriqi, 2016). The community only respects the rich families and so, they do not interfere in the life of the rich families.

Afghanistan has 42 per cent of its population under poverty. In rural areas, 45 per cent of its population is under poverty and in urban areas, about 21 per cent of its population is under the line poverty. In rural areas, the population is around 23 million. The population in rural areas consist of 90 per cent illiterate women and about 63 per cent illiterate men. The population has always been highly dependent upon the agricultural