

**ANALYZING FEMALE HUMANITARIAN WORKERS' CHALLENGES; A CASE OF
HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN**

By

Jamila Ahmadi

23168004

A thesis submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master in Disaster Management.

Postgraduate Programs in Disaster Management (PPDM)

Department of Architecture

BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

September 2024

© 2024, **Jamila Ahmadi**

All rights reserved.

Declaration

I at this moment declare that:

1. This thesis is my original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.
2. This thesis does not include the material previously published or written by others, except where properly cited with full and correct references.
3. The current thesis has not been submitted or accepted for any other degree or diploma at any university or institution.
4. I have acknowledged all significant sources of assistance.

I at this moment, that the thesis titled 'Analyzing Female Humanitarian Workers' Challenges; A Case of Humanitarian Organizations in Afghanistan' is my original work, except where otherwise indicated. I have acknowledged all the sources of information and assistance, and I have obeyed all academic and ethical standards as required by Brac University



Jamila Ahmadi

ID: 23168004

Approval

The thesis entitled “ANALYZING FEMALE HUMANITARIAN WORKERS’ CHALLENGES; A CASE OF HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN” submitted by JAMILA AHMADI (ID: 23168004) in Summer 2024 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master in Disaster Management on September 2024.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)



Shams Mansoor Ghani
Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture
School of Architecture and Design (SoAD), Brac University

Program Coordinator:
(Member)



Muhammad Ferdaus
Lecturer and Coordinator
Postgraduate Programs in Disaster Management (PPDM)
Department of Disaster Management and Resilience Design
School of Architecture and Design (SoAD), Brac University

External Examiner:
(Member)



Md. Mijanur Rahman
Director General (Former)
Department of Disaster Management, MoDMR
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Departmental Head:
(Chair)



Zainab Faruqui Ali, PhD
Chairperson, Postgraduate Programs in Disaster Management Board
Professor and Chairperson, Department of Architecture
School of Architecture and Design (SoAD), Brac University

Ethics Statement

The study included female humanitarian workers from different organizations and different backgrounds for ethical considerations, the names of the participants and their organization's details of the participants remained anonymous throughout this research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants interviewed in this research and their organizations, and all the participants and their organizations were fully informed about the purpose of this research. All the collected data and participants' confidentiality were maintained and securely stored and will not be shared with any individual or organization. After completing this research, all the collected data will be appropriately destroyed or deleted. Throughout the study, my role as an academic researcher was communicated and understood by all involved parties.

Abstract

This paper explores the numerous difficulties and challenges experienced by female humanitarian workers within humanitarian organizations currently working in Afghanistan. Humanitarian organizations play an important role in providing services and support to the most vulnerable population of this country while offering job opportunities for women in humanitarian and other related sectors. This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in the humanitarian sector. It encompasses their roles and responsibilities and the barriers they face due to the lack of governmental and organizational support, political instabilities, economic difficulties, security issues, and conservative society and families.

Females in Afghanistan were always victims of society, and their situation and status became worse in the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power after twenty years. For more than two years, women have encountered several challenges and restrictions on their rights, including limitations on their liberty and freedom, education, healthcare, movements, dress, and working in offices. Under the rule and government of the Taliban, women have to follow these compulsory rules, including dress codes like the full hijab restrictions in their movement in public, and the ban on universities and schools without raising their voices.

The research conducted a mixed-methods design that encompassed qualitative and quantitative data. For qualitative data, the researchers utilized in-depth interviews with female workers, and for quantitative data, an online survey was conducted. For data gathering, female humanitarian workers were selected from three national and three international organizations in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, facilitated by software tools such as NVivo, enables the identification of recurring themes and patterns, illuminating the complex interplay of challenges and societal stigma faced by female workers. Quantitative data analysis is conducted using SPSS to analyze the survey responses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the respondents.

The findings of this research contributed valuable insights for interventions and enhanced opportunities aimed at addressing the unique challenges encountered by female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan, the effects on their mental health, and their coping mechanisms. By highlighting the importance of a comprehensive and targeted approach, the study advocates for

initiatives that promote gender equality, allocate resources effectively, and eliminate cultural barriers within the humanitarian sector. Ultimately, the research aims to empower female humanitarian workers to navigate and overcome challenges thereby, creating a safer and more supportive environment for their professional growth and contributions to vulnerable communities in Afghanistan.

Keywords: *Female Humanitarian Workers, Challenges, National and International NGOs*

Acknowledgment

I am deeply owed to various individuals who provided unforgettable and invaluable support and encouragement throughout the several stages of my thesis. First and foremost, I would like to extend my warmest gratitude to my respectful and honorable supervisor, Shams Mansoor Ghani. His unlimited guidance, valuable insights, and thoughtful feedback were critical to completing this thesis. His dedication to my academic growth and unwavering support have been truly inspiring. Without his expert and honest guidance and timely interventions, this thesis would not have reached its completion.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to all the Department of Disaster Management members at Brac University. Particularly, the program coordinator and lecturer Muhammad Ferdous, his mentorship and guidance throughout my academic journey were remarkable. His support in both the classroom and beyond has greatly enriched my learning experience, and I am truly thankful for his support.

My warmest appreciation extends to my friends and previous colleagues who provided valuable assistance during the data collection process. Their support has been necessary, and I am deeply grateful for their time and effort to contribute to my research.

Finally, I am honestly and deeply grateful for my respectful and kind family. To my parents and my brother, for unwavering motivation, financial support, and constant belief in my abilities have been the foundation of my achievements. Their love and honest support have sustained and motivated me through the most challenging times and for all that I owe a debt of gratitude.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval.....	iii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Acknowledgment.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Acronyms.....	xii
Chapter one	
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	2
1.3 Objectives of the Research.....	3
1.4 Research Questions.....	3
1.5 Significance of Study.....	4
1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Research.....	5
Chapter Two	
Literature Review.....	6
2.1 Historical Context and the Impact of Conflict and Instability on Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan.....	6
2.1.1 Soviet Invasion.....	6
2.1.2 Consequence of the Soviet Invasion.....	7
2.1.3 Humanitarian Assistance.....	7
2.1.4 Civil War.....	8
2.1.5 US- Lead in Afghanistan.....	9
2.2 Gender Dynamic in a Humanitarian Setting.....	10
2.2.1 Gender dynamic in Urban areas.....	11
2.2.2 Gender Dynamics in Rural Areas.....	11
2.3 Women’s situation in the first regime of the Taliban.....	13
2.3.1 Changes in the Lives of women after the Collapse of the First regime of the Taliban	13
2.4 Women in Afghanistan over the last 20 years and the return of the Taliban.....	15

2.5 NGOs in Afghanistan.....	16
2.5.1 NGOs in the First Regime of Taliban 1996-2001	17
2.5.2 NGOs between 2001-2021	17
2.6 Overview of Female Humanitarian Workers’ Role	18
2.6.1 Brief Explanation of Female Humanitarian Workers’ Challenges	18
2.7 A Brief Explanation of Humanitarian Organization in Afghanistan	19
2.7.1 Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH)	21
2.7.2 Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)	21
2.7.3 International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC)	22
2.7.4 Organization for Coordination of Humanitarian Relief (OCHR).....	22
2.7.5 Community Action for Healing Poverty Organization (CHAPO)	22
2.7.6 Afghan Development Association (ADA)	23
Chapter Three	
Methodology	25
3.1 Advantages of Using Mixed Methods	25
3.2 Research Materials	25
3.3 Participants for the Interview	27
3.4 Sampling	28
3.4.1 Purposive Sampling	28
3.4.2 Snowball Sampling	29
3.4.3 Random Sampling.....	29
3.5 Research Location	29
3.6 Data Collection.....	30
3.7 Data Analysis	31
3.8 Ethics of the Research.....	32
Chapter Four	
Findings and Results.....	34
4.1 Navigating the Current Challenges Faced by Female Humanitarian Workers Under the Regime of the Taliban.....	37
4.1.1 Before Taliban	37
4.1.2 Under the Flag of the Taliban.....	40
4.2 Ban of Work on Female Workers	44

4.2.2 Cultural and Societal Norms	50
4.2.3 Security Risk	52
4.2.4 Stigmatization and Harassment	54
4.3 Female Humanitarian Workers' Challenges in NGOs	54
4.3.1 Discrimination	55
4.3.2 Work-life Balance	57
4.4 Coping Mechanism	59
4.4.1 Moral Purpose.....	59
4.4.2 Financial Income	61
4.4.3 Hope for Changes	62
4.5 Organizational Support and policies on how to cope with the challenges	63
4.6 Organizational Policies and Practices	65
4.6.1 Policy Adaptation	66
4.6.2 Strategic Negotiation	67
4.6.3 Resource Allocation.....	68
Chapter Five	
5.1 Discussion	70
5.2 Recommendations	73
5.3 Conclusion	75
References.....	77
Appendixes	86

List of Tables

Table 01: List of NGOs and INGOs according to the Ministry of Economy

Table 02: List of NGOs and INGOs according to ACBAR

Table 03: Participants Information

Table 04: Anonymous name of organizations

Table 05: Academic Qualification of the Participants

Table 06: Work Experience of the Participants

Table 07: Type of organizations

List of Figures

Figure 01: Data collection method

Figure 01: Percentage of staff distribution in the organizations

Figure 02: Percentage of agreement and disagreement of participants to the changes

Figure 03: Level of anxiety and depression

Figure 04: Impact of cultural and Social Barriers

Figure 05: Level of security concerns

Figure 06: Level of discrimination

Figure 07: Manage work-life balance

Figure 08: Impact of sense or moral

Figure 09: Impact of financial motive

Figure 10: Hope for the changes

Figure 11: Impact of work environment

Figure 12: Adapt to the changes

List of Acronyms

NGOs	Non-governmental organization
INGOs	International Non-governmental organization
SPSS	Statistical Package of Social Science
UN	United Nations
AKAH	Aga Khan Agency for Habitat
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
OCHR	Organization for Coordination of Humanitarian Relief
ADA	Afghanistan Development Association
CHAPO	Community Action for Healing Poverty Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United State
HPS	High Peace Council
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
ISIS	Islamic State
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
IRC	International Rescue Committee
AAH	Action Against Hunger
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
DACA AR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
AWEC	Afghan Women's Education Center
AWRSA	Afghan Women Rehabilitation and Skill Building Association
HOPA	Humanitarian Organization for the People of Afghanistan
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
GNI-A	Good Neighbors International
AHF	Afghan Humanitarian Fund
WCC	World Child Canada
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergency
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid (Afghanistan)
ECI	Enabled Children Initiative
CAID	Christian Aid

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Women have been engaged in humanitarian work for decades, but their contributions and challenges have constantly been overlooked (Larmenier & Brennan, 2019). Over 40% of the 500,000 humanitarian workers who offer frontline aid during extremities, wars, and disasters are anticipated to be women (Patel et al., 2020). Female humanitarian workers play a pivotal role in meeting the specific requirements of women and girls affected by humanitarian crises, but they encounter several challenges. Despite their long involvement in humanitarian work, women are occasionally disregarded in disaster response operations (Larmenier & Brennan, 2019). Women are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse, which can cause physical and mental trauma, potentially affecting their movement and effectiveness on the job (Sauter, 2024). Half of the population of Afghanistan is made up of women and girls, and it should be assured that they're involved in humanitarian tasks and receive due acknowledgment for their contribution. Women around the world face challenges and rigors. In the social and conservative environment of Afghanistan, women and girls are among the most vulnerable strata of the country (UN Women, 2022). In Afghanistan, more than 800 NGOs and INGOs are engaged in humanitarian, reconstruction, development, and peacebuilding programs, and female workers are a part of these associations and play crucial roles in delivering humanitarian services (Olson, 2006).

Afghanistan can be considered one of the most dangerous places for female humanitarian workers (Albrecht, 2022). The recent takeover of the Taliban has hurt women's rights, freedoms, and their capability to work and provide humanitarian assistance. Female humanitarian workers are essential because they frequently have better access to women and children, who make up an important part of those in need and vulnerable (Curter, 2002). The humanitarian extremity in Afghanistan has been aggravated by ongoing political insecurity, economic stress, and natural disasters, making the role of NGOs and philanthropic organizations more pivotal than ever (Faarup, 2022). still, the unique challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan remain largely understudied, despite their significant contributions to the sector. This exploration aims to bridge

this gap by examining the multifaceted challenges female humanitarian workers encounter within national and international NGOs operating in Afghanistan.

The study employed a mixed-methods design and employed in-depth interviews for qualitative data collection, as well as an online survey for gathering quantitative data. The findings of this exploration contributed precious perceptivity for interventions and enhanced openings aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan. By pressing the significance of a comprehensive and targeted approach, the study advocates for enterprises that promote gender equivalency, allocate coffers effectively, and exclude artistic walls within the humanitarian sector. Eventually, the exploration aimed to reveal the power of Afghan women and female humanitarian workers to navigate how they could overcome the challenges, what kind of support they entered from their associations, and what other managing mechanisms were there. Meanwhile, this study explored how the changes affected their internal faculty. Thereby, creating a safer and further probative terrain for their professional growth and benefactions to vulnerable communities in Afghanistan.

1.2 Problem Statement

Afghanistan is a country with a challenging environment for females in the geopolitical context due to decades of war, humanitarian crises, political instability, natural disasters, and cultural norms. Not only for female humanitarian workers, overall it is a tough and restrictive society. Specifically, since the Taliban came into power women and adolescent girls have not had access even to their fundamental rights, which makes their lives very difficult (Essar & Rauf, 2023). According to the report of the UN, in 2023, millions of Afghan people require humanitarian assistance, and according to the cultural and social norms existing female workers are needed because in most areas Afghan women may not feel comfortable heading to a male environment or they cannot share their sensitive issues directly to the men and family.

Female humanitarian workers play a very important role in addressing humanitarian needs. However, they frequently face challenges that can ruin their sense of safety (Tiina Saarikoski, 2019). Female Humanitarian workers who are working in NGOs and INGOs despite their imperative contribution face sociocultural barriers, environmental and Organization policy barriers, security challenges, and so on (Najafi Zada, 2019).

The current research on the broader challenges in humanitarian work specified the challenges and gender-specific issues faced by female workers, especially in the Afghan community. This research is driven for the assessment of a very comprehensive examination of the challenges faced by female workers in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul and Mazar-e- Sharif in both National and International NGOs, understanding their experience with past and current governments, and how they cope with these challenges while continuing their contribution in addressing humanitarian assistance. Knowing the experiences of these women working in NGOs and INGOs is important for the progress of gender-responsive policies and support systems of these organizations.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

To adopt a comprehensive understanding of the Female humanitarian worker's challenges within National and International NGOs in Afghanistan, this research will focus on the below objectives:

- Focus on and describe the specific roles and responsibilities of female humanitarian workers within both national and international NGOs working in “Afghanistan”.
- To assess and analyze gender-specific “challenges” faced by female humanitarian workers, considering personal, social, and Organizational concerns and how they can cope with these challenges.
- Investigate the strategies female humanitarian workers employ to manage work-life balance, particularly in demanding and challenging environments in Afghanistan.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the main responsibilities of female humanitarian workers within the context of NGOs?
- What gender-specific challenges are faced by female humanitarian workers within the NGOs in Afghanistan?
- What kind of systems and policies are supported by these national and international organizations to address these gender-related challenges, and how do these females cope?

1.5 Significance of Study

The presence of women in society with their right to work as men is very important and makes up one of the most significant pillars of a successful society. This study will address an evident gap in the existing literature by focusing on the experiences of female humanitarian workers within National Organizations. It suggests an in-depth detection that is contextually particular, reflecting the inimitable socio-cultural dynamics of the region, by their working in National and International Organizations and the challenges that they faced. This study contributes to the valuable aspects that can be aware of the development of gender-responsive policies within national and international NGOs. This has the power to promote and enhance gender equity and equality within the humanitarian sector. Female humanitarian workers are often engaged in capacity building for the local Afghan women, which is important for long-term socio-economic development. Exploring the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers enables the recognition of areas where support systems and organizational practice can be promoted. This assists in a more useful and safe work environment for women in the humanitarian sector.

This study aims to explore practical recommendations for improving working conditions. These recommendations are to be planned by the organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders to accomplish tangible and useful changes that impact positively on the well-being and efficiency of female humanitarian workers. The discovery of transverse agents such as age, ethnicity, and education level can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges. Working females in organizations show a diversity of experiences. This study will highlight the challenges that underscore international advocacy and awareness needed. It can drive global attention and support toward improving conditions for female humanitarian workers and by extension the communities they serve.

In conclusion, this study investigates the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers within humanitarian organizations such as AKAH, BRAC, and ICRC, and National NGOs such as OCHR, CHAPO, and ADA, how they treat the female staff, which kind of coping mechanisms are there for overcoming the challenges, and which type of support is given by this organizations in this regard.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The scope and Limitations of this research emphasize and focus on exploring the specific challenges faced by female humanitarian workers within humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan. Particularly, within both the national and international organizations. Its objective is to examine gender-specific obstacles, coping mechanisms, and organizational support systems in this context. However, the below limitations were found in this research.

1.6.1 Sensitivity of the Topic: The objective of this study is to explore the massive challenges faced by female humanitarian workers under the Taliban regime. Nevertheless, the sensitivity of this topic especially, in the current political situation, brought up significant obstacles in locating and engaging participants. Some of the participants are unwilling to participate in interviews or surveys due to fear of the consequences for themselves.

1.6.2 Security Concerns: Distance from Afghanistan made it difficult to collect the data and conduct face-to-face interviews and fieldwork. The participants first couldn't trust the researcher to share the exact information and even they were not allowed by their organization to give an interview

1.6.3 Fear of Report: The participants underreported their experiences of abuse, harassment, and discrimination because of the fear of harassment from the Taliban and even fear of warning from their organizations, and losing their present jobs. This caused an incomplete picture of the challenges that they faced.

1.6.4 Apprehension in discussing Taliban- related topics: The participants avoid talking about this issue because of the sensitivity of the topic and the code of conduct of their organization.

1.6.5 Poor connection: Due to the poor internet connection in Afghanistan, the data via an online platform and the poor connection made it so tough to collect the data on time, and the participants also rescheduled their interviews many times, wasting time was there.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The current literature on the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers, especially in Afghanistan and the organizational contexts of national and international NGOs, elaborate a wrapped and strong perspective. Global studies and research within the wide sector of humanitarian aid clarify the multi-dimensional roles of women in this field and the particular challenges they face. This chapter reflects on the context of Afghanistan and specifies the sociocultural factors that impress the participation of women in humanitarian work. The literature highlights the history of the humanitarian context, gender dynamics, the challenges and opportunities of women before and after the Taliban rule, a brief explanation of NGOs and INGOs, and the need for a gender-sensitive approach to understanding female humanitarian workers' challenges in Afghanistan.

2.1 Historical Context and the Impact of Conflict and Instability on Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan

The humanitarian context of Afghanistan goes back to the forty years of war which include the Soviet invasion, the civil war, the Taliban regime, the US-led invasion, the repeated natural disasters especially, floods, earthquakes, drought, landslides, and avalanches which occur every year, the high percentage of poverty, casualties and injuries of hundreds of people, and the recent pandemic of Covid-19 have restricted Afghanistan within a devastating crisis (OCHA, 2021). The attack of 2011 caused hundreds of civilian casualties, injuries, and displacement of so many people meanwhile, these huge crises increased the demands of people for food, lack of health services, education, and humanitarian assistance, according to the IPCC report, 16.9m or 42% of the people were exposed to food in 2021 (Benelli et al., 2012).

2.1.1 Soviet invasion

According to Imtiyaz GulKhan (2012), today's Afghan war and instability are the root of four decades of conflict and instability and one of them is the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion, which started in 1979 and continued until 1989, caused huge anarchy. This invasion was formed by a combination of various factors such as ideological, strategic, and political. In the beginning, the Soviet Union wanted to spread power and via that influence South

Asia and the Middle East and viewed Afghanistan as the best place for it because of its geographic location, the Soviet Union got the chance to access the warm-water ports and potential expansion routes, to South Asia and this motivated the invasion (Roy, 1990).

2.1.2 Consequence of the Soviet Invasion

Khalilzad, (1985) This invasion that occurred in 1979 and continued for 10 years caused unexpected casualties of the Soviet Union military in Afghanistan, and more than 25000 militaries lost their lives. The Soviet Union caused huge human murder, and abuse of women and children meanwhile, thousands of people fled their homes and migrated to other countries such as Pakistan, Iran, Germany, and Turkey. All these affected the Afghan people's Physical and mental health. The Soviet Union came with this aim and ideology to capture Afghanistan's economic, social, cultural, and religious heritage (Khalilzad, 1985). The policy of the Soviet Union was like this to bomb the villages thousands of people were killed and injured, hundreds of women became widowed, and hundreds of people lost their property and remained homeless. This catastrophic war caused a huge refugee of Afghan people around the world and 6 million people became refugees in the neighboring countries they needed urgent assistance for relief and rehabilitation. According to a report, one million people became disabled during this war (Khalidi, 1991). According to the census of 1975 before the war, the population was estimated at 13.05 million, and in some reports, it was 15-17 million people. But after the war and the census, 876825 Afghans equal to 7% of the population were killed during this 10-year war 1979- 1989).

2.1.3 Humanitarian Assistance

The first number of refugees who fled their homes in 1979 and became refugees to Pakistan was around 400000 (UNHCR, 1998). At this time, many humanitarian agencies, such as all UN agencies, and NGOs became involved in providing humanitarian aid to the refugees and the IDPs. For the refugees, the UN agencies provided shelter, food, hygiene, and education (UNCHR, 1998). At that initial and critical condition, Afghan NGOs played a significant role in providing different kinds of humanitarian assistance although at that time they were not officially recognized and registered by the government meanwhile, they had to provide only a smaller percentage of reconstruction and rehabilitation support but with these all challenges and restriction they did a good job (Dimitrakis, 2012). They supported the hospitals for the basic health sector and paid the

doctor's salary. They had their collaboration with the headquarters in Pakistan for the Afghan refugee. Alongside UNCHR these NGOs hand-solved the refugee visa issue problem. NGOs were in charge of supporting the military commanders inside Afghanistan (Goodhand and Atkinson, 2001). According to a report by Baitenmann (1990), NGOs spent 20 million dollars on the people at that time, and this amount was provided by UN agencies, and implemented by NGOs.

2.1.4 Civil War

Hashimy (2023) noted that wars have a long history on Earth and can happen anytime, and the Civil War happened because of various factors such as imperialism and military adventurism. Any type of war will remain at a high cost because it will ruin everything and can take the life of a person forever; it can destroy the person's property at a time; it can bring a shock; it can destroy the environment and biodiversity; and it can bring famine. In the case of Afghanistan, many players can be national and international, and each of them works for their power, fame, and personal benefit (Ghufran, 2001). The failure of the Soviet Union in 1989 was not the end of the war in Afghanistan, and vice versa, the civil war had already started. After that, the war was against the Najib government. Finally, the Mujahedin could defeat the government of Doctor Najib, but this was not only the end of the war; rather, a civil war started between the Mujahedin, and each of them wanted to be in power (Khalilzad, 1994).

As Braithwaite, (2022) cited, the Civil War remained plagued by massive unemployment and socioeconomic consequences. The civil war disrupts economic and social institutions, and it could present an extreme rate of poverty, forced migration to foreign countries, a negative impact on mental health, increased depression, increased disability, and casualties, loss of property and infrastructure, an increased amount of violence against women and their rights, increased child marriage, and the ban of girls from school and women from work. Hameed et al., (2023) pointed out that the civil war in Afghanistan which started from 1989 to 1992 after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union between different parties concerned caused thousands of casualties such as females, males, and children.

The war increased the rate of unemployment because most of the INGOs were not able to continue their implementation and had to leave the country. The NGOs were responsible for the delivery of

vulnerable people but they also encountered many obstacles and challenges in delivering aid, and their security was under threat because of the political dynamics, warring of the parties, and restrictions on their implementation meanwhile, the conflict and war influenced badly in their programs implementations and provide services. Because of the war hundreds of women lost their husbands and it hurt them and they were not able to provide food for their children which caused a huge crisis (Lyall, 2019). Lyally also pointed out the social, economic, and psychological impact of the civil war. The civil war caused a breakdown of social structures, community cohesion, connection, and trust. Targeting civilians by the terrorist group could create fear among the people special the children, the people could not go outside they had to hide in their homes because of the bombs and explosions.

2.1.5 US- Lead in Afghanistan

The US mission in Afghanistan officially started in 2001 following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and Pentagon in Washington D.C. The attack was launched by a terrorist group called al-Qaeda after the attack the president of the U.S. government decided to start its operation in Afghanistan against the Taliban and the terrorist group Al-Qaeda and meanwhile, for the freedom of Afghanistan (Katzman & Magill, 2001). The U.S. aim was to establish peace and a stable Afghanistan. There was a need to create an interim government Hamid Karzai a Pashtun ethnic was appointed for this mission and later on, according to the official election, he became the first president of Afghanistan in 2004 (Dobbins & Malkasian, 2015).

The withdrawal of the Taliban was not the end of the war in Afghanistan they continued their war, they could not directly take the government but they continued their explosions and attacks in all provinces of Afghanistan every month four to five explosions were in provinces where the people of Kabul the capital of the country were the most victim of these explosions. The targeted explosion was increased special against the lower politics of government and Hazara people (Sonmez et al., 2020).

However after the establish of the High Peace Council (HPC) in 2010, the negotiations for peace with the Taliban were slow, and were not willing the negotiate Finally, direct negotiation between the Taliban and the U.S was started in 2018 and the peace agreement was signed in Doha in 2020,

which was not for the interest of Afghanistan (Sadat, 2019). The Taliban requested the withdrawal of U.S troops from Afghanistan and the concern of people for Afghanistan increased once again fear was created among people because the people knew that after the US withdrawal once again Taliban would be in the government and unfortunately it happened, while the Taliban leaders and the U.S were busy with the peace negotiation in Doha Taliban used the opportunities and started their fight in other provinces except the central provinces which are Kabul, Herat, and Mazar.

When they believed that there were no US troops in Afghanistan they started their occupation and finally, occupied the whole country very easily and this was the start of misery once again in Afghanistan (DORA, 2021). The situation of NGOs in Afghanistan after the Taliban withdrawal and failure became better and increased the number of NGOs in Afghanistan as Galway et al., (2012) pointed out that 891 NGOs were active in Afghanistan from the year of 2000 till 2014 which consisted of 617 National NGOs and 263 International NGOs. NGOs all the time played an important role in Afghanistan despite various challenges they stayed with Afghanistan and most of them continued their operation and their operation back to the Soviet invasion in 1979. During this tough time, NGOs were in charge of providing food, medical care, and shelter to Afghan refugees in Pakistan and also to IDPs in the country (Atmar & Goodhand, 2002).

2.2 Gender Dynamic in a Humanitarian Setting

Gender dynamics refers connection and relationship between men, women, boys, and girls. Gender dynamics are formed by socio-cultural perspectives about gender and the power of interactions and relationships to define and understand them. The term gender dynamics in every society depends on their own culture, mindsets, knowledge, and social norms. For example; the term gender dynamic in Afghanistan is like that the uneducated and even some educated people believe that women stay at home, look after the children, and do the household chores and men have the responsibility of outside to take the breadwinners and support the family financially (Manganaro & Alozie, 2011). Gender and gender equality and ethnicity are somehow difficult in the context of Afghanistan as Simonsen, 2004 pointed out various factors like religion, language, tribes, and education in different areas such as rural and urban areas. Afghanistan is predominantly a patriarchal society and there are so many differences in terms of sex between men and women. The more value is for women compared to men (Monsutti, 2013).

2.2.1 Gender dynamic in Urban areas

Gender dynamics in urban areas vary significantly from those in the rural areas. In the context of Afghanistan, the term gender dynamics refers to the sample of relations, roles, understanding, and power of men and women that can be found in the urban and major cities of Afghanistan. These dynamics in urban areas are shaped by different levels such as educational background, positions, socioeconomic status, religious practices, cultural norms and ethnic factors, and some other factors of women's rights and freedoms (Kabeer et al., 2018). In Afghanistan, gender dynamics in urban areas are more progressive than in rural areas, like women having access to education, more job opportunities, and being able to walk in public freely. As Afghanistan is a conservative society with conservative mindsets, in urban areas there are also so many forms of discrimination, inequalities, and restrictions, not only in society but even in families. Some families prefer a boy to a girl; in some families, if the newborn baby is a girl, the man in the family will not be that happy. If the baby is a boy, there will be a celebration for the coming son. Girls and women have sacrificed for many years because of this patriarchal society (Ghosh, 2003).

Gender roles in Afghan societies have many factors reinforcing women's positions, mostly in urban areas and cities, and they do not transfer to rural cities. Even educated women most of them are in conservative families and societies stuck in traditional customs and regulations to stay at home and men have the responsibility to make money even if the female of the home is independent should share the money with her husband and give the salary to him and it causes inequalities although women work outside and still they are responsible to do the homework after coming from out (Barakat & Wardell). Experts pointed out that Afghan society should change its mindset and conservative manner when the men of Afghanistan stop their discrimination against women and they have to live freely in every society, whether it is rural or urban.

2.2.2 Gender Dynamics in Rural Areas

Gender dynamics in rural Afghanistan are more complicated and deeply impacted and influenced by religious, cultural, social, and economic factors. Living in rural areas is much tougher for people. The facilities and opportunities are less and people are more busy with agriculture, livestock, and gardening (Fernandez, 2023). Females are sacrificed all the time in every place it

doesn't depend on the being rural or urban. Tolerating social, cultural, and economic factors is more common in rural areas and females should accept and respect each of them even if it is not according to their desire. Although women in Rural areas have a particular role and place in different sectors such as health care, household duties, taking care of the children, and some other activities the social norms still influence them. They should be cautious with their behavior and their attitude (Tavva et al., 2013).

In rural areas, men believe that women should be at home, taking care of property and children and the opportunities for employment and education should be less. In many rural areas, getting an education is tough for girls because most families prioritize that boys should get an education because they believe that boys are the future of their life and they will take care of them more, and girls, are trying to teach more house duties. Most families are doing it because of their mindsets but some other families are poor with limited resources and can not afford their children's necessities to send them to school (Babury & Hayward, 2014).

Economic Opportunities for women in rural areas are limited because of conservative mindsets and practical barriers. If a woman has any idea of opening a small business she will not get any support from her family except the families that are educated and know how a woman can change a society in a better way by her power and knowledge (Karimi, 2018). All these challenges are because of the Purdah practice (Purdah is a cultural and religious practice that is practiced in some Muslim and Hindu communities, restriction of women in public and observation of their clothing, and movement and segregation between men and women (Ritchie, 2017). Women in rural areas of Afghanistan often encounter tough obstacles to taking part in social and political life. Traditional forms of leadership are dominated by men, and the voices of women are excluded from many decision-making processes.

For example, women do not appear in local jirgas and shuras, or community councils, and their specific needs and perspectives are therefore not taken into consideration in community decisions. Some organizations work for the establishment of women's shuras to provide women with a platform to discuss their issues and influence decisions at the community level (Akbari, 2020).

2.3 Women's situation in the first regime of the Taliban

Today's Afghan women's situation is the result of the first regime of the Taliban from 1996 to 2001. In their first period of government, almost 98% of women were removed from the public realm because of the rule and restrictions of the Taliban. In their first rule, they forbade girls from going to school or higher education, and this resulted in 90% of girls not going to school in January 2000 (Corti & Swain, 2009). This heartbreaking news was announced on their first takeover of Kabul on 28 September 1996. Around 250 women from Herat, one of the largest provinces of Afghanistan raised their voices, but unfortunately, they were beaten by the Taliban (Emadi, 2002).

gradually their restrictions became worse and worse even though they did not allow women to go out without wearing a burqa. This was a compulsory dress code for Afghan women and did not allow them without a male who had to be their husband, father, or brother which was called Mahram according to Islamic law. In addition to all these restrictions, when girls' schools were banned and women were not allowed to go to work, life became unexceptionally hard even for the male part of society because around 75% of the teachers in school were women. The healthcare problem increased day by day as most of the doctors and nurses were women as well (Cordell, 2019).

2.3.1 Changes in the lives of women after the collapse of the first regime of the Taliban

The situation of women automatically changed when Hamid Karzai came into power in 2001. At that time, many seats in the parliament were given to women, which means 68 seats out of 249 deputies in Wolesi jirga (The Wolesi Jirga, or the lower house of the National Assembly of Afghanistan. It is one of the two seats in the Afghan parliament (Wordsworth, 2007). 102 members in Meshrano jirga (Mashrano Jirga the upper seats of the Afghanistan Parliament it serves as the counterpart to the Wolesi Jirga and plays a crucial role in the legislative process (Nakabandi, 2014). Schools reopened, and women's rights were supported by the existence of Americans and NATO allies who were responsible for the security of Afghanistan from 2006 up to 2021 (Nakabandi, 2014). According to IFJ International (2014), in some parts of Afghanistan, conservative culture and religious customs forbid women from cultural and social activities. But still, with all their limitations, the brave women of Afghanistan could make great progress. The job opportunities for women were at a high rate; for example, around 10,000 journalists, about

1500 of whom were women. Still, there were security concerns because most of the time, the journalists and their families were attacked by terrorists. Although the challenges continued after the Taliban fall in 2001, especially in the education sector, in some provinces the schools were under threat from the Taliban and ISIS. But, despite these concerns, Afghan girls and teachers could join national and international schools and achieve awards. Aqeela Asif, an Afghan woman who taught Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Afghanistan, got the Nansen Refugee Award from UNHCR in 2015 meanwhile, in 2016, she was a candidate for the Varkey Foundation for Global Teachers (Powell, 2014). Female humanitarian workers received a lot of opportunities, not only in urban areas but even in rural areas. Since 2001, the landscape of female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan has changed and improved very well. The fall of the Taliban in 2001 opened so many opportunities for women to participate in public organizations. After 2001, when the U.S. led in Afghanistan, an incredible increase occurred in the operation of NGOs and INGOs (World Development Report, 2012). According to the statistics of the Ministry of Economics of Afghanistan in 2020, 2150 NGOs are currently active in Afghanistan, of which 293 are international and 1857 are national. These organizations are engaged in different sectors, and gender issues are one of the most important parts of each organization. Female humanitarian workers played an important role in these NGOs, and the NGOs provided so many opportunities for them by understanding the basic needs of women and girls and engaging the female workers in delivering humanitarian assistance for them. The beneficiaries showed their satisfaction with these female humanitarian workers and could share their sensitive issues. NGOs and INGOs create diverse job opportunities for women in different fields such as healthcare, humanitarian work, development, capacity building, and education. Alongside the other activities of female humanitarian workers, they were also engaged in providing training and workshops for those women who did not know about their rights and increasing their capacity.

For the past 20 years, women have lived in a safe and progressive environment. Although there were a lot of challenges, they have made significant progress working as teachers, lawyers, judges, nurses, doctors, artists, journalists, and musicians. Most of them had collaborations with humanitarian organizations. Female humanitarian workers have a significant and positive impact on women. Besides these, most of them had their own businesses, such as beauty salons, sports clubs, and so on (IANS, 2016). Women had the rights which Islam and the Holy Quran emphasized

women have the right to be educated, women are entitled to their own opinions and may also vote, women are permitted to drive, women can work, and operate businesses, a woman has the right to give testimony, women can participate in leadership positions, women can lead prayer, women have the final say in choosing whom they wish to marry, women have the right to keep their last name after marriage, women have to full right to their wealth, women are not owned, controlled or abused, women have the right to initiate divorce and women are equal to men. Taliban deprived them of all these rights (Ali, 2004).

2.4 Women in Afghanistan over the last 20 years and the return of the Taliban

Afghanistan, a country, has experienced various conflicts and wars over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The wars caused lots of deaths, injuries, destruction of infrastructure, and devastation. Changes in the regimes over the years among different tribes have hurt women who have always suffered for getting and losing their rights dealt with (Crews et al., 2008). After the first collapse of the Taliban because of the 11/9 attack, Afghan women got access to their rights once again, and the president of the United States, George W. Bush, was in charge of this unforgettable moment. After the attack on 11/9, US resident George Bush decided to go to war in Afghanistan, and while fighting against the Taliban, George fought for the equality and freedom of Afghan women (Perry, 2013). According to the ranking of the world, Afghanistan has the lowest number of gender equality aspects. Considering the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2021, Afghanistan ranks last among 156 countries. Instead of this ranking according to the United Nations Gender Equality Index and Gender Inequality Index, Afghanistan ranked 169th out of 189 countries in 2020 (UNDP 2021a and UNDP 2021b). Despite all the above rankings according to the "SIGI Index," which is the discrimination against women, Afghanistan has the tenth lowest rank out of 120 countries, and this ranking determines that all this discrimination against women is inside their family systems, society systems, and cultural context. Security concerns and violence are the biggest problems in Afghanistan that women face. A survey that was held in 2019 with 17,812 respondents showed that most of the inequality faced by women is a security issue and that women have less access to public services (Asia Foundation, 2019). The other reason was that 25 percent of women had not been allowed to work outside because of their family restrictions and around 11.3 percent because of security concerns (Albrech et al, 2022). Nowadays, Afghanistan is known as the most dangerous country for women in the world; they

cannot even access their basic rights, which education includes. The Taliban made life worse for women during their first period from 1996 to 2001, and now they are returning in 2021. About 20 years ago, there was a lot of progress in gender equality. Women could attend school; there was great progress in the health sector; they had the right to attend political decision-making; they had the right to candidacy for parliament; and they had special positions in the previous government before the Taliban took over.

2.5 NGOs in Afghanistan

Humanitarian assistance has been an effective and crucial subject in the landscape of Afghanistan's development and reconstruction. NGOs in Afghanistan play a very important role in addressing the vulnerable population and delivering assistance for a sustainable and accountable life (Rahmani, 2012). NGOs have played a significant role and have started their activities since the Soviet invasion in December 1970. For the first time, they provided food, shelter, and medical care for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan (Mitchell, 2017).

The NGOs needed to register and incorporate their activities with Mujahideen's seven-party alliance in Peshawar (Atmar & Goodhand, 2002). The Afghan refugee camps included 80,000 Afghan refugees in 1979 and it increased to 750,000 and 4 million in 1984 (Runion, 2007). In 1980 NGOs started their cross-border activities in Afghanistan and they addressed the basic needs of people. Some areas of their activities were limited, those areas that were not under the control of the Soviets (ACBAR 2014 & Mitchell, 2017). A small number of local NGOs were allowed to continue their activities in Kabul and International NGOs were not allowed to work in the country (West 2001 & Mitchell, 2017). The allowed Organizations could provide only emergency services (Goodhand, 2013lo). After the Soviet Union collapsed and withdrew in 1988 many NGOs expanded their activities in different sectors such as education, health care, infrastructure, and humanitarian services and also expanded their activities in the areas that had limits (Mitchell, 2017). The NGOs officially and formally started their work with the permission of the government (Rubin 1995). Soon they received remarkable funding from International organizations and governments such as USAID, UNHCR, and WFP (Carey & Richmond 2004).

2.5.1 NGOs in the First Regime of Taliban 1996-2001

NGOs had a good and effective period from 1990 to 1995. When the Taliban took over in 1996 the role and activities of NGOs automatically changed. Various organizations were forced to get out of the country and continue their activities in Pakistan. Those specific organizations were reminded in Afghanistan that there were a lot of restrictions the organizations were banned for all female workers and a few Afghan women had access to humanitarian relief (Johnson & Leslie, 2009).

The main activities of NGOs were in humanitarian relief; they could not have any activity in politics because the Taliban were afraid and thought that would be a threat to the Islamic vision. A few of these active Organizations tried to work for peace-building (Atmar & Goodhand, 2002). Meanwhile, the Taliban were afraid of International organizations largely of Western origin and this caused them to withdraw from 38 international Organizations in 1998 (Manipuri, 2003), relocate to Pakistan, and change their employees to local employees.

2.5.2 NGOs between 2001-2021

After the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, NGOs could get many benefits from different funding sources. Besides their activities, their presence in Afghanistan has also increased (Rahmani, 2012). Most of the organization's funding comes from the UN, and these NGOs must commit to their work and go through the UN structure (Oliver et al. 2004). At that time, most of the organizations had returned, and there were more than 2465 NGOs active and registered with the Ministry of Planning. During the period of the Hamid Karzai government, the insecurity somehow increased, and lots of NGOs were attacked by several terrorist groups such as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other opposite groups (Mammadli, 2021). At this time, the rules for NGOs have changed. The NGOs had to re-register with the Ministry of Economy and comply with the new reporting rule. This resulted in a decrease in NGO delegations in Afghanistan, and there were 1630 NGOs in 2008 (Rahmani, 2012). Thirty-eight percent of the staff in these organizations were women, and they delivered assistance for women, girls, boys, and children accurately. NGOs were so active physically in different parts of the country and provided good job opportunities for females, and they were engaged in different humanitarian sectors. NGOs carried out different projects in

humanitarian development, civil society, and healthcare, and all these NGOs were financed by the Afghan government and international organizations (Farrell, 2022).

2.6 Overview of Female Humanitarian Workers' Role

According to the Gender Handbook (2018), humanitarian actions, simply provide, providing life-saving assistance, and simplifying the recovery of communities affected by man-made and natural disasters and other required emergencies. Humanitarian organizations can promote gender equality, supported by confirmed principles and immense field experience. Female humanitarian workers' role is vital in addressing gender equality and empowerment worldwide. Their existence in this sector is not just an assurance that the particular needs of women and adolescent girls are addressed; meanwhile, it encourages local communities and challenges traditional gender norms. By actively engaging with local people, female humanitarian workers contribute to building a comprehensive gender-sensitive humanitarian response (Barakat & Wardell 2002). According to UN Women, lots of female humanitarian workers are responsible for advocating for women's rights such as access to education, freedom, healthcare, gender equality, leadership roles, and addressing and recognizing gender-based violence.

In summary, female humanitarian workers play a very important role in responding to crises, addressing the specific needs of vulnerable populations, and addressing gender equality, gender equity, and empowerment. Their presence also helps to create a representative workforce, reflecting the diversity of the communities in which they work.

2.6.1 Brief Explanation of Female Humanitarian Workers' Challenges

Since the fall of the country by the Taliban women and girls have not lived in good conditions, they have been back to the past 20 years. And once again they are seeing those cruelty and black days. It has been about two years since secondary schools and universities banned girls from going to secondary and high schools and after that, they can continue their higher education. The only reason that the Taliban are saying that there are no proper school and university uniforms and hijabs following the Sharia and culture (Amnesty, 2022). Currently, most NGOs ban female workers and they continue their work online. Currently, Afghanistan is in a huge humanitarian crisis having female humanitarian is needed. A compulsory dress code for female humanitarian

workers is required, and a Mahram is required. They cannot go to the field without their Mahram who should be their father, husband, and brother. They stopped and questioned at the checkpoints of the Taliban (UN Report, 2023).

2.7 A Brief Explanation of Humanitarian Organization in Afghanistan

All humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan have an important role in addressing the most challenging humanitarian needs and for the most vulnerable people, particularly in conflicts, political instabilities, and disasters. Both national and international humanitarian organizations focus on wide sights such as emergency relief, healthcare, education, food security, child protection, infrastructure, women's rights, and the protection of vulnerable populations especially women, children, and (IDPs) internally displaced people (Essar et al, 2022). For instance, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is one the key international organizations in Afghanistan that plays a vital role in providing emergency assistance, healthcare, education, women's rights, and economic support to the communities destroyed by different factors (Carter, 1991). Some other international organizations have been working in Afghanistan for many years; Action Against Hunger (AAH), Action Aid Afghanistan, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Christian Aid (CAID), Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) and e.t.c. Meanwhile, there are hundreds of national organizations that are working under the support of government and international organizations. International organizations under the Taliban government most of them have been working indirectly means implementation is going on through national NGOs but some of them are working directly. The National NGOs are playing a key role in Afghanistan implementing their operations through International NGOs. Since the Taliban, the role of NGOs has become more effective and they are playing a vital role in approaching assistance. The very supportive national organizations are the Afghan Women Education Center (AWEC), Afghan Women Rehabilitation and Skill Building Association (AWRSA), Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), Humanitarian Organization for the People of Afghanistan (HOPA) e.t.c. All these national and international organizations work tirelessly to promote education, health, nutrition, and gender equality and empower women, advocating for their rights at both national and international levels. The collaborative attempts of these humanitarian organizations are obligatory in mitigating the impact of the crisis, rebuilding the communities, and promoting

sustainable development in Afghanistan. Although a lot of challenges were faced by these organizations they remain committed to their mission of soothing human suffering and fostering resilience among Afghan communities. Their work is characterized by a deep commitment to humanitarian principles, often at great personal risk, and emphasizes the importance of international solidarity and support in addressing the ongoing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. According to the Economic Ministry of Afghanistan currently, 3001 NGOs are registered under this ministry 2753 of them are national and 248 are international organizations.

Total Member NGOs	3001
International Member NGOs	248
National Member NGOs	2753

Table 1: Number of NGOs and INGOs, source Ministry of Economy 2022

According to ACBAR Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & development, a national, independent, and non-governmental organization providing a platform for sharing information and networking for national and international organizations, 203 NGOs are registered on this platform, including 117 national and 86 international organizations.

Total Member NGOs	203
International Member NGOs	86
National Member NGOs	117

Table 2: Number of NGOs and INGOs, source ACBAR

The Aga Khan Habitat for Agency (AKAH), Bangladesh Ruler Advancement Committee (BRAC), and International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) are international organizations that have an unprecedented history in Afghanistan, and they are the top organizations through their implementation and reach out to vulnerable people at any time and in different sectors. Organization for Coordination of Humanitarian Relief (OCHR), Community Action for Healing Poverty Organization (CHAPO), and Afghan Development Association (ADA) are the three best national organizations in Afghanistan and they provide their assistance through international NGOs.

2.7.1 Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH)

AKAH (Aga Khan Agency for Habitat) is a part of the Aga Khan Development Network,(AKDN) previously known as (Focus) a non-denominational and non-governmental organization working for the poorest communities of Asia and Africa. It is a humanitarian agency that started its first operation in 1996. This agency supports the most vulnerable people and works for a safe and sustainable environment in which families and communities can handle their difficulties in life. This network's special emphasis is on capacity building, self-reliance, resilience, GBV, and providing opportunities for a good quality of life. This agency has a focus on respect for human dignity and humanity to get their rights inside and beyond the boundaries without considering race, nationality, and color. Working for the empowerment of males and females is one of the most important tasks of this organization. This organization works around seven provinces inside the country and Tajikistan, Syria, Pakistan, and India worldwide (Najimi, 2011).

2.7.2 Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)

BRAC is an international organization that started its operation in Afghanistan for the first time in 2002. Its first program was started in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and it aimed to do its cooperate with the vulnerable people who were reminded after the post-conflict. After 7 years, BRAC increased its programs to the other provinces of Afghanistan, which caused it to become the largest INGO in the country. BRAC implemented various types of assistance in the development of the country and different sectors such as health, education, microfinance, women empowerment, agriculture, capacity building, and strengthening of local government (Chowdhury et al., 2006). Out of 34 provinces, BRAC works in around 14 provinces of the country. Up to this date, BRAC has reached over 5.64 million people, improved their socioeconomic situation, played a very important role in their education, healthcare, community empowerment, capacity development, and helped communities. Currently, around 772 staff are working in BRAC from this amount, 37% are female and 63% are male. Around 33% of the positions are under the hands of females, such as managers or higher positions, and 13% of all the country management team members consist of females (Islam & Anwar, 2012).

2.7.3 International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) is a private association under Swiss law with international mandates under public international law. which is active in so many countries and Afghanistan is one of them. ICRC has a long history of providing humanitarian assistance for many decades and started its first operation in 1986, during the massive political and military situation (Curtet, 2002). Also, Curtet cited in 2002 that ICRC first based was in Kandahar when it was the first regime and power of the Taliban in Kandahar before taking Kabul in that tough and challenging time worked with women and despite this worked hard to provide a comprehensive response to the needs of all population special those were more vulnerable. ICRC is active in 34 provinces of Afghanistan and its main focus is to respond to humanitarian crises such as healthcare services, rehabilitation, reconstruction, providing livestock for the vulnerable, providing job opportunities, maintaining women's rights, and accessing clean water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (Debebe, 2007).

2.7.4 Organization for Coordination of Humanitarian Relief (OCHR)

OCHR is a National Non-Governmental organization that officially started its work in 2015 to have and play a very important role in providing humanitarian assistance for the country's most vulnerable stratum people. In humanitarian situations emerging as a result of conflict or natural disasters, the response encompasses the provision of tools and resources to reduce suffering and increase self-sufficiency. The endeavors focus on the social and economic development of the people dwelling in remote parts of the country. OCHR's approach includes sustainable development, focusing on ultra-poor communities of Afghanistan. Promote social cohesion, curtailing extremism in all forms, and inclusiveness of peace processes where children, women, and marginalized groups have a voice. OCHR has a strong partnership with different NGOs and INGOs such as WFP, Christian Aid, UNOCHA, UNICEF, and GNI-A. OCHR is helping people at the most urgent time and in the most remote and vulnerable areas (OCHR, 2024)

2.7.5 Community Action for Healing Poverty Organization (CHAPO)

CAHPO is a non-governmental, non-profit, and National Organization established in 2013 by a group of experts. This local Organization is responsible for delivering humanitarian and development services and is committed to the Ministry of Economy and is registered by it. CAHPO has an active partnership with other organizations and stakeholders. CAHPO focuses more on the development of women and the young generation of girls and boys by providing different opportunities and engaging them in developmental and humanitarian activities to improve their ability and capacity. As mentioned above CAHPO has a strong partnership with different stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Refugee, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. The donors who support CAHPO are Afghan Humanitarian Fund (AHF), Action Aid, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Program (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Child Canada (WCC), Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA), and Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergency (INEE). The geographical spots where CAHPO is working around Afghanistan are Jowzjan, Zabul, Ghazni, Helmand, Nangarhar, Khost, Hirat, Parwan, Logar, Badakhshan, Kunduz, Balkh, Kabul, Bamiyan, Paktia, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Wardak. The key sectors that CAHPO covers are Humanitarian and Livelihood, Capacity Building, Education, Women Empowerment, Advocacy and Social Research, Conflict Resolution, and Gender and Human Rights (CAHPO, n.d.-a).

2.7.6 Afghan Development Association (ADA)

ADA is a non-governmental, non-profit, and non-political organization. ADA mostly promotes the development and humanitarian assistance for the vulnerable people of Afghanistan. This national organization was established in 1990 to provide emergency and humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Then it started to spread its operations in Afghanistan and now it is one of the foremost development organizations in Afghanistan. Besides, this ADA is responsible for natural and conflict emergency issues. ADA tried every stage to work with the most vulnerable, poor, uneducated, unemployed, returnees, refugees, and the people who were affected by natural disasters. ADA aims to eradicate poverty in Afghanistan and for this reason, its focus is on sustainable livelihoods, especially in the agriculture sector. Besides, this its focus is on

humanitarian sectors which provide humanitarian services during natural disasters, education, resolving conflicts, and for recent years working in peacebuilding activities. ADA is working in various geographical spots of Afghanistan such as Kabul, Takhar, Kunduz, Jawzjan, Faryab, Daikundi, Zabul, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Laghman, Kunar, and Herat Provinces. Previously 50% of the employees were male and 50% female but now due to the restrictions against women 35% of the employees are women and ADA supports women in every stage of their work life. The donors of this organization who are supporting are WFP, IRC, CAID, and NCA (Projects – Afghan Development Association, n.d.)

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter explains step by step the process of data gathering, sampling, the materials, the interview process, and the methods of analysis employed. Moreover, before going directly into the process of data collection, the chapter explained the benefits of using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative data and also explained each sample that the researcher used for this research.

3.1 Advantages of using Mixed-Methods

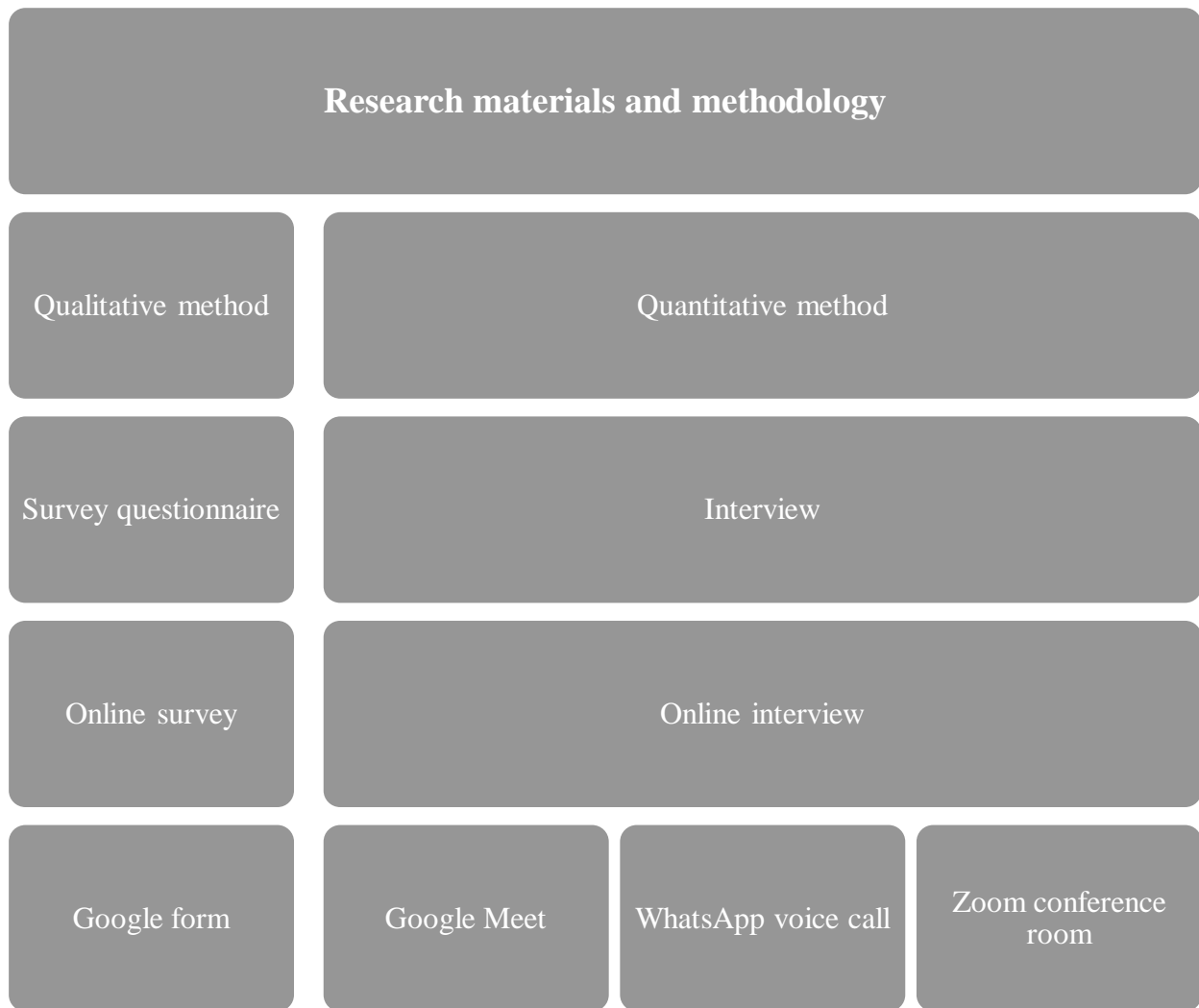
Clark (2017) emphasized that mixed-methods research can provide a wide range of information and an understanding of the context under review. Clark also argued that by mixing qualitative and quantitative methods or data, a researcher can gain insights into the numerical attributes and in-depth experiences, human behaviors, and social and environmental processes. Mixed-methods research gives the researchers the liberty to do their research and study based on what they are trying to find out. what the main goal of this mixed-methods research is? what they want to achieve? and what is valuable for them. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) noted that with this method, researchers can select from different designs and elements that can be sequential, concurrent, or transformative. This flexibility allows the researchers to adjust their method to certain specific needs of the study, and in the meantime, it can make it easier to progress and succeed.

3.2 Research Materials

The materials that the researcher used for this study included a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews, and survey questionnaires. These methods were developed to widely explore female humanitarian workers' challenges in national and international organizations and their experience within the organization and field. Their roles within the organization, their coping mechanism for overcoming the challenges, how they impact their work, and their suggestions and demands from the government and organization.

The individual interviews were conducted with Nineteen female workers from three national and three international organizations from diverse ethnic groups such as Pashtun, Tajik, and Hazara. According to their roles, the researcher conducted the interviews mostly with the managers, and coordinators despite having interviews with officers and officer assistants as well. The interviews focused more on the participants' experiences within the organizations their roles, their expectations from the organizations and the government, and the opportunities and support these organizations are providing for these employees in this critical situation. Their coping mechanism for the challenges that they are facing while working in the office or the field, and finally their suggestions to the government and the in-charge organization. It should be mentioned that each of these interviews was conducted privately and confidentially and the researcher tried to consider the manner of this research meanwhile, the participants could express and share their thoughts more honestly and confidently. Because of the remote nature of this research interviews allowed for flexibility in scheduling and accommodated participants' geographical locations.

An online survey questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data from female workers. Not only from these six targeted organizations but also from diverse organizations. The survey questionnaire includes 32 questions divided into various sectors this questionnaire aims to capture key demographic information like educational background, and length of services. Additionally, influences of the changes in the country on their mental health, and their work environment, which kind of strategies are they utilizing to overcome these challenges. The questionnaire was conducted online among female workers and it resulted in 56 responses via an online Google form. The quantitative data collected through the online survey could provide valuable insights.



3.3 Participants for the Interview

The participants of this study played a vital role and were important elements of this research; they could provide valuable insights and perspectives into the research under investigation. They represented various groups of individuals who had direct experience with the situation and the environment and were involved in this research. The selection of participants for this research was guided by particular criteria related to the research objectives and questions, and they and the researcher believed that their diverse ideas and experiences would be meaningful for this research. Participants participated in six national and international organizations. The organizations that, the researcher included in this research are the most active and affected organizations in Afghanistan

for many years they have been serving the country. They work in different parts of Afghanistan and sectors such as humanitarian, development, capacity building of the young generation, women empowerment, education, and peacebuilding. The participants of the organizations utilized various settings for the interview and could actively participate via these online platforms, including Zoom Conference Room, Google Meet Conference Room, and WhatsApp Call. The focus of this paper and effort was more on the background, perspectives, and experiences of the participants to gain a wide understanding of the research. One thing that all the participants emphasized about their confidentiality and privacy because they were female workers and sharing their ideas was tough for them in this critical situation. The researcher promised them that would keep their privacy safe and this gave them the energy to provide clear information and assisted the researcher in gaining the aim of this research. Before going into a deep discussion, the researcher sent them a consent letter via the student Gmail to confirm their consent and after that, the researcher involved them in this study.

3.4 Sampling

The sampling methods used in this study were vital in ensuring a wide range of information and observation of the female humanitarian worker's challenges within humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan. This study used two primary sampling methods: Purposive sampling, Random sampling, and snowball sampling.

3.4.1 Purposive Sampling

Lopez and Whitehead (2013) cited that in purposive sampling, the participants will be recruited under the pre-selected criteria related to the specific research questions because participants will be those with the essential experience and status or have the knowledge to provide the information that the researcher looks for. For the research, this method permitted to inclusion of 19 Humanitarian Female workers with various backgrounds, experiences, and the level of their qualifications for this study. The females who are working currently under this new government had the experiences of the previous government.

3.4.2 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is determined as a purposeful data collection method in qualitative research. When samples with specific targets and characteristics are not accessible easily snowball methods can be used (Naderifar et al., 2017), for this study the researcher utilized snowball sampling as well. The process began with the identification of initial participants who were involved in this research and contained the experiences and characteristics related to this research. First, the participants selected and nominated the other participants from their organization with relevant criteria. These nominated participants became additional participants in the research and they referred to more participants this was the process of snowball sampling that the paper employed for gathering the qualitative data in this research.

3.4.3 Random Sampling

Golzar and Tajik, 2022 cited that Random Sampling was described more difficult and impartial sampling technique. In Random sampling, each participant of the targeted number of participants has an equal right and chance of being selected for the sample. This method minimizes sampling and increases the generalizability of the research findings. By utilizing random sampling, the researchers aimed to warrant the statistical validity and the reliability of the study findings meanwhile, maintaining ethical consideration by preventing partiality and discrimination in the selection of participants. Overall, the use of random sampling for gathering the quantitative data collection process contributed to the reliability and credibility of the research objectives and questions.

3.5 Research Location

Primary and secondary data were used to gather the data from different sources. For this research's data collection, the paper used qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive result on the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in humanitarian organizations. For the qualitative, this paper conducted online and individual interviews with six organizations, separately three national and three international organizations, in two provinces Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. These interviews aimed to explore the specific challenges experienced by female workers

within these organizations. Meanwhile, to collect the quantitative data the paper employed an online survey approach, from various organizations across various provinces such as Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, and Badakhshan. The survey focused on the participants' educational background, length of experience, challenges, and coping mechanisms. By combining the interviews and surveys the research provided a comprehensive understanding of multifaceted challenges, experiences, and coping mechanisms faced by female workers in NGOs.

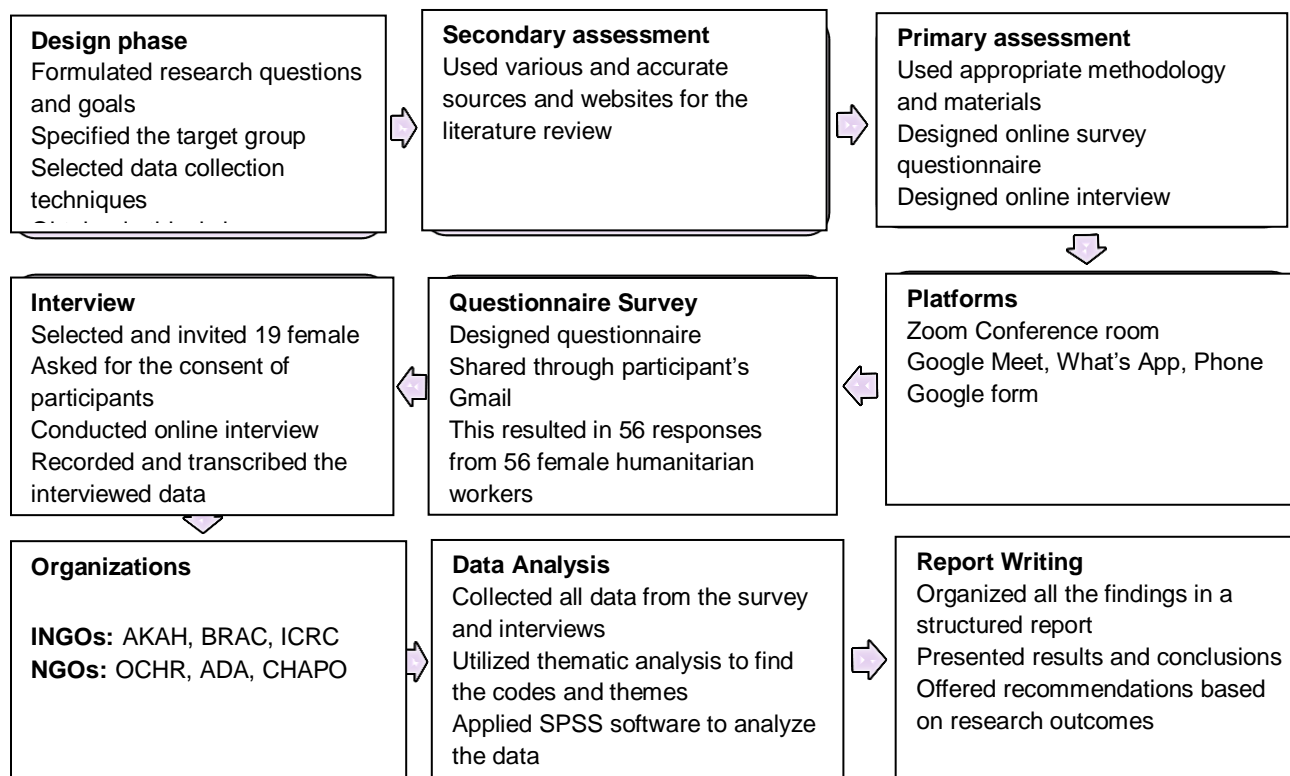
3.6 Data Collection

For this research, the secondary data were gathered from various sources such as different reports, websites, books, and publications. For the qualitative data, the researcher interviewed the participants. The interviews were conducted via several platforms, such as Zoom conference room, Google Meet conference room, and WhatsApp call. Korstjens & Moser (2018) cited that an interview is a data collection method where an interviewer shares the questions with the participants either in person, online, or over the phone. For this research, the researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach for the qualitative data the paper picked the interviews that aimed to uncover the importance of key themes and participants' experiences by focusing on their responses, and the paper maintained that the semi-structured interviews gave more time for them participants' responses to express their perspectives comfortably and could provide more information. The paper included more open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews so that the participants could share their sensitive experiences and the challenges that were tough for them to express, and this gave them a chance to express themselves because previously they did not have this chance to express themselves and no ears to listen. The questionnaire was prepared in English, but the interviews were conducted in three languages: English, Persian, and Pamiri, based on the demands of the participants the participants. Nevertheless, most of the interviews were conducted in English, but it was tough for some of the participants to respond to the questions in English. That's why the paper considered their situation and gave them the chance to continue in two more local languages. For the quantitative data, the paper preferred to have an online survey. For the survey, this paper used the online Google form and divided the questions into two parts. The first part was about general questions, and the second part was about the experience, the coping mechanism, the activities of the organizations, and the coping mechanism, as well as some

questions about their mental health, which the recent changes in the country caused. The first interview was conducted on March 11, and from March 10 to April 10, a Google Form online survey was available. Overall, two months were spent collecting the primary data from the organizations. Participants in this study were female humanitarian workers who are currently working in NGOs in low and senior positions.

Figure 3.6: Data Collection Method

The below figure shows all the processes of the data collection.



3.7 Data analysis

In the stage of analyzing the data, this paper engaged various techniques to maintain and ensure the correctness, confidentiality, and relation to the research objectives. Foremost, the paper interviewed the participants using Zoom and Google Meet and recorded at the same time, this paper saved these recordings in a specific folder and kept them on their password-protected computer. Some participants gave their interviews on WhatsApp and recorded their voices on the

phone. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio into text using the transcription feature of Microsoft Word. Later, the paper keenly and carefully reviewed all the transcriptions multiple times to ensure their accuracy and correct the grammatical errors. After reviewing and converting the transcribed records, the researcher deleted the original records and used pseudonyms instead of their real names to maintain the confidentiality and trust of the participants' details. This preventative processor was vital in the safeguarding and the identity of the participants and meanwhile, for the confidentiality of the data collected. In conducting the data analysis of this research on “Female Humanitarian Workers' Challenges in Humanitarian Organizations”, the researcher utilized both deductive and inductive coding approaches. The deductive coding allowed the researcher to identify the codes and themes based on the existing review literature on female humanitarian worker challenges, their experiences, and the coping mechanism for these challenges. For the interviews with female workers, the research utilized the inductive coding approach and involved the new codes and themes from the raw data. This method made possible an extensive exploration of participants' experiences, and ideas. For analyzing the quantitative data and the survey responses the researcher utilized descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to explore and examine quantitative data related to the challenges faced by female workers in NGOs.

3.8 Ethics of the Research

The Research Excellence Framework, 2014 noted that research is the process of inquiry leading to new perceptions, ideas, and thoughts the multi-stage process of research ethics of the research is one of them. Researchers themselves are responsible for the sensitivity, and confidentiality of the data, they have to take care of them and consider their obligations (Resnik, 2018). In the process of this research, the researcher considered all the obligations and kept the confidentiality of the participants. Before starting the interviews, the researcher sent a consent letter to the student's Gmail and asked for their permission officially researcher invited them for the interview through this consent letter and official email, explained the purposes of the research, and mentioned that this interview was only for academic purposes and the completion of her dissertation. The paper also mentioned that she could reject this interview if she did not want to be a part of it. The researcher asked for their permission to record the audio during the interview, and they accepted. The paper also requested that if she did not feel comfortable responding to any question, you could

skip the question, and even if you did not feel comfortable continuing the interview, she could leave at any time she wanted. Additionally, for more conditionality, the paper used an anonymous instead of their real name (e.g., F1, F2, F3, and e.t.c.) and did the same process for their organization's name. After completing the interviews and having them transcribed, the paper automatically deleted their records. If any responses remained unclear during the analysis, the researcher contacted the participants for further information and clarification, and they graciously offered their assistance.

3.9 Limitations

Participants' availability was one of the toughest parts of this research, as the participants were female staff. During their working hours, they could not spare their time except for a few of them the researcher had interviewed during the day most of them because the interview was conducted at night. Some were because of unexpected problems when changing the times and rescheduling many times, delaying the data collection. A weak internet connection was one of the other difficult parts of this research. Sometimes, they faced trouble staying connected during interviews, which made it tough to hear the information smoothly and clearly. Emphasized the participants for not taking their pictures and not turning on the camera. Empahsed of the participant to keep secret their voice.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Result

This chapter explored the findings and results of the research and offered a wide recognition of the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers within humanitarian organizations. This chapter explained the results and outcomes of the mixed methods, which employed qualitative and quantitative data. For qualitative data, the paper conducted online interviews with the female staff, and for quantitative data, this research conducted an online survey. Meanwhile, this chapter examined the coping mechanisms, comparing the current and previous governments and the changes for female staff, the opportunities that female staff had before and now, the impact of the changes and challenges on their mental health, the restrictions they have, and the supporting system that they receive from their organizations. For an explanation and description of the findings and results of this chapter, this research conducted 19 online interviews, and the online survey resulted in 56 respondents. Both methods were conducted to explore and analyze female humanitarian workers' challenges: A case of humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan. The research questions were: Focus on and describe the specific roles and responsibilities of female humanitarian workers within both national and international NGOs working in "Afghanistan." to assess and analyze gender-specific "challenges" faced by female humanitarian workers, considering personal, social, and organizational concerns and how they can cope with these challenges. Investigate the strategies female humanitarian workers employ to manage work-life balance, particularly in demanding and challenging environments in Afghanistan. The interviews and the survey allowed the researcher to answer the mentioned research questions exactly. The online interviews were conducted on different platforms. These females are in different positions with various work experiences. As mentioned in Chapter 3 considering the confidential information of the participants. For this reason, the paper kept their names and organizations anonymous. Below the table is the participant's information which interviewed.

No	Education Background	Province	Name of the Org	Type of Org	Current role	Experience
F1	Master	Kabul	Org A	International	Coordinator	5 years
F2	Master	Kabul	Org B	International	Coordinator	4 years
F3	Bachelor	Kabul	Org D	International	Officer	4 years
F4	Bachelor	Kabul	Org A	International	Manager	5 years
F5	Master	Kabul	Org F	International	Coordinator	5 years
F6	Bachelor	Kabul	Org E	International	Officer	4 years
F7	Bachelor	Kabul	Org B	National	Manager	6 years
F8	Bachelor	Kabul	Org B	National	Coordinator	4 years
F9	Bachelor	Mazar-e- Sharif	Org F	National	Officer	6 years
F10	Master	Mazar-e- Sharif	Org C	National	Officer	5 years
F11	Bachelor	Mazar-e- Sharif	Org D	International	Officer	6 years
F12	Bachelor	Kabul	Org F	International	Officer	5 years
F13	Bachelor	Kabul	Org D	National	Community Mobilizer	4 years
F14	Bachelor	Kabul	Org C	National	Manager	3 years
F15	Bachelor	Kabul	Org E	National	Manager	6 years
F16	Bachelor	Kabul	Org A	National	Manager	5 years
F17	Master	Mazar-e- Sharif	Org E	National	Officer	4 years
F18	Bachelor	Kabul	Org F	National	Coordinator	4 years
F19	Bachelor	Mazar-e-Sharif	Org C	International	Manager	5 years

Table 3: Female humanitarian worker's interviewer's information

The below tables are the participants' academic qualifications, their experience of working in the organizations, and the type of organizations in which they worked. For the data collected via an online survey, the participants were from various organizations. The educational backgrounds of these participants differed; 76.8% means 43 females out of 56 have a bachelor's degree, 21.4% which is 12 females out of 56 have a master's degree, and 1.8% means only one person has a PhD.

		Academic qualification			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Bachelor	43	76.8	76.8	76.8
	Master	12	21.4	21.4	98.2
	PhD	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Academic Qualification of Participants

		Work experience in the organization (Years)			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	1-2 years	13	23.2	23.2	23.2
	3-5 years	26	46.4	46.4	69.6
	Over 5 years	17	30.4	30.4	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Work experience of participants

		Type of organization			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	NGO	26	46.4	46.4	46.4
	INGO	30	53.6	53.6	100.0
	Total	56	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Type of Organizations

Table 6 shows the experience of the participants 13 females out of 56 females 23.2% of them are with experienced 1-2 years, 26 females out of 56 females which are 46.4% of them are with experienced 3-5 years, and 17 females out of 56 females which 30.4% of them are with the experience of over 5 years. And Table 7 shows the type of organizations that the participants are working and it shows that 26 of them out of 56 which is 46.4% are working in NGOs and 30 of them out of 56 which is 53.6% are working in INGOs.

4.1 Navigating the Current Challenges Faced by Female Humanitarian Workers Under the Regime of the Taliban

The world is keeping an eye on the state of women in Afghanistan. Women's rights used to exist, or at least they were mentioned in the paper, but these days the paper is nonexistent and nothing is mentioned in the name of women. They make up a very small portion of the population; the statement that women in all societies comprise half of Afghanistan's current society demonstrated that, under the Taliban government, women's lives mean nothing (Hendessi, 2022). The difficulties faced by Afghan women began the day the Taliban took power.

Women's fundamental human rights have been systematically taken away from them. Women's rights are being restricted more and more each day. Numerous women were excluded from social, political, and public spheres. restrictions on their ability to obtain employment, education, humanitarian aid and services, freedom of movement, a mandatory dress code, equity, and equality. According to the UN Women Report (2023), the restrictions led to a decline in confidence, anxiety, mental health issues, early marriages, suicide rates, mortality, and unemployment.

4.1.1 Before Taliban

Given that they have the same opportunities at work as female employees, gender equality may enhance both their economic potential and sense of empowerment. Nobel laureate Esther highlights the connection between societal economic growth and the empowerment of women (Duflo, 2012). In addition to having a positive effect on economic growth, promoting gender equality in the workplace can also reduce gender-based violence, equalize participation in decision-making, and reduce corruption based on appearance, ethnicity, ethics, and language barriers (EIGE, 2021). Female humanitarian workers in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) frequently encounter discrimination based on appearance, ethnicity, knowledge, sect, and even language. Following the fall of the Taliban's initial regime, women workers were able to regain their rights.

Still, discrimination took many different forms. In addition to providing humanitarian relief, women in NGOs are essential in assisting other women in gaining access to their fundamental

rights, which include advocacy for women's empowerment, education, and nutrition, among other rights. In NGOs, female employees are consistently singled out due to their gender. Afghanistan is a conservative society, as was already mentioned. Out of the total male population, 70% adhere to the belief that women belong in the home, should not work, and should not play a role in organizations and government.

Even with the Taliban's fall in 2001 and the establishment of a new government, things improved daily and there were an increasing number of opportunities for women, even though these women workers still had limited opportunities within their organizations. Male employees believed that women lacked the skills necessary to perform labor-intensive tasks and were incapable of working in the field. Even with their contributions, female employees received unfair treatment and opportunities. For instance, women tended not to hold higher positions in national organizations, but this was not the case in government sectors.

Women participated actively in politics, had the right to vote, and were able to voice their opinions on matters about political, economic, and women's empowerment before the second Taliban regime. The Ministry of Women Affairs, or Wizarat Amor Zanan, was the name of their ministry. They were eligible to run for office in parliaments, and out of 249 seats, 69 were open to women. In NGOs, it was the other way around: women were more likely to work as officers, assistants, coordinators, or managers than as directors.

Because of their gender, the men attempted to prevent them from assuming leadership roles and believed they were incapable of performing their jobs. A female humanitarian worker with prior experience working under the Taliban government and under their current leadership was interviewed.

Over my ten years of experience, I have encountered discrimination in both the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Every year I was promoted in my government job. In NGOs, The highest position I could get was the coordinator. Due to their gender and preference for working in the field, men were typically given more opportunities (F14, 17.03. 2024).

One other challenge that the female humanitarian workers faced before the Taliban in NGOs was their appearance. In Afghanistan, it is a fact that some organizations and those who are in charge of hiring staff prefer gorgeous and elegant women to be in the position it was something that the other females did not feel well about themselves. A participant from organization A claimed that;

This happened to me when I was shortlisted for a job; on the day of the exam, I was with two other women who were nicer than me, even though I passed the exam with flying colors and was rejected. She also mentioned that, even within organizations, being beautiful opened up the most opportunities for women, who occasionally received promotions based on their beauty (F10, 03.03. 2024).

Sects presented another difficulty for women employed in the workforce. Sunni Muslims, who make up the majority of the Sunni Muslim population in Afghanistan, and Shi'a Muslims are two different religious groups; discrimination against both groups is pervasive. The majority of workers in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are Sunni Muslims, who do not favor Shi'a Muslims holding higher positions within the organization. Corruption is another issue that affects both men and women equally because of nepotism in hiring. In some NGOs, the person in charge of recruitment gives preference to people who have a connection to the candidates, regardless of their qualifications and skills, without account considering the female candidate's appearance (Ahmadzai, 2017).

According to a participant with prior work experience under the Taliban, corruption could occur in any setting, including government agencies, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Organizations, offices, and governments that wished project to carry out and work on the project properly took into account the credentials, skills, and abilities and made their hiring decisions accordingly.

I encountered corruption against me in the course of my work before the Taliban. I was qualified for a position once I applied, and my qualifications were accepted. However, a director's relative filled the position, and this person was hired without a written test or interview. In certain organizations, hiring decisions are made solely based on an applicant's command of the English

language; if an applicant is found to be fluent in the language, she is hired without taking into account her qualifications (F2, 18.04.2024).

Another participant expressed her concerns, saying that after a year of job searching, she had been turned down numerous times due to her appearance, ethnicity, and sect. This had left her disappointed and wanting to destroy her educational records. She asked that all organizations take transparency into account and disregard factors such as nationality, ethnicity, and even minor obstacles unrelated to an applicant's qualifications.

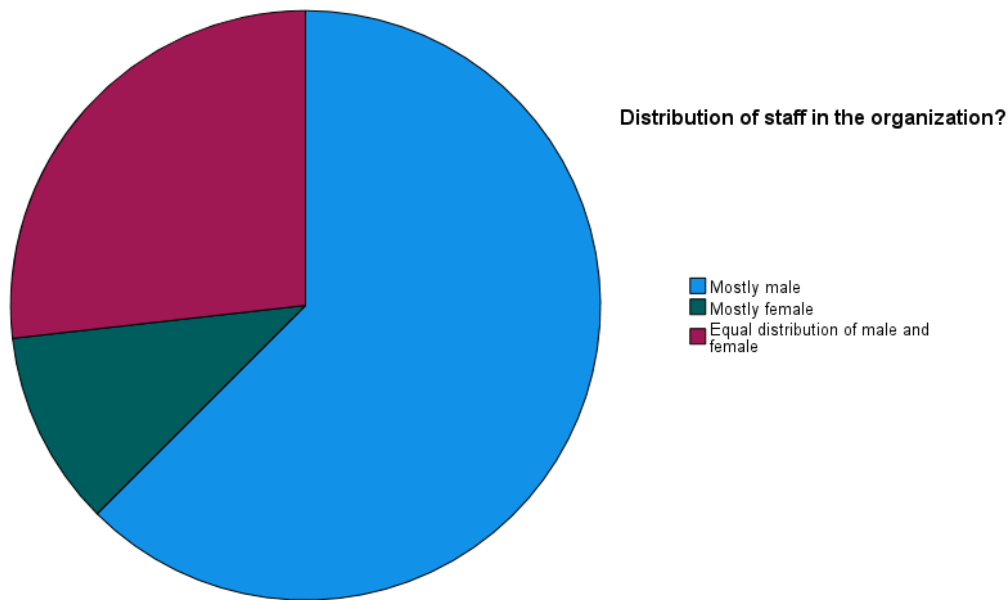
4.1.2 Under the Flag of the Taliban

After years of struggle, women won their rights and became accustomed to living in a free society. Women who founded their businesses received health care, attended colleges and universities, fought for their future, and were appointed to positions in government agencies and ministries. Women who had the freedom to wear whatever they wanted in public without fear of being arrested by the authorities lost nearly everything in a short period, which was unthinkable for them. As of right now, they are nearly everywhere to almost nowhere.

Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the number of female employees in NGOs decreased. Before the Taliban took power, female humanitarian workers had a significant role in both the previous administration and NGOs. Women are prohibited from working by the Taliban, and they are not permitted to report to work until further notice. They stated that they made this announcement to prepare a proper dress code, but it has been nearly three years since this additional announcement was made.

In each organization, the percentage of female employees has significantly decreased from 40% to the current majority of male employees. In a survey, women stated that, except in certain organizations where current employees are equal, a significant portion of the workforce is male.

Figure 4.1.2: Show the percentage of staff distribution



The group of data in Figure 4.1.2 indicates the percentage and frequency of staff distribution in the organizations, which shows that 62.5% of the staff are mostly male, only 10.7% mostly female, and 26.8 equal representatives of male and female. A participant from organization C in the interview on 18 March 2024 said that in the organization where she is working most of the staff are male as previously before the Taliban it was equal and even sometimes fewer women were getting a project was tough because the donor requested to have more female staff special for their gender equality issue.

GBV is yet another issue that affects female employees in NGOs, primarily in national organizations. Even the former administration was and still is like this. women who work in humanitarian aid. According to the female workers the researcher spoke with for the research, certain NGOs have experienced and still experience various forms of harassment. Within some organizations, senior staff members attempt to abuse their position of authority by abusing female employees verbally, emotionally, or through gender discrimination and threats of physical harassment.

Due to the nature of their jobs and societal and cultural norms, female employees in the government and NGOs experienced abuse at a higher rate than male employees. During the

interviews with female employees of various organizations, some stated they had not personally witnessed harassment, while others stated they had.

Although we did not witness any physical harassment, we did experience unwanted sexual harassment and occasionally felt uncomfortable verbal abuse. Occasionally, remarks regarding their appearance are made to them by their male beneficiaries, supervisors, and even seniors, which makes them feel insecure and dehumanizes them (F7, 09.04.2024).

Another issue that affects society as a whole and affects female workers is gender discrimination. There are many different tribes in Afghanistan, including the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, and Aimaq tribes. The Pashtun ethnic tribe makes up the largest portion of this ethnic group, accounting for nearly half of the population (42%). The Tajik tribe comes in second place with 27% of the population, followed by the Hazara tribe (10%), the Uzbek tribe (9%), the Aimaq tribe (4%), the Baluch tribe (2%), and a few other tribes that makeup 5% of the total population of Afghanistan

For many years, the Shai sect known as the Hazara was the victim of every conceivable circumstance, including explosions and every decade. Except for a few educated individuals who grant their girls the opportunity to study and their women the opportunity to work, the majority of the Pashtun population in the nation holds senior positions in NGOs and is prohibited from working. The other people do not want their women to work.

For this reason, they favor positions held by men. They also give precedence to members of their ethnic group, the Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, and others, if they feel that there is no other option. Significant discrimination was discovered during interviews with two female humanitarian workers who were Tajik and Hazara, and one of them stated that;

After graduating from university, I looked for work. After lots of hardship, I was able to find one, but I soon realized that there was various discrimination there. Pashtun women workers were given preference everywhere, and when there was an opportunity to travel for work, it was for them. They failed to recognize my abilities and the hard work I had put in, and as a result, I was constantly suffering (F8, 01.04.2024).

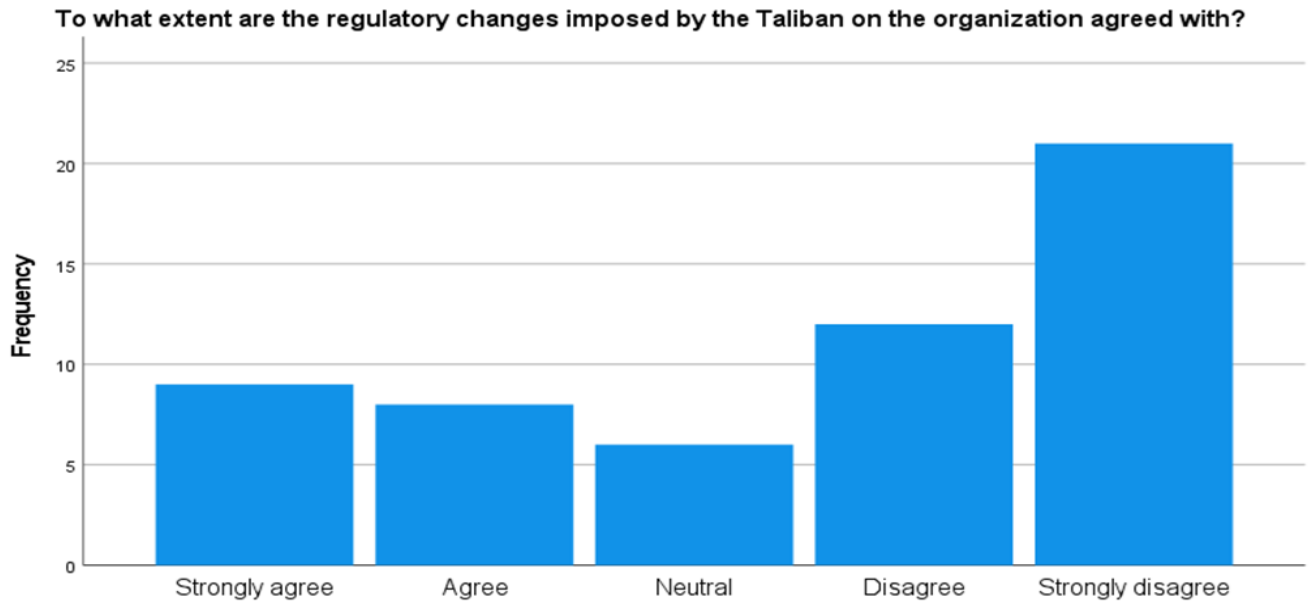
The decline in the number of female NGO humanitarian workers was a major setback. Due to the significant role that female workers played in providing humanitarian assistance, the majority of projects and donors ceased operations. In the meantime, having female employees in the field is essential to meeting their needs because women feel more at ease discussing sensitive matters with them; their absence created a barrier to receiving help.

In the healthcare industry, in particular, having female employees is crucial because, in Afghanistan's conservative society, women are not allowed to openly discuss sensitive issues or raise concerns with male coworkers. Instead, they must put up with the violence and suffering without speaking up or asking for assistance because, unlike in the previous government, there was no government and no sympathetic men to listen to our concerns.

According to an interview, women are afraid to disclose their true needs and sensitive issues, so they are not allowed to go into the field. However, in certain emergencies, they have to go after extensive discussions with the government. A member of Organization F made the following statement:

If I am lucky enough to be allowed to work in the field someday, I will admit that it is very hard for me to talk to women in a relaxed and fearless manner because they do not share as much as they used to. They fear that if we tell them the truth, the government won't care about them, and I am afraid that the men in uniform will come and take me into custody (F15, 27.03.2024).

Figure 4.1.1: Percentage of agreement and disagreement



The figure indicates the percentage and frequency of female agreement and disagreement with the changes of Taliban that imposed in their organization 9 Females which is 16.1% percent strongly agree, that some females are from strict families they were happy that at least in this situation their family agreed with them and allow them to work so that's why they are happy with the changes. 8 female workers which are 14.3% agree and they have the same idea. 6 of them which is 10.7% were Neutral and they said they don't have any idea if they say something nothing will change it is better to keep quiet. 12 of them which is 21.4% of the respondents disagreed and said from the day that these changes came into our organization that one of them was an isolated male and female office it was unacceptable for them because they said we have to change our ideas with our managers or directors. 21 of them which is 37.5% of the respondents strongly disagree and they said they wish that the Taliban changed their minds in a better way.

4.2 Ban of Work on Female Workers

The Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan estimates that 43,372,950 people will live in Afghanistan in 2024, with 50,46 percent of the population being male and 49,54 percent being female. This means that women make up half of the population. On May 20, 2023, UNHCR-UN Women stated that as of August 2021, fewer women were employed as humanitarians; the majority

of these women resigned from their positions and departed the country. The majority of INGOs declared they could not carry out their work without female employees, left the country, and ceased operations until an unspecified time.

On December 30, 2022, ICRC, one of the INGOs operating in Afghanistan, stated that 3000 of its 8000 employees are women or girls. The organization believes that having women provide humanitarian services is essential. The majority of humanitarian services rely on them, and their loss during our mission in Afghanistan would result in a catastrophic event and economic stagnation.

Since the majority of women and girls working in the humanitarian sector are the only providers for their families, losing their jobs can be a dangerous trauma. The ICRC hoped that the Taliban's new role would allow women to continue working. UNHCR-UN Women reported that the Taliban tightened their regulations and formally declared that female NGO employees could no longer work after the end of December 2022. The UN Agencies declared this ban on April 4, 2023, depriving female humanitarian workers of their rights.

The educated women of Afghanistan have long aspired to financial independence; however, the current government, which has banned women from all areas of society, prevents them from realizing their goals. Afghanistan is among the most hazardous countries for women, with the lowest rankings for women's safety, rights, and security worldwide, as demonstrated by all these prohibitions and restrictions. The percentage of female humanitarian workers who are currently prohibited from employment is depicted in a figure.

It should be noted that the Taliban has more restrictions on NGOs than on INGOs. In fact, during a recent discussion, the Taliban asked that INGOs turn over the budget so that they could manage the NGOs' share of the funding.

As was mentioned at the outset, women make up 49.54% of the population overall. However, we cannot say that all 49.54% of women are financially independent because women in rural areas lack productive jobs, even if they work informally, and those who do work in urban areas face restrictions and government regulations that limit the projects they can complete and the income they can earn. Additionally, women who do not work but whose spouses held government positions or services before the Taliban also lost their jobs, forcing them to provide for their families and take less money.

Numerous interview subjects, with whom the researcher conducted in-depth interviews, expressed dissatisfaction with the modifications and the prohibition on their employment. Since they work from home, it can be difficult for them to focus and complete the most crucial tasks. Taliban women in our organizations had so many opportunities, according to a participant from organization B who said she had worked there for six years and had never seen restrictions of this kind.

She loved going to the office every day, but since the Taliban outlawed the movement, she is no longer able to work there. She claims that although working online is a good alternative, there are still many difficulties, including frequent power outages. She expressed her hope that this regime would change eventually after stating that she missed crucial meetings due to low power and poor connection.

Another participant from organization A shared his frustration that;

I believe that being prohibited from working is a bad idea because, as members of society, we have the right to work. We are attempting to handle our work remotely, but it is not effective because the women depend on us to be there for them in the field; they should be able to get help (F11, 03.03. 2024).

The women assert that there are more Taliban restrictions on NGOs than there are on INGOs. The majority of INGOs' staff members are foreign nationals, so even though the Taliban cannot impose any restrictions on them, they are still unable to move around freely and are required to adhere to the burqa dress code. Though they face fewer restrictions than female NGO employees, Afghan women who work for INGOs are still subject to limitations. They also say that although we hide our identities, we are employed; nobody is aware of this. According to a participant from Organization B,

Although I am thankful that I have a job in this dire situation and can at least provide food for my family of eight members, I feel terrible about hiding my identity. I am not motivated to work online this winter because of all the difficulties I had with the bad internet connection and power outage. Sometimes I have to cover my entire face, from head to foot, if I have urgent work to

complete and it cannot be done online. Wearing a burqa is not a big deal to me; all I want is to work and exercise my rights, which are granted by Islam. (F9, 17.03. 2024).

4.2.1 Anxiety and depression under the regime of the Taliban

The Taliban's violence against women in Afghanistan and the recent changes they have brought about are now chronic problems. From the moment they came into power, women lost all of their fundamental freedoms and human rights. They outlawed going to school, working outside, traveling 45 miles without an escort, going to beauty salons, using public restrooms, wearing brightly colored dresses and high heels, and even applying nail polish. They also forbade the use of mannequins. The Taliban inflicts various forms of harm on women who disobey these regulations, such as covert interceptions that reveal their location (Mehrabi et al., 2023).

Female humanitarian workers are subject to the same limitations. The Taliban have made it impossible for the female laborers who used to work in the fields; instead, they must work online and are subject to harassment, violence, and restrictions on their clothing and freedom of movement. Significant harm and suffering have been inflicted upon women as a result of the Taliban's cruel treatment of them, which includes forced marriages, sexual attacks, and public executions. Building a more secure and just society for women in Afghanistan and around the world requires increasing awareness and working toward these goals. Following two decades of conflict between various parties, the Taliban twice took control of the country, causing mental health problems for Afghan women, particularly during the second Taliban government that took place in August 2021. This negatively impacted female humanitarian workers. In addition, female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan face a variety of difficulties and barriers due to the country's conservative and social norms (Niyazi et al., 2023). According to a cross-sectional study done in 2022, female humanitarian workers also reported feeling more anxious and frustrated than other members of their gender.

Compared to male workers, they experience higher levels of anxiety and depression. According to a 2022 study carried out in Afghanistan by Canadian Women for Women, following the Taliban takeover, a significant proportion of women suffered from anxiety and depression. Many of them also lost their jobs, making them the primary providers for their families. This led to an increase in violence, poverty, early marriage, and damaged family relationships. Individuals who work, particularly in national organizations, are not allowed to work from the office; instead, they must

work from home, which presents several difficulties. In addition, they must take care of their children and household duties, and the demands of their jobs have altered and burdened them greatly.

The working lady claims that we are losing our hope and desire daily because we have no idea what will happen tomorrow or what additional rules the government will impose. F3 and F5, during the interview, discussed their concerns regarding their mental health status.

I've been employed by several companies since 2012, and throughout that time, I've never experienced a state of frustration or hopelessness like this. After making significant progress and growing more optimistic about the future for myself and my kids, things quickly changed. My frustration increases every time I consider the circumstances that are growing worse by the day. As the sole provider for my family, I find it extremely distressing to consider the possibility of losing my job today or tomorrow and the consequences for my family. Despite my education and work experience, I continue to struggle with severe anxiety and depression due to the mandatory limitations (F3, 03.03.2024)

According to a female staff, she claimed that; we abandoned the plans and hopes we had made for a better, more promising future. Throughout the 20 years, women have made significant progress and accomplished a great deal, not just as employees. They were able to observe their efforts, advancement, and opportunities. In a short period, they completely lost their progress. According to a different participant from Organization F, she gained a great deal of experience working in the humanitarian sector for six years.

She worked hard to further her career and support her family after landing the job of her dreams. Since she lost her father in a fight ten years ago, her mother and siblings depend on her income. She is also my family's only hope. She is worried that she won't be able to support her family if she loses her job today or tomorrow. She is not to blame for her anxiety and depression, despite these worries.

As demonstrated by the F5 story, aid workers in Afghanistan deal with more than just money. Since they typically provide for their families alone, the challenges and obstacles make them feel depressed and stressed out. Additionally, many of them have no clear future. Since the days of the Taliban government, anxiety has been a growing problem among women and is not limited to the

experiences of one or two of them. Sadly, most Afghan families lost their men to war, natural disasters, illness, and other causes. The women either depart with their kids or the mother and sisters depart after losing their loved ones.

As the situation worsens daily, these women become increasingly concerned because it is their families' responsibility to care for them and provide for their basic needs. When female humanitarian workers believed they had lost their two decades of progress, as they had for many years, that was the most difficult and disheartening aspect of their experience. Sixty-six female humanitarian workers participated in an online survey, and all of them stated that the recent changes in their mental health.

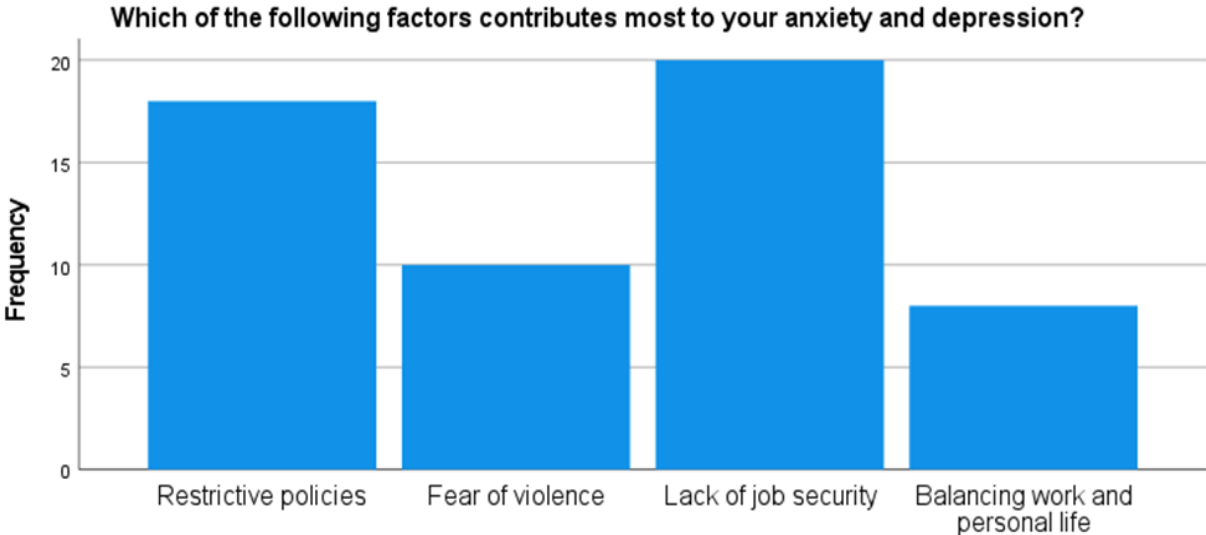


Figure 4.2.1: Anxiety and depression

The figure indicates that 18 people which is 32.1% reported anxiety and depression because of restrictive policies, 10 people which is 17.9% reported fear of violence, 20 people which is 35.7% reported a lack of job security, and 8 people which is 14.3% reported balancing work and personal life.

4.2.2 Cultural and Societal Norms

Afghanistan's historically patriarchal and conservative society presents difficulties for female humanitarian workers in all facets of their fieldwork responsibilities. Due to gender segregation, speaking with male community members is unusual for people living in the majority of conservative areas. It could be difficult for women to participate freely in community meetings as a result, and it can be difficult for them to find space between men. The purdah system is another difficulty faced by female humanitarian workers in the field.

One of the popular forms of traditional segregation in South and East Asia is the Purdah system or Pardah. Afghanistan is one of these countries. This phrase describes the practice of women veiling and limiting their interactions and communication with men, which results in their gender being segregated in many facets of society. Because of its patriarchal foundation, Afghan culture dictates how men and women interact and communicate daily. Due to the lack of acceptance of this interaction between men and women in the community, female humanitarian workers find it too difficult to navigate this system while working in the field.

This was already very difficult before the Taliban, but now that most women are prohibited from working in the fields, it is much more difficult. In the Afghan context, guardianship refers to the idea that men, brothers, and fathers should be in charge of women and girls, making decisions on their behalf. To reach out to women and girls, female humanitarian workers may encounter obstacles, such as the need to obtain permission from the male guardian or opposition from male family members who are afraid of outside influence on their female relatives. Female humanitarian workers are under so much pressure at once from cultural norms and expectations that they must take care of.

Fieldwork and travel availability is severely limited by the expectation that one prioritizes family responsibilities and rules above all else. The presence and visibility of women in public, particularly in conservative areas and specifically affected by conflicts, frequently attracts unwanted attention and puts their safety at risk. The majority of the time, community members who object to the presence or actions of female humanitarian workers subject them to unwelcome harassment or violence.

Being a female humanitarian worker, I occasionally go to the field and people ask me how my family can let me work and interact with men. When I hear these questions, I feel so let down by the cultural norms and mentalities of my people. (F1, 18.03.2024).

Another Female worker from Organization D mentioned that;

I will never forget the moment I showed up for field work and people stared at me. A man said to me, With this makeup and dress, you came for work, I wish the Taliban would arrest you and demonstrate to you that you do not have the right to work; as a woman, you must stay at home and take care of the house. This was a very serious offense, and that day I wished I had not been born in Afghanistan (F12, 14.03.2024)

A fellow female humanitarian worker expressed dissatisfaction with the patriarchal society, confirming that it presents difficulties for them to communicate with other women and that they occasionally need to travel with a guardian when conducting fieldwork because the men in that society forbid the women from speaking with their spouses. According to a participant from Organization D,

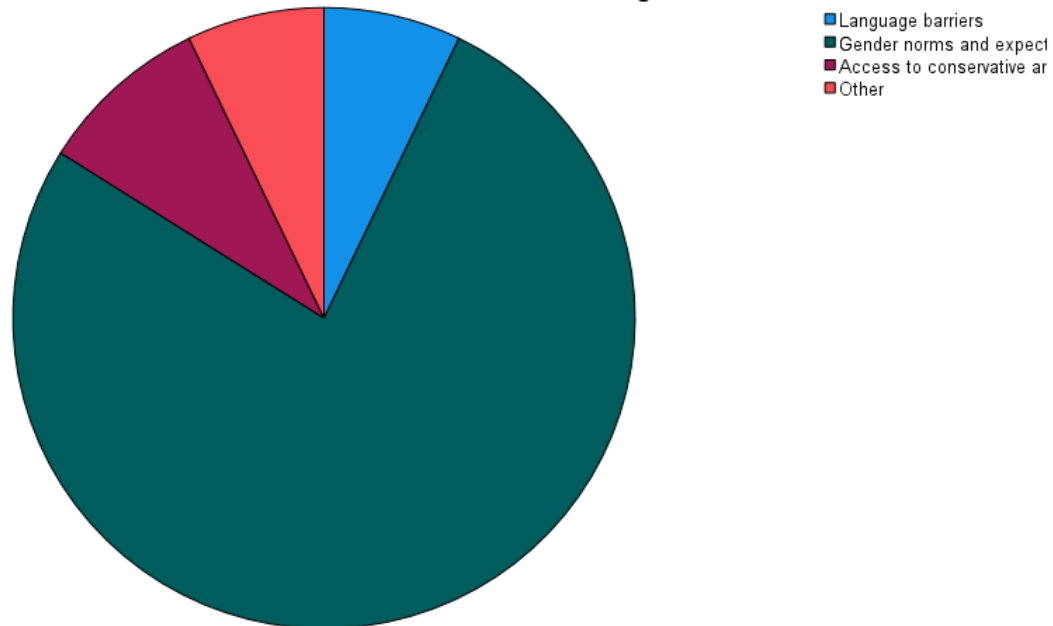
“ The cultural and social anomalies have caused the absence of women in society and social activities, which hurts the growth and development of women “ (F17, 13.03.2024).

The social and cultural norms place women in difficult positions. One participant stated that women are unable to conduct research projects on their own since they are required to rely on men for activities and are not permitted to travel to remote research areas without a mahram. She encountered this issue frequently while I was performing my duties because the men in the field were so traditional and, in some cases, would not let me speak with the women in the family.

A survey which conducted on 56 female humanitarian workers and this survey shows how these female workers navigate the cultural and social barriers.

Figure 4.2.2: Social and Cultural Barriers

How do female humanitarian workers navigate through social and cultural barriers to effectively engage with the beneficiaries and the communities in Afghanistan?



The figure above indicates that 7.1% percent of the figure shows language barriers, 76.8% percent of the barriers that female workers face are Gender norms and expectations and these cultural norms and expectations depend on the beliefs, mindsets, and knowledge of every area in which female workers work. Sometimes these norms can restrict the ability of female workers to travel to their work location, attend the workshops and community meetings, and deliver assistance. Afghanistan is a country with different languages and accents sometimes it can be difficult for female workers to communicate with people, especially with those women who are illiterate and can speak their language which can be only Pashto or Persian. 7.1% percent shows the barrier of access to conservative areas that is so tough for women to navigate with.

4.2.3 Security Risk

When providing aid to vulnerable populations in the field, female humanitarian workers frequently worry about their safety. The conservative environment and the social norms that restrict women's visibility and mobility are the main causes of these worries. The situation for female workers is made more difficult by the involvement of female humanitarians in communities, especially in areas where the majority of people share the Taliban's ideology and believe that women should stay at home and have no right to work alongside men.

Extremist organizations frequently target female humanitarian workers because the Taliban oppose women's emancipation and participation in public life. Concerns raised by female workers include sexual violence, kidnapping, and harassment most of which occur in areas affected by conflict. Many female workers perished in this way; they were taken to unidentified locations and tortured; their families discovered their dead bodies in the streets. For many of them, the kidnappers demanded enormous sums of money from their families, which they were unable to provide; after torturing and accurate execution, the kidnappers threw away their victims' dead bodies in the street. This type of kidnapping occurred before the Taliban, and it continues even under their rule with no government action to stop it. As a result, the situation for female workers becomes more dire every day. When conducting fieldwork, they can feel secure.

Before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, we were terrified of kidnapping; after some of our female coworkers were abducted, our organization assisted in their release. This was not the end of the work; although the Taliban are currently in power, we are still in danger and have never felt safe, neither under the previous administration nor under the current one. (F13, 17.03.2024).

Below is a conducted survey from 56 people showed the security concerns of the female workers

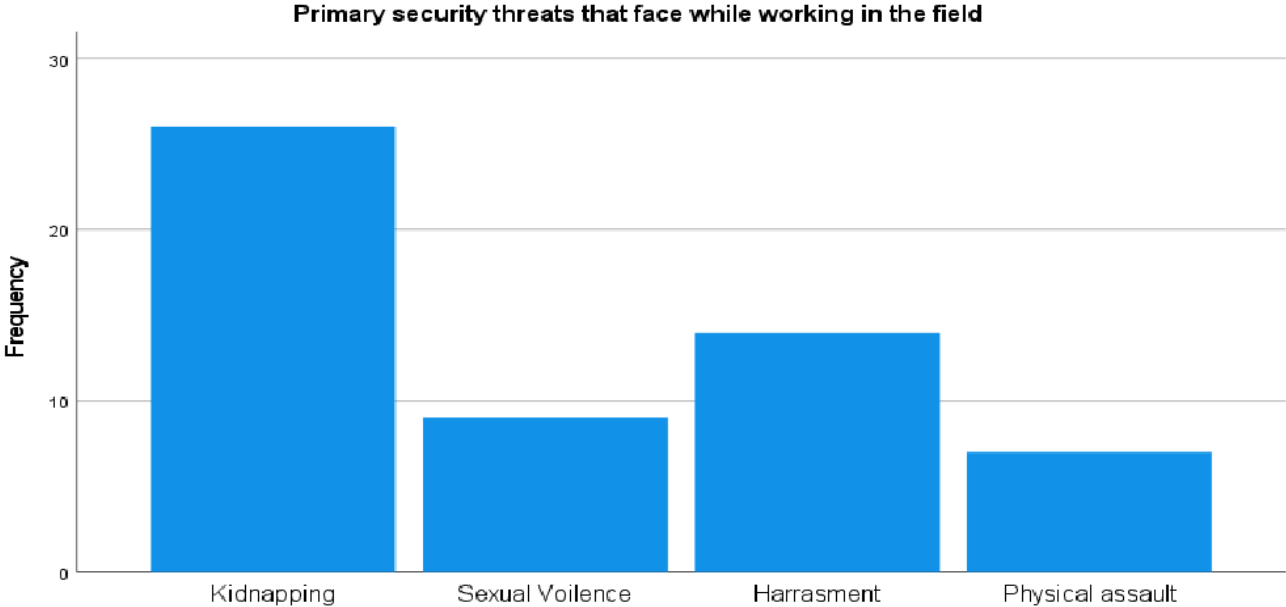


Figure 4.2.3: Female humanitarian worker security concern

The figure shows that the highest security concern is the kidnapping of 26 females which 46.4% reported, sexual violence is also one of the security concerns according to the conducted survey of 9 people which reported about, 16.1%, harassment consists of 14 females staff which 25% reported about, and 7 people which is 12.5% reported physical assault.

4.2.4 Stigmatization and Harassment

Regardless of whether they work or stay at home, women's rights are consistently marginalized in Afghanistan. The distinction lies in the fact that although housewives are vulnerable to harassment and domestic abuse within their homes, working women who are not burdened with additional family-related stressors also face threats from society. Various forms of harassment, including physical assault, intimidation, threats, and verbal abuse, are experienced by female humanitarian workers. Members of the public, local law enforcement, and occasionally even coworkers may harass someone. Due to cultural norms, societal attitudes, political and economic instability, as well as people's ignorance of women's rights, there is an increased risk of harassment and abuse for female workers, which exacerbates the situation. A participant from Organization C said that;

In the distant places where I was distributing aid, especially to the newly arrived children, and instructing women on how to use the safe pad, I did not feel secure. In this scene came up to me and started to bother me. He was yelling, attempting to assault, and speaking in an aggressive tone, telling people not to come near this place or talk to our women because they would pick up bad habits from you. I wished I had never gone to the field because I felt so horrible, lost all self-control, and began crying. It was a terrible day for me (F16, 23.03.2024).

4.3 Female Humanitarian Workers' Challenges in NGOs

Afghanistan presents difficulties for women. Despite their dedication and hard work, female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan face numerous obstacles in a society that values conservatism. Numerous research interviewers also mentioned that women are making more sacrifices in Afghanistan than men and that the current work environment is not only worse for female employees but also getting worse for male employees. In NGOs and INGOs, women face

a variety of obstacles, including a lack of female role models, discrimination, work-life balance, sexual harassment, restricted opportunities, social and cultural norms, security and safety concerns, and access to vulnerable populations. Let's move on to each of them now.

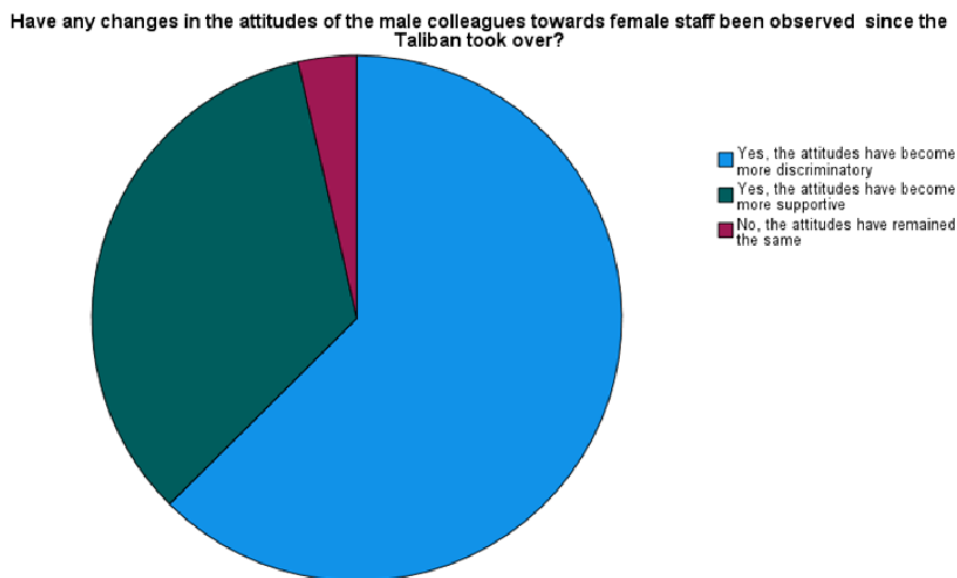
4.3.1 Discrimination

Over the years, female NGOs working in humanitarian aid have encountered a variety of difficulties, prejudice, and discrimination in various fields. Their freedom of movement in public spaces, workplace segregation, right to work, clothing regulations, Mahram issue, long-distance travel, discrimination in the workplace and industry, and worries about their safety and security are all examples. The century-old prejudice against female humanitarian workers in non-governmental organizations is still present. The promotion of gender equality and rights can still face challenges, even in national or international NGOs.

Because of social and cultural norms, discrimination in Afghanistan occurs in a conservative and patriarchal environment. Before and after the Taliban, female humanitarian workers experienced a growing number of obstacles, difficulties, and forms of discrimination. Female employees of NGOs put up with a lot of obstacles and hardships. restrictions on their ability to participate in decision-making, opportunities restricted due to their gender, gender-based violence, tightened regulations, worries about their safety and security, and a few other issues we will address one at a time.

A participant from organization A stated that;
despite the organization's strong support, she occasionally feels discriminated against. Although we believe that because we work with educated people, they should support us, she can sense that there is discrimination in society, but at least in our organization, where we need to feel safe. Despite this, there is still dominance in terms of facilities, opportunities for advancement, and decision-making. She added that occasionally, the men in our groups would rather have opportunities because they believe that women are weak and shouldn't have them now that the Taliban is in power (F5, 01.03.2024).

Figure 4.3.1: Discrimination inside the organization



The figure shows that 62.5% of the females said that yes the attitudes of their male colleagues changed and some of them became more discriminatory when they saw the atmosphere was for them. 33.9% of them said that they didn't change their attitudes and vice versa they became more supportive, and 3.6% of them said that their attitude remained the same means those colleagues that they discriminated against before the Taliban are still doing this.

Another participant said that;

I can't deny that I have always experienced discrimination—both in my family and in the community. Discrimination inside organizations has gotten worse ever since the Taliban took power. Some of our male coworkers were unhappy that there were women in the organization; some of them were even against women being there. When the Taliban took over, they were ecstatic and exclaimed, Now you can't continue your work (F19,11.03.2024).

4.3.2 Work-life Balance

In every organization, the most obvious problem is finding a work-life balance. Increased work pressure and extended work hours led to numerous imbalances in the lives of female employees across all industries. In addition, several organizations have acknowledged their noteworthy contribution to their success, demonstrating the devotion and commitment of women to participating in a variety of community pillars. Women are finding it harder to balance their personal and professional lives as a result of longer workdays and increased expectations (Pahuja, 2017). Women's presence, collaboration, and the world's rapid progress and development are felt at various phases and aspects of life.

It can be challenging for female humanitarian workers, particularly in a society like Afghanistan, to manage and maintain their personal and professional lives while working in a variety of roles and sectors. Some families do not understand that women can not take care of both sides of the family. Female workers face additional pressure from family obligations, expectations, and workload, which makes it difficult to maintain mental clarity (Edwards & Oteng, 2019). Humanitarian workers who are married reported that it can be difficult for them to balance their personal and professional lives at times. This complaint is more common among married workers than single ones.

Because of the strain of managing both my family and my work at the office, there are moments when I feel like I'm done. I leave for work at 8:00 a.m. and return home around 6:00 p.m. Although they act happy, my husband's family is not pleased at all with this. I am exhausted when I get home and have to take care of my two kids and cook dinner. Instead of unwinding afterward, I have to do housework. Nevertheless, I consider myself fortunate that I have a job and am independent in this situation (F14, 14.03.2024).

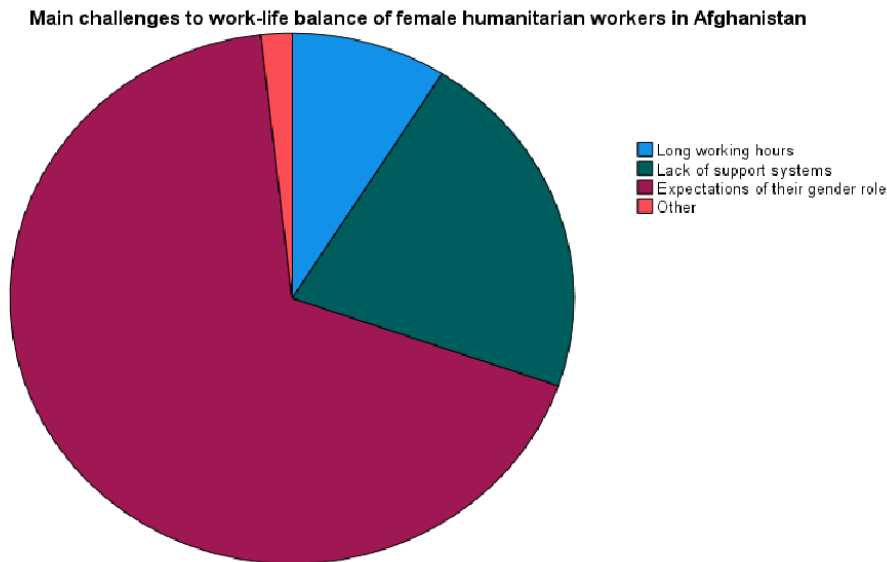
One of the attendees from organization E stated that, although her spouse is unemployed, he did hold a job in the previous administration. She was employed at an INGO at the time of the Taliban invasion and was terrified of losing it, but she managed to hold onto her position. Her husband is a kind and understanding man who looks after the kids while she works during the day. She is grateful for his support, but occasionally her husband mistreats her because she is a woman and

working in this situation. However, when he realizes that she persisted in her work despite the difficult circumstances, he gives her encouragement.

Meanwhile, another participant who is working in Organization D said that;

Being a single woman, I'm relieved that, at least, my home life doesn't put as much pressure on me as it does at work. I can manage my personal and work lives only sometimes because of the working hours and the distance between my house and my organization. This is because only sometimes if the work at the office is heavy, I can't get home in time. I don't have any sisters, but my mother is still old. My brothers help me with the work

Figur 4.3.2: Work-Life Balance



The figure indicates that 8.9% percent of female workers face challenges in long working hours, and due to the long working hours, they said that they get time to take care of themselves and their family, and sometimes it affects their mental health but still, they were happy and said that they can manage at any cost. 21.4% percent of female humanitarian workers were suffering from the lack of support from their family and their family interventions. The stress in both lives could bring challenges and negative impacts causing emotional breaks. 67.9% percent were suffering from the expectations of their role it is because of the societal pressure and the cultural norms that restrict their free movement, and the discrimination due to their gender from social and colleagues.

4.4 Coping Mechanism

Not only do Afghan women who work have a difficult life, but all women in society do. Life can be difficult for them due to their traditional and strict upbringing, lack of government assistance, and domestic struggles. The obstacles that female workers face in their personal and professional lives as a result of social and cultural norms, limited government, and family issues all need to be dealt with. Some things can support and motivate them to carry on with their work, handle obstacles, and help the most vulnerable individuals in the most vulnerable situations.

The research participants expressed dissatisfaction with the obstacles they faced, particularly during the Taliban regime. However, they expressed contentment with their jobs, regardless of whether they were employed online or off.

4.4.1 Moral Purpose

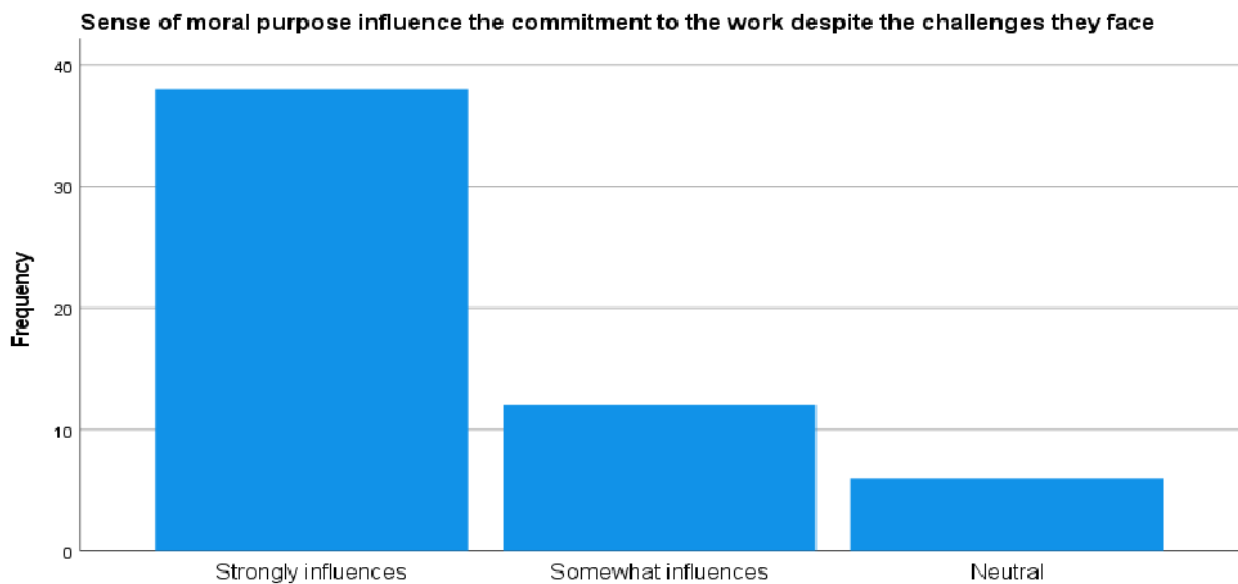
Female humanitarian workers went through so many tough situations and they were witnesses to many years of war even at that time, they were willing to do their job and help people. They witnessed the struggles of the most vulnerable areas how the women and children went through tough situations and how those women motivated them to not give up and continue their work in every tough situation and make a positive impact. Meanwhile, they witnessed children who were deprived of education, women who faced limited access to healthcare, and facing family violence. Witnessing all these becomes more than just a job for female workers and due to their moral purpose and it empowers them to continue through tough situations and bring changes in the society even under the regime of the Taliban they use the very limited source that can help women and children.

A participant from organization F mentioned that; Working in this situation is tough, many of her relatives say how you can work and not be scared if the Taliban do something to you when sometimes she thinks about these kinds of speeches, to be honest, she feels fear and says they are right because if Taliban do something no one can do anything and no one can defend her but, still she is working because thousands of women need her help she got education for this aim that one day she can help her people now she should help them and she is happy with her situation and can sacrifice anything for the happiness of her people.

Another participant shared her dream and how she struggled

I used to dream of working in society so, that I could observe and experience people's lives and circumstance. Now, I am unable to make that dream come true. As a woman employed in the community, I am aware of the struggles my people face in providing service and I am acutely aware of the suffering endured by women. I always vowed as a female worker to never give up and to work with people under any circumstances (F7, 09.04.2024).

Figure 4.4.1: Sense of Moral



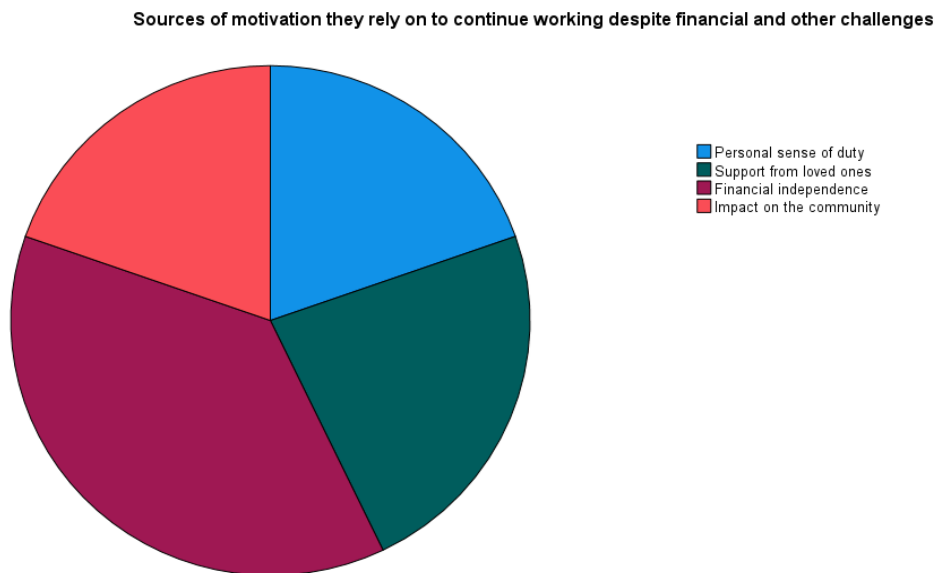
The figure shows that the moral purpose strongly influenced 38 female workers which are 67.9% are doing their job with eagerness reported that moral purpose had a strong influence on 12 of them which is 21.4% reported that they were somewhat influenced and 6 10.7% said that it is neutral means they don't have any idea about this.

4.4.2 Financial income

Those women who lost their husbands and primary providers as a result of years of war and conflict have worked for many years in the humanitarian sector, among other fields like education and healthcare. Being financially independent inspires these women to work hard, overcome obstacles, and fight for what they want. They are proud of their independence. Their personal lives can benefit from it, as can the provision of services for underprivileged women. These female employees are empowered to work harder and bring in more revenue because of the support and encouragement they receive from their loved ones. Here is a speech that a female employee of Company E gave, saying the following:

In addition to being proud of myself as a working woman, I'm also proud of myself for being financially independent and able to support my family and myself. I'm glad that my hard work and proper work have paid off. Along with my son Mahram, I visit a remote area to provide aid to the locals (F19, 11.03.2024).

Figure 4.4.2: The Financial motive of Female workers



The figure shows that 19.6% of them working in the current situation because of their sense of duty, 23.2% of them support their loved ones, 37.5% of them want to be financially independent,

and 19.6% of them because of their impact on the community which is a positive impact to encourage other families to let their daughters to work and to live freely.

Another employee of organization B, in the meantime, stated that since the arrival of the Taliban, most of their projects have been on hold due to modifications, and their pay has also decreased. Despite this, she is content with what she has because it allows her to at least provide for her children's needs, and feels good about giving back to her community.

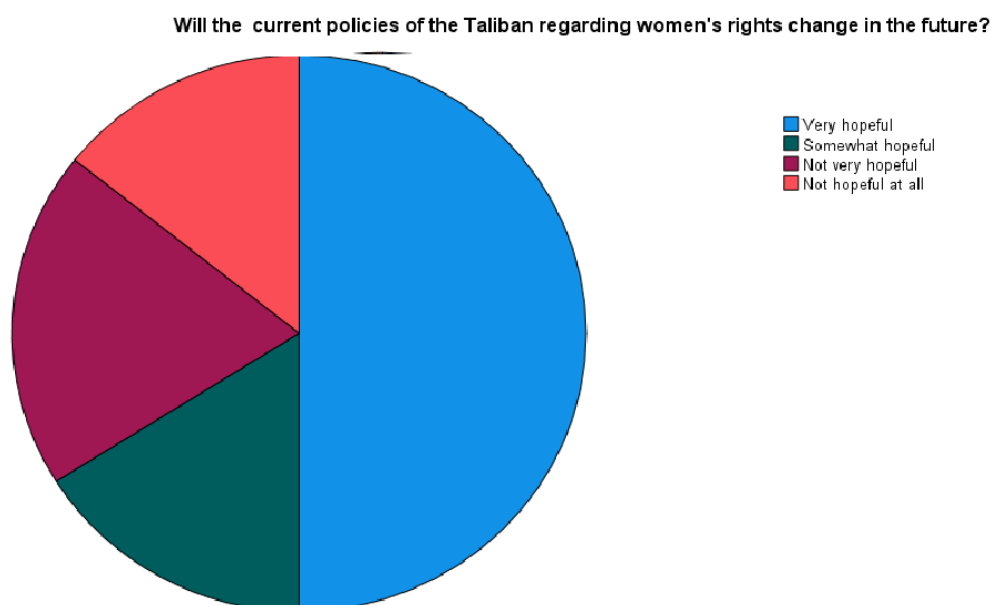
4.4.3 Hope for changes

Moreover, even with current hardships stemming from the Taliban regime, many of Afghanistan's female humanitarian workers are fueled by hope too. They hope that the Taliban will change their policy and they will be free in public and free to work without any Mahram. This unwavering belief is being turned into meaningful and durable action: they are natural role models for younger generations of girls, promoting a more accurate image of what girls can achieve. Each act of service whether through educating and providing healthcare to women and children, volunteering or offering humanitarian aid, etc. is a way of benefiting the women whose knowledge and experience will better serve as agents for change with each day, these women are breaking the cycle of mediocrity and signaling that they will be a driving force to build a better Afghanistan. All of these things can begin to create long-term changes in society and cause policy-level modifications to support the rights of women. They are, in the face of blatant opposition and adversity however, hopeful beacons that stand firmly committed to continue breaking down barriers for themselves and others. A participant from organization F said that; she had worked for the first government of the Taliban and in the second period she had hope in their previous government that they would change their mindsets for women or maybe another new government would take their place and Afghanistan will be free now she also has the same hope, she also said that now Afghanistan is not the Afghanistan of 20 years back we are in the way of progress and we will continue and we believe that Taliban will change.

It is not only about female workers' hope and disappointment, it is about the hope of all people in Afghanistan because women were more victims of this government they are hoping more but still a high percentage of them are disappointed and don't believe and trust that Taliban will change and let all women get their rights. As a participant from organization D mentioned that;

”Although I don’t have any trust in the Taliban government and know that this misery will remain until their government does not change” (F14, 14.03.2024).

Figure 4.4.3: Hope for the changes



The figure indicates how women are hopeful that the rule of the Taliban will change 50% of them are very hopeful, 16.1% of them are somewhat hopeful, 19.6% of them are not very hopeful and 14.3% of them are not hopeful at all.

4.5 Organizational Support and policies on how to cope with the challenges

Humanitarian aid work is both crucial and challenging, particularly in Afghanistan. The social norms, the government's lack of assistance, family pressures, and violence can all be difficult for Afghan women. Particularly for female workers, the battle for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is one of admiration. A never-ending tapestry of hardship is woven by societal expectations, the government's, and even internal family pressures. Nevertheless, they would rather work than give up and struggle to obtain their goals. They have strong backing from the government and

organizations in addition to the support of the organizations. Nevertheless, the government no longer provides them with as much support.

Nevertheless, the organizations continue to support them and offer them all the resources and opportunities necessary to enable them to work so they can do so fearlessly. A code of conduct that addresses harassment, explicit policies like safeguarding policies both inside and outside the organization, and training initiatives that raise security awareness and cultural sensitivity are just a few examples of the various tools that can be included in this support system.

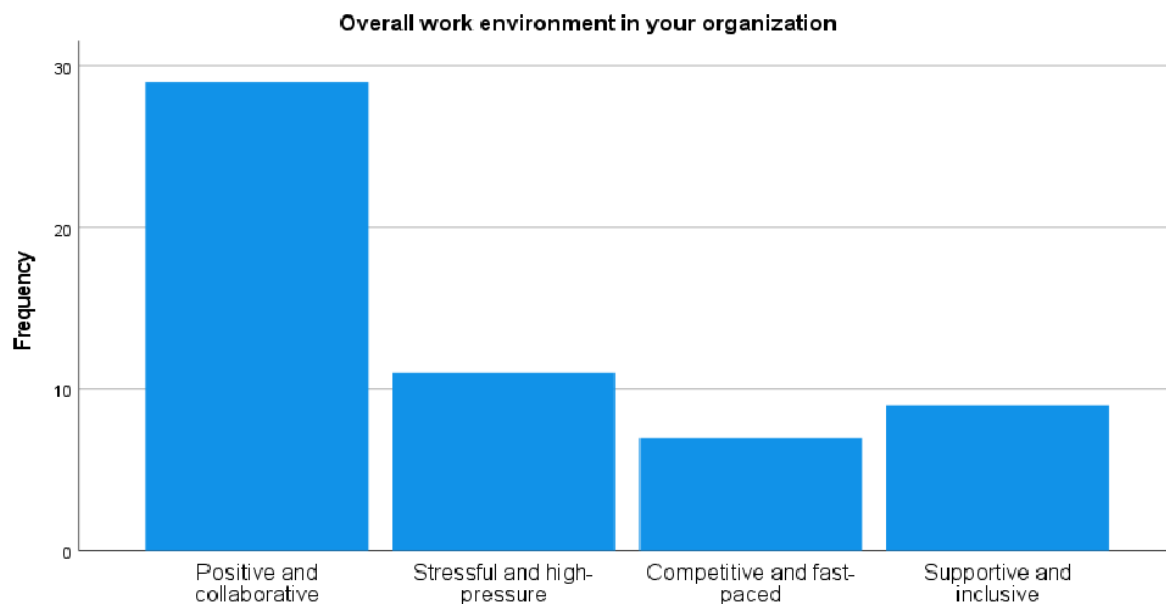
Encouraging a positive and healthy work environment gives female humanitarian workers the means and instruments necessary to fulfill their vital roles with success. Their steadfast endeavors and diligence guarantee that vital aid reaches the most susceptible groups, providing a glimmer of hope and diligence. A participant from Organization A brought up the following:

An encouraging and dynamic work environment is crucial, in my opinion. Fortunately, I work for a supportive company where I feel very safe. The pressure to perform well makes work bearable, though, and when I receive praise and encouragement from my superiors and coworkers, I am filled with pride (F6 12.03.2024).

Simultaneously, a second person from organization F stated that although she is aware that NGOs have fewer resources than INGOs, she is fortunate to have her organization's limited resources and constantly works to assist them in any way possible, including with personal and family issues, particularly the financial aspect.

The below figure shows the conducted survey of 56 female humanitarian workers they expressed their ideas about their working environment and were satisfied.

Figure 4.5: Overall work environment



The figure shows the frequency and the percentage of 56 female humanitarian workers who participated in this survey and shared their ideas about their working environment in the organization. It shows that out of 56 humanitarian workers, 29 females which are 51.8% reported that their working environment is positive and collaborative, 11 females out of 56 which is 19.6% reported that it is stressful and sometimes with high pressure due to workload, 7 female out of 56 which is 12.5% reported that it is competitive sometimes for a position or any other opportunities, and 9 out of 56 which is 16.1% reported that it is supportive and inclusive.

4.6 Organizational Policies and Practices

NGOs and INGOs created policies to guarantee the safety and security of female employees both inside and outside of their organizations in response to the difficulties faced by these workers under the Taliban regime. The following are some guidelines and procedures that INGOs and NGOs are putting into effect:

4.6.1 Policy Adaptation

NGOs and INGOs run policies that cater to the particular needs and difficulties encountered by female employees on the inside. If there are issues about the NGO outside, they also carry out these policies. To ensure that the policies continue to be impacted and that appropriate approaches are taken when circumstances change, the process requires a dynamic and effective approach. Safeguarding is one of these policies that NGOs and INGOs are putting into place for the security and safety of workers. By implementing this policy within the company, a safe environment free from abuse of any kind is created. Safeguarding is concerned with the rights, protection, health, and well-being of employees.

Every employee, especially women, can work safely and comfortably by putting this policy into practice. All employees, regardless of rank, are subject to this policy. This policy states that no male employee has the right to verbally or physically harass any female employee. This policy gives everyone the right to file a complaint against the person who is harassing them.

If a female employee reports abuse, the policy will take appropriate action. If the abuse is minor, such as verbal abuse, the employee will receive a warning; if the employee engages in such behavior again, they will be fired. Otherwise, a fair and just decision will be made through a Personal meeting and investigation.

According to a participant from Organization E,

I am extremely pleased with the policy changes and code of conduct that our organization is putting into place. It was previously strict, but under the Taliban administration, it became even stricter—no one was allowed to make disparaging remarks about other or female employees. In the beginning, I felt extremely safe because the person in charge of this kind of thing gave me a workshop where I could go directly to the person if I felt unsafe or abused and there was no need to be afraid (F9 17.03.2024).

4.6.2 Strategic Negotiation

Any organization that has policies about strategic negotiation will take it seriously if there is any abuse, harassment, or misbehavior occurring within the organization or outside of the workplace. Strategic negotiation is an option for staff members who are mistreated by directors or other coworkers. There is a dedicated team that handles contacting the complaints with the strategic negotiation. A conversation with the team would be facilitated. The woman expresses her unacceptable behavior clearly and requests a proper apology along with a commitment to change. To have less interaction with the abuser, negotiations could also be made regarding work schedules and physical space arrangements. that an employee—particularly a female employee leaves the office during business hours to conduct fieldwork and if something goes wrong, the organization will be held accountable and take appropriate action. To reduce the risk, she might also bargain with the company to alter her travel schedule or routes. If possible, this negotiation may entail advocating for the use of a security escort or even finding other, less risky ways to deliver aid without actually entering these high-risk areas.

This negotiation strategy aims to find the best solutions that address the safety concerns of the female worker while also achieving the organization's goal of delivering aid effectively. By clearly communicating the impact of the abuse and proposing practical solutions, female aid workers can leverage negotiation to create a safer and more supportive environment for themselves and their colleagues. As a participant from organization C mentioned; In her organization, everything is organized she had support all the time inside and outside the office when she went for field work, even now under the regime of the Taliban she has her Mahram with herself, and the organization provides them a specific number if they face something they can call them and they will be present urgently. Another participant from Organization B said that;

One of our male employees was seen by my colleague asking for a relationship, despite being married. The employee was reported by my colleague , and he was subsequently fired by the company. No misbehavior or verbal abuse has ever been experienced by me. (F7, 09.03.2024).

4.6.3 Resource Allocation

The purpose of resource allocation policies is to regulate the distribution of resources within an organization by its strategic goals and priorities. These policies can facilitate the efficient operation of all departments and projects. This policy can be used to allocate resources in any way, and employees are pleased with it because it allows them to make decisions regarding hiring, budgeting, and other matters involving physical and technological resources. This policy can effectively address any challenges faced by an employee by directing necessary resources toward issue resolution.

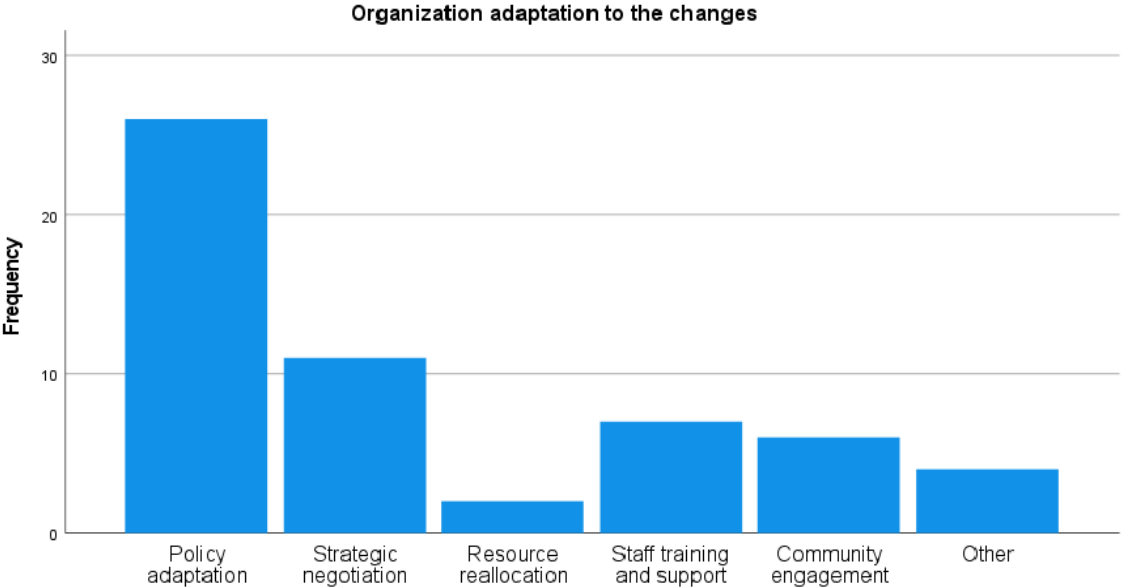
This policy's needs assessment component would precisely pinpoint the nature of the employee's challenge, including whether it is understaffed, lacks tools that are deemed necessary, or has an excessive workload. To lessen the difficulty, resources like more staff, technology assistance, or training courses are distributed based on a prioritizing system. For instance, the company can assign more workers or better distribute the workload if the issue is one of an excessive workload that causes productivity to decline.

Furthermore, contingency planning guarantees that funds and resources are set aside to promptly address unforeseen problems. Frequent evaluations and feedback systems are implemented to enable continuous observation and modification to guarantee that the resources allotted are successfully addressing the employee's challenge and fostering a positive work environment. Individual difficulties are addressed with the proper support in this strategic and responsive manner, enhancing both the general organizational effectiveness and the welfare of the workforce.

We feel safer and more helpful because our organization is implementing Resource Allocation as one of the other policies to address the issues we are facing. I worked for many years in both NGOs and INGOs, both of which were encouraging. However, one positive thing about INGOs is that they actually put their policies into practice, and staff members should be dedicated to each policy and act appropriately (F15, 27.03.2024).

Every organization applies different policies and they choose the policy that is more useful for all the employees, according to a survey of 56 female staff from different organizations that shows which kind of policy is more implemented in their organization.

Figure 4.6: Adapt to the changes



This figure shows that out of 56 female workers, 26 of them which is 46.4% policy adaptation in their organization, 11 people which is 19.6% going for strategic negotiation, 2 people 3.6% go for resource allocation, 7 people which is 12.5% of the survey adapting staff training and support, 6 people which is 10.7% reported for the community engagement and 4 people which is 7.1% going for another policies and code of conducts.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Finding out about the difficulties encountered by female aid workers in Afghanistani humanitarian organizations, their coping strategies, and the organizational support was the aim of this study. Additionally, the results were examined in the context of the body of current literature. For many years, Afghan women—not just those who worked as employees—faced numerous difficulties. It began with the Soviet invasion and persisted until the establishment of the Taliban government. Because of the ideology of Mullahs and in the name of Islamic Sharia laws, they battled for decades for their rights and were denied even the most fundamental ones.

Women's rights to healthcare, employment, education, public speech, freedoms in society, and decision-making have all been taken away from them from 2001-2021, claims Kolhatkar (2002). Afghanistan has the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the world, and the country's women's literacy rate is estimated to be 3% today.

Despite experiencing discrimination and inequality based on their gender, female employees were crucial to the provision of humanitarian aid. Women made great strides toward regaining their rights following the Soviet invasion and the initial 20-year Taliban rule. They were presented with numerous opportunities in various domains, particularly those related to roles within NGOs and INGOs. They held a variety of positions, including those of leadership, participated in decision-making, worked outside without restriction, spoke openly in public, and spoke out for their rights. Important positions in the government and a ministry devoted to women were also attained by the women. They even managed to get seats in the nation's parliament.

Despite all of the advancements women have made in the last 20 years, they still face numerous obstacles and struggle daily. They are prevented from participating in a wide range of professional spheres within the NGOs due to discrimination based on their appearance, ethnicity, and sect. The issues that women face outside of the workplace include sexual harassment, physical assault, and abduction. Particular cultural expectations ruined women's lives and denied them many opportunities. The results imply that although female workers encountered numerous difficulties

during the initial phase of the Taliban, they achieved notable advancements following their downfall.

But we cannot claim that women lived and worked without hindrances or difficulties during these 20 years without the Taliban regime. The research participants expressed that they constantly battle with conservative society; they were raised in conservative homes and were raised in societies that held the view that women should stay at home, take care of the home, bear children, and work as slaves. The gender disparities disappointed the participants. The fact that 20 years of their development had been destroyed in a matter of days was one of the disappointing aspects of this discovery; it was unreal to them and left them feeling shocked and depressed.

They were more depressed after losing their dream and facing an uncertain future, and they were pressured into marriages against their will by their families. The disappointing aspect of the research was that women who had grown up in traditional homes and believed that women belonged indoors were content with the government's changes and the Taliban's rule. They shared the same ideology and showed no concern for the girls and women who had given up on their dreams. An additional noteworthy discovery pertains to the participant's predicament of experiencing discrimination from both the previous and current governments. They claimed that some of their coworkers were Taliban supporters who actively discriminated against women, prevented them from advancing professionally or achieving higher positions, participated in organizational decision-making, and even attempted to sabotage their chances by sending them on fieldwork.

The research also reveals that fear of physical assault, harassment, and kidnapping poses a challenge for female workers. Kidnapping was a problem before the Taliban, putting female employees in danger, and it continues under their leadership. especially the women who deal with these kinds of issues and difficulties while working remotely. They frequently received orders to cease working from the Taliban and unidentified individuals.

Female humanitarian workers' mental health is impacted by overcoming all of these obstacles. There were several factors contributing to the elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and psychological

discomfort. These difficulties were largely caused by factors like discrimination, limitations on freedom, and an increase in both domestic and public violence against women. These mental health problems were exacerbated by increased domestic responsibilities, fear of job loss and job instability, and uncertainty about the future of the current government. The majority of women who had previously supported their families solely through their work have lost their jobs, but even those who are employed now are struggling financially as a result of donors fleeing the nation after the Taliban took power and their pay decreasing, which has left them emotionally unstable. The level of organizational support varies greatly. While some NGOs and INGOs were forced to defend policies and resources, such as flexible work schedules, mental health support, and security training, many others found that their operations were hindered by limited capacity to advocate for and protect female workers because they were identified by operational risks and security constraints.

Notably, the results also emphasize how important it is to maintain ongoing initiatives to combat discrimination based on gender and advance fairness and equality in the work of humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan. Since they don't want to be unemployed and spend their days at home, female humanitarian workers continue to work despite the numerous obstacles they face in the hopes that the Taliban will change their policies and permit women to return to the workforce and reopen schools.

One of the most significant factors in this discovery was being financially independent. Due to their inability to work, women who lost their husbands in combat or whose husbands were injured in combat work for them because they are their families' primary providers and don't want to lose their jobs.

Furthermore, in the current circumstances where female workers require more support, NGOs and INGOs are making every effort to assist them. By offering various policies in the face of any difficulty, you can refer back to this policy and consider them. The best practices that companies are putting into place to give female employees a safe workplace are resource allocation, policy adaptation, and strategic negotiation.

In summary, immediate action is required to protect and empower women who work in humanitarian relief. Since women are unable to access humanitarian aid in the majority of these areas, female workers are necessary. The first steps in developing more inclusive and fair work environments for NGOs and INGOs in Afghanistan are taking care of the issues facing female humanitarian workers and strengthening their resilience.

Women and their families would experience fewer long-term negative consequences from these constrictive laws and social norms if they received psychological support, vocational training, and economic empowerment. The same is true of improving organizational policies, which will become better with proper resource allocation, clear safeguarding, and strategic negotiation frameworks. As they pursue the goal of assisting Afghan women, fighting for their rights, and providing them with significant humanitarian efforts, NGOs and INGOs should remain watchful, proactive, and involved. For female humanitarian workers seeking social justice and gender equality, this requires resiliency and unwavering resolve. Such empowerment will serve longer-term goals in bringing about societal transformation within intricate socio-political contexts, in addition to improving the caliber of assistance provided by female workers.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion presented the following recommendations are suggested :

- Afghan female workers due to the restrictions of the Taliban regime and insecurity are particularly facing mental health issues inside and outside of the organization. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the organizations enhance and strengthen comprehensive safeguarding policies, provide regular security training, and mental health support services, and take action to provide a safer work environment that impacts their mental well-being.
- Some female workers can't manage their work life and their family life due to the long working hours in the office, so it is recommended that the organizations decrease the policy of office working hours.

- Address active female workers' challenges by the organizations and remove gender-based discrimination simultaneously, promote the culture of accepting women in society, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for female workers in leadership and decision-making roles.
- The government should accept women who are part of society and should have the right to freely express their concerns and ideas without fear. The organizations should talk with the government about the women's situation and share their concerns allowing them to come to the office and work in the office.
- Kidnapping is a serious concern and threat for female humanitarian workers, Particularly in a conflict zone such as Afghanistan. The organization needs to enhance security measures and ensure that the workers are well-trained and armed to handle these threats and it can reduce the risk of kidnapping and protect their staff.
- Due to the current situation more than half of the women lost their jobs, the government needs to support them and create more opportunities for them to find a job and those women who are still working at Organizations should increase their salaries, give them a chance to get the leadership positions and have the right in decision making.
- Afghanistan is like another country signatory to various international agreements and conventions like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and many more agreements emphasize about women rights in every aspect of the life and fully free from any kinds of discrimination. So,

it is recommended that the government align by considering the national and international standards and take concrete steps to implement them.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided a profound glance at the very important roles and crucial challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in Humanitarian organizations before the Taliban and under the Taliban regime. Despite their important existence and collaboration, these females have various difficulties due to social and cultural norms, conservative people, safety concerns, and restrictive policies and rules. The introduction of this research highlighted the significance of having women in humanitarian sectors because they can better serve and reach vulnerable groups such as women and children. The problem statement of this research pointed out the very urgent need to know the obstacles these workers face especially within NGOs and INGOs operating in Afghanistan. The research aimed to explore these challenges in detail, focus on their roles, specific gender-related barriers, and how they cope with all these issues

Additionally, this research provides a direct overview of the humanitarian organization's efforts and hard work in Afghanistan, presenting how both national and international organizations have and play an important role in addressing the needs of the people due to the several conflicts, political instability, and natural disasters. The humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan work together to make a better Afghanistan assist rebuild the communities and promote sustainable development in Afghanistan.

Notably, the findings and results of this research highlighted the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in their organization and outside of the organization. The restrictions that they have in their workplace, particularly the banning of their work from office by the Taliban, reduce their existence in the organizations and cause a disturbance in humanitarian services aggravating issues like gender-based violence. Additionally, female humanitarian workers mostly experience verbal and emotional abuse, gender discrimination, and gender discrimination, and harassment from community members, local authorities, and even colleagues in their

organizations. These issues happened because of the lack of awareness regarding women's rights and the patriarchal attitudes in society. One other challenge that the findings found was ethnic discrimination as the participants claimed that Pashtun women often received more favorable treatment than the Hazara and Tajik races.

Economic challenges increased because of the ban on women's work and it badly affected the financial stability of lots of families, because in most families women are the primary breadwinners, struggling and support their families and communities. Moreover, instead of all the problems and challenges females are struggling to maintain the work-life balance. They manage their professional responsibilities with domestic duties, and it leads to stress and overtiredness due to traditional expectations of the families. It caused an increase in discrimination, abuse, mental health challenges, and economic instability.

Despite these serious barriers the resilience and determination of these women are, driven by a strong moral purpose to support vulnerable populations, especially women and children. The financial support and their hope for change and a better future motivate them to insist on their important roles. Meanwhile, the organizational support of the NGOs and INGOs is important in addressing the challenges, particularly through policies like strategic negotiation, resource allocation, and the safeguarding and code of conduct. Each of these policies offers a formal mechanism for females to raise their voices and concerns, seek resolutions, and provide the necessary support to mitigate the challenges.

In summary, the findings highlight the need for strong changes to promote gender equality and develop a safer environment and a supportive environment for female humanitarian workers in humanitarian organizations. Such an effort needs unceasing by national and international organizations to understand obligatory humanitarian assistance that goes in support of syncretist societal development.

References

Ahmadzai, Khan Wali. 2017. "Afghanistan: Few jobs for educated women". Institute for War & Peace Reporting, December 5.

Ahmed-Ghosh, H. (2003). A history of women in Afghanistan: lessons learned for the future or yesterdays and tomorrow: women in Afghanistan. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(3), 1-14

Akbari, M. R. (2020). Political participation of women in Afghanistan during the last decade (opportunities & challenges). *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 5(9), 2456-2165.

Albrecht, C., Rude, B., & SiteMinder, T. (2022). Women in Afghanistan: Developments over the Last 20 Years and the Return of the Taliban. In *Cession Forum* (Vol. 23, No. 01, pp. 57-62).

Albrecht, C., Rude, B., & Stitteneder, T. (2022). Women in Afghanistan: Developments over the Last 20 Years and the Return of the Taliban. In *CESifo Forum* (Vol. 23, No. 01, pp. 57-62). München: ifo Institut.

Amnesty (2022). Afghanistan: Taliban's backtrack on school re-opening for girls reversible and transformation. *Planning for Higher Education*, 42(2), 1.

Antonio Donini Senior Researcher, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

Atmar, H. and Goodhand, J. (2002). Aid, conflict, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan: what lessons can be learned?

Atmar, H. and Goodhand, J. (2002). Aid, conflict, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan: what lessons can be learned?

Babury, M. O., & Hayward, F. M. (2014). Afghanistan higher education: The struggle for quality, merit.

Baitenmann, H. (1990). NGOs and the Afghan war: the politicization of humanitarian aid. *Third World Quarterly*, 12(1), 62-85.

Barakat, S., & Wardell, G. (2002). Exploited by whom? An alternative perspective on humanitarian assistance to Afghan women. *Third World Quarterly*, 23(5), 909-930.

Barakat, S., & Wardell, G. (2002). Exploited by whom? An alternative perspective on humanitarian assistance to Afghan women. *Third World Quarterly*, 23(5), 909-930.

Benelli, P., Donini, A., & Niland, N. (2012). AFGHANISTAN: Humanitarianism in Uncertain Times. Feinstein International Center.

Braithwaite, A., Ghosn, F., & Hameed, T. (2022). Under pressure: when refugees feel pressured to leave their host countries. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 35(1), 595-614.

Carey, H. F., & Richmond, O. P. (2004). *Mitigating conflict: the role of NGOs*. Routledge.

Carter, L. (1991). Afghan non-governmental organizations and their role in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Peshawar: International Rescue Committee.

Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan, "Statistical yearbook 2011-2012".

Chowdhury, A. M. R., Aminul Alam, M., & Ahmed, J. (2006). Development knowledge and experience: from Bangladesh to Afghanistan and beyond. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 84(8), 677-681.

Cordell, K. A. (2019). International development and gender in Afghanistan: The impact of the women.

Corti, D., & Swain, A. (2009). War on drugs and war on terror: Case of Afghanistan. *Peace and Conflict Review*, 3(2), 41-53.

Crews, Robert D., and Amin Tarzi. *The Taliban and the crisis of Afghanistan*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Curter, C. L. (2002). Afghanistan: An ICRC perspective on bringing assistance and protection to women during the Taliban regime. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 84(847), 643-654.

Curtet, C. L. (2002). Afghanistan: An ICRC perspective on bringing assistance and protection to women during the Taliban regime. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 84(847), 643-654.

Debebe, Y. (2007). Staff turnover in international non-governmental organizations (NGOs): A case study of International Rescue Committee (IRC). Unpublished Master's Thesis, Addis Ababa University.

DIMITRAKIS, P. (2012). The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: International Reactions, Military Intelligence and British Diplomacy. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 48(4), 511–536.

Duflo, E. (2012), "Women Empowerment and Economic Development", *Journal of Economic Literature*.

Edwards, A. K. & Oteng, R. (2019). Attaining Work-Life Balance and Modeling the Way among Female Teachers in Ghana. *International journal of education policy and journal*.

EIGE (2021a), "Economic Case for Gender Equality in the EU.

Emadi, H. (2002). *Repression, resistance, and women in Afghanistan*. United States: Praeger Publishers.

Essar, M. Y., Ashworth, H., & Nemat, A. (2022). Addressing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan through \$10 billion Afghani assets: what are the challenges and opportunities at hand? *Globalization and health*, 18(1), 74.

Essar, M. Y., Rauf, N., Head, M. G., Nemat, A., Baez, A., Blanchet, K., & Shah, J. (2023). Afghan women are essential to humanitarian NGO work: the *Lancet Global Health*, 11(4), e497-e498.

Faarup, J. T. (2022). How have NGOs reacted and adapted to the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan? (Master's thesis, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås).

Farrell, T. (2022). Military adaptation and organizational convergence in war: Insurgents and international forces in Afghanistan. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 45(5), 718-742.

Fernandez, L. (2023). Unveiling Gender Dynamics: An In-depth Analysis of Gender Realities. *Influence: International journal of science review*, 5(3), 61-70.

Galway, L P, Corbett, K K and Zeng, L 2012 Where are the NGOs and why? The distribution of health and development NGOs in Bolivia. *Globalization and Health*, 8(38).

Ghufran, N. (2001). The Taliban and the civil war entanglement in Afghanistan. *Asian Survey*, 41(3), 462-487.

Goodhand, J. (2013). Contested boundaries: NGOs and civil-military relations in Afghanistan. *Central Asian Survey*, 32(3), 287-305.

Hameed, M. A., Rahman, M. M., & Khanam, R. (2023). Analyzing the consequences of long-run civil war on unemployment rate: Empirical evidence from Afghanistan. *Sustainability*, 15(8), 7012.

Hameed, M. A., Rahman, M. M., & Khanam, R. (2023). Analyzing the consequences of long-run civil war on unemployment rate: Empirical evidence from Afghanistan. *Sustainability*, 15(8), 7012.

Hashimy, S. Q. (2023). Impact of War on the Environment: A Critical Study of Afghanistan. *International Environmental Legal Research Journal*, 1(1), 52-61.

Hendessi, M. (2022). In the eye of the storm: Afghan women and girls navigating displacement. In *The Elgar Companion to Gender and Global Migration* (pp. 212-221). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Islam, M. N., & Anwar, A. (2012). BRAC in Afghanistan: Building South-South partnerships in teacher training. *Prospects*, 42, 55-70.

Johannessen, B., & Strand, A., (2021) Afghanistan.

Johnson, C., & Leslie, J. (2009). *Afghanistan: The mirage of peace*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.

Kabeer, N. (2018). Gender, livelihood capabilities, and women's economic empowerment: reviewing evidence over the life course.

Karimi, A. M. (2018). Challenges of Rural Economy and Women Economic Empowerment in Afghanistan: A Concept Note. Available at SSRN 3291958.

Katzman, K., & Magill, C. E. (2001, November). *Afghanistan: current issues and US policy concerns*. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

Khalidi, N. A. (1991). Afghanistan: demographic consequences of war, 1978–1987. *Central Asian Survey*, 10(3), 101-126.

Khalilzad, Z. (1985). *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*.

Kolhatkar, S. (2002). The impact of US intervention on Afghan women's rights. *Berkeley Women's LJ*, 17, 12.

Larmenier, J., Sweetman, C., & Thylin, T. (2019). Introduction: gender, humanitarian action, and crisis response. *Gender & Development*, 27(2), 187-201.

Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München.

Lopez, V., & Whitehead, D. (2013). Sampling data and data collection in qualitative research. *Nursing & midwifery research: Methods and appraisal for evidence-based practice*, 123, 140.

Lyall, J. (2019). Civilian casualties, humanitarian aid, and insurgent violence in civil wars. *International Organization*, 73(4), 901-926.

Mammadli, M. (2021). HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN 1996-2021 (Doctoral dissertation, VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY).

Manganaro, L. L., & Alozie, N. O. (2011). Gender role attitudes: Who supports expanded rights for women in Afghanistan? *Sex roles*, 64, 516-529.

Manipuri, M 2003 NGOs and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. In: Carey, H F and Richmond, O P (eds.). *Mitigating Conflict: The Role of NGOs*. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 138–155. DOI:

Mehrabi, A., Naghavi, A., Afsharzada, M. E., Afsharzada, M. S., Brailovskaia, J., & Teismann, T. (2023). Trust in higher guidance and suicidality in Afghan students under the Taliban regime {fr}(Confianza en la orientación superior y suicidalidad en estudiantes afganos bajo el régimen Talibán). *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*, 23(4), 100398.

Mitchell, D. F. (2017). NGO Presence and Activity in Afghanistan, 2000-2014: A Provincial-Level Dataset. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 6(1).

- Monshipouri, M 2003 NGOs and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. In: Carey, H F and Richmond, O P (eds.). *Mitigating Conflict: The Role of NGOs*. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 138–155. DOI: 10.1080/10643140310001653912
- Monsutti, A. (2013). Anthropologizing Afghanistan: Colonial and postcolonial encounters. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 42, 269-285.
- Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection, and analysis. *European journal of general practice*, 24(1), 9-18.
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in development of medical education*, 14(3).
- Najafizada, S. A. M., Bourgeault, I. L., & Labonté, R. (2019). A gender analysis of a national community health workers program: a case study of Afghanistan. *Global Public Health*, 14(1).
- Najimi, A. W. (2011). Built heritage in Afghanistan: threats, challenges, and conservation. *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 68(3), 343-361.
- Neyazi, A., Padhi, B. K., Ahmadi, M., Erfan, A., Bashiri, B., Neyazi, M., ... & Griffiths, M. D. (2023). Depression, anxiety and quality of life of Afghan women living in urban areas under the Taliban government: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ open*, 13(8), e071939.
- Olson, L. (2006). Fighting for humanitarian space: NGOs in Afghanistan. *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 9(1).
- Pahuja, S. (2017). A study on the work-life balance of working parents in the educational sector. *Asian Journal of Management*.
- Patel, P., Meagher, K., El Achi, N., Ekzayez, A., Sullivan, R., & Bowsher, G. (2020). “Having more women humanitarian leaders will help transform the humanitarian system”: challenges and opportunities for women leaders in conflict and humanitarian health.

peace and security agenda 2001–2015. In *Rebuilding Afghanistan in Times of Crisis* (pp. 90-104). Routledge.

Perry, S. (2013). *Changing Roles of Women in Afghanistan: The Impact of the Rise and the Fall of the Taliban*.

Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). Mixed methods research. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 305-306.

Powell, C. (2014). *Women and girls in the Afghanistan transition*. Council on Foreign Relations Incorporated.

Rahmani, R. (2012). Donors, beneficiaries, or NGOs: whose needs come first? A dilemma in Afghanistan. *Development in Practice*, 22(3), 295–304.

Resnik, D. B. (2018). *The ethics of research with human subjects: Protecting people, advancing science, promoting trust* (Vol. 74). Springer.

Ritchie, H. A. (2017). *Negotiating Traditional Norms and Barriers in Women's Fragile Economic Development in Afghanistan*. In *People, Aid and Institutions in Socio-economic Recovery* (pp. 99-118). Routledge.

Roy, O. (1990). *Islam and resistance in Afghanistan* (Vol. 8). Cambridge University Press.

Rubin, B R. 1995 *The fragmentation of Afghanistan: state formation and collapse in the international system*.

Runion, ML 2007 *The History of Afghanistan*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Sadat, S. K. (2019). ABD-Taliban barış görüşmelerine ara verildi. *Anadolu Agency*. 13 December 2019.

Sauter, M. (2024). # AidToo, or when the situation permits rape: sexual violence among humanitarian aid workers. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 9(1), 1.

Ali, S. M. (2004). *The position of women in Islam: A progressive view*. SUNY Press.

Sönmez, G., Bozbaş, G., & Konaşul, S. (2020). Afgan Talibanı: dünü, bugünü ve yarını. *NEUSBF Dergisi*, 2(2), 59- 77.

Tavva, S., Abdelali-Martini, M., Aw-Hassan, A., Rischkowsky, B., Tibbo, M., & Rizvi, J. (2013). Gender roles in agriculture: The case of Afghanistan. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 20(1), 111-134.

West, K 2001 *Agents of altruism: The expansion of humanitarian NGOs in Rwanda and Afghanistan*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Wordsworth, A. (2007). *A Matter of Interests: Gender and the Politics of Presence in Afghanistan's Wolesi Jirga*. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

World Development Report 2012 “Gender Equality and Development”; P-4, available at.

Appendixes

Appendix A

Consent Letter

Research Title: Analyzing Female Humanitarian Workers' Challenges- A Case of Humanitarian Organizations in Afghanistan

Dear Participant,

My name is Jamila Ahmadi, and I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in Disaster Management at BRAC University. As part of my academic requirements, I am conducting research for my thesis titled " Analyzing Female Humanitarian Workers' Challenges- A Case of Humanitarian Organizations in Afghanistan"

Your insights and perspectives are crucial to the success of this research project, and I kindly request your cooperation in responding to the following questions. Please rest assured that all information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and your responses will be used solely for academic research purposes.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to skip any question you feel uncomfortable answering. However, I encourage you to provide honest and accurate responses based on your beliefs and experiences.

Thank you very much for considering participation in this study. Your contribution will greatly contribute to advancing our understanding of the challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

Jamila Ahmadi

Master of Disaster Management BRAC University

I have read the above and discussed it with the researcher. I understand the study and agree to participate.

Name & Signature

Appendix B

Questionnaires

Questionnaire for female staff

The purpose of this questionnaire is for academic Purposes as it is required for my master's dissertation. This questionnaire needs your comprehensive assets which can complete my dissertation through your honest and correct responses, and to observe your view about your experience as a female humanitarian worker, the challenges you are facing, and your coping mechanism. Here, I assure you that everything will be kept confidential and safe. Therefore, your actual, straight, and timely answers for succeeding in this research are crucial, and I kindly request you to respond honestly to these questions.

1. Sex:
 - Male
 - Female

2. Age (Years):
 - A. 20-25
 - B. 26-30
 - C. 31-35
 - D. 36-40

3. Marital Status:
 - A. Single
 - B. Married
 - C. Widowed
 - D. Divorced

4. Educational Qualification:
 - A. Bachelor
 - B. Master
 - C. PHD

5. Your work experience in the Organization:
 - A. 1 year
 - B. 1-2 years
 - C. 3-5 years

D. 5 years

6. Position in the Organization:
 - A. Manager
 - B. Coordinator
 - C. Officer
 - D. Assistant Officer

7. Type of organization:
 - A. National NGO
 - B. International NGO

8. What is the distribution of staff in your organization?
 - A. Mostly male
 - B. Mostly female
 - C. Equal representation of male and female

9. Which senior positions are held by female staff in your organization?
 - A. Director
 - B. Manager
 - C. Coordinator
 - D. Officer
 - E. Other, please specify

10. For how long has your organization been working in Afghanistan?
 - A. 1-5 years
 - B. 5-10 years
 - C. 10-15 years
 - D. 15-20 years

11. Which geographical spots is your organization working in?
 - A. Kabul and Mazar
 - B. Badakhshan and Baghlan
 - C. Others
 - D. All

12. Which activities is your organization pursuing?
 - A. Humanitarian
 - B. Women's Rights
 - C. Education
 - D. Development

13. Based on your gender, have you ever faced any specific challenges, or threats, or felt unsafe within your organization?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
- If yes, please specify them
14. Can you briefly explain and share your perspective on the current situation for female workers in the country?
15. How has the recent instability affected your work?
16. How do cultural and social norms and expectations hamper your activity, access to resources, and interaction with beneficiaries?
17. Have you ever faced any kind of gender-based abuse, harassment, and discrimination during fieldwork or in your workplace?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
- If yes, please specify each of them
18. Does the organization support you with access to training, resources, and specific assistance addressing challenges faced by female staff?
- A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree
 - E. Neutral
19. Has the current Taliban government influenced your work?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
- If yes, can you briefly explain?
20. To what extent do you agree with the changes in implementation since the Taliban took over?
- A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree
 - E. Neutral
21. What coping mechanisms does your organization employ in response to these changes, and how would you describe its relationship with the Taliban?

- A. Policy Adaptation
- B. Strategic Negotiation
- C. Resource Reallocation
- D. Staff Training and Support
- E. Community Engagement
- F. Other Please Specify

22. Are there any specific strategies or coping mechanisms in your organization that make you feel safe and motivated in your work?

- A. Yes
 - B. No
- If yes, please specify

23. What are the main factors that contribute to work-life balance challenges for female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan?

- A. Long working hours
- B. Lack of support systems
- C. Gender role expectations
- D. Other (please specify)

24. How do female humanitarian workers navigate cultural and social barriers to effectively engage with beneficiaries and communities in Afghanistan?

- A. Language barriers
- B. Gender norms and expectations
- C. Access to conservative areas
- D. Other (please specify)

25. What policies and practices can national and international organizations implement to support better and address the specific challenges faced by female humanitarian workers in Afghanistan?

- A. Flexible working arrangements
- B. Gender-sensitive security protocols
- C. Training and capacity building on gender issues
- D. Other (please specify)

26. What are the primary security threats you face while working in the field?

- A. Kidnapping
- B. Sexual Violence
- C. Harassment
- D. Physical assault

27. Have you observed any changes in the attitudes of your male colleagues towards female staff since the Taliban took over?

- A. Yes, the attitudes have become more discriminatory
- B. Yes, the attitudes have become more supportive
- C. No, the attitudes have remained the same

28. How does your sense of moral purpose influence your commitment to your work despite your challenges?

- A. Strongly influences
- B. Somewhat influences
- C. Neutral
- D. Does not influence

29. What sources of motivation do you rely on to continue working despite financial and other challenges?

- A. Personal sense of duty
- B. Support from loved ones
- C. Financial independence
- D. Impact on the community

30. How hopeful are you? that the current policies of the Taliban regarding women's rights will change in the future?

- A. Very hopeful
- B. Somewhat hopeful
- C. Neutral
- D. Not very hopeful
- E. Not hopeful at all

31. Which of the following factors contributes most to your anxiety and depression?

- A. Restrictive policies
- B. Fear of violence
- C. Lack of job security
- D. Balancing work and personal life

32. Is there anything else you would like to share?

33. Do you have any suggestions? For example, what actions should the government and responsible organizations take to help you better overcome your challenges and feel safe in your work?

