Exploring Educational Transitions and Cultural Adaptations: Afghan Female

Undergraduate Student's Experiences in Transitioning from Afghanistan to

Bangladesh

By

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Student ID: 23157024

A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of   Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School
Improvement

BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University

Declaration

It is hereby declared that,

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate reference.

 3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Sidiqa Amani

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Approval

The thesis titled "Exploring Educational Transitions and Cultural Adaptations: Afghan Female Undergraduate Student's Experiences in Transitioning from Afghanistan to Bangladesh" Submitted by Sidiqa Amani (Student ID: 23157024) of fall 2023 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement on April 21, 2024.

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Ethical Statement

The study involved the following participants:

- Female Undergraduate Students: 12

- Instructors and professors: 1 male and 2 female

For ethical considerations, the names of schools, universities and personal identification details of participants remain anonymous throughout this research. Prior consent was obtained from all participants, including students and teachers from various universities in Bangladesh who were interviewed for this study. All data collected and associated forms are securely stored and will not be shared with any individual or organization. Following the completion of this research, these records 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 research examines the experiences of Afghan female undergraduate students in transitioning from Afghanistan to Bangladesh, specifically focusing on Exploring Educational Transitions and Cultural Adaptations.

Data collection utilized a qualitative research approach with individual interviews both virtual and in-person conducted with a total of 15 participants. The outcomes of this investigation uncover that the educational background of these participants in Afghanistan was characterized by traditional teaching methods and a teacher-centered approach. Upon enrolling in Bangladeshi universities, Afghan students encountered a new teaching-learning environment and faced some challenges, including teaching methodologies, educational practices such as critical thinking, collaboration work, research, and language barriers. Additionally, they faced non-academic obstacles related to social, cultural, food, weather, and environmental adjustments, further complicating their academic pursuits in Bangladesh.

Based on these findings, a set of recommendations is proposed for organizers of study-abroad programs in Bangladesh. These recommendations aim to provide support services tailored to the needs of Afghan female students, thereby enhancing their chances of academic success during their studies.

Keywords: Traditional and modern teaching-learning methods, cultural adjustment, academic progress and coping strategies

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the brave Afghan female students constantly striving to obtain education, with the noble aim of catalyzing positive transformations within their communities and beyond. Your resilience, determination, and pursuit of knowledge serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration to all.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to several individuals who provided invaluable support and encouragement throughout the various stages of writing my thesis. Firstly, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mamunur Rashid, for his unwavering guidance, continuous support and attention, care, and constructive feedback. Without his expert guidance and timely, insightful feedback, completing this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you immensely, Dr. Mamunur Rashid. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to all the esteemed faculty members who have guided and mentored me during my courses at the BRAC Institute of Educational Development. It has been a privilege and an honor to learn from such distinguished educators. My profound gratitude goes to the entire team at IIS, whose unwavering support, both emotionally and financially, facilitated the completion of my master's degree at BRAC University. I am thankful for their belief in me and their assistance throughout this journey. Special thanks are due to Dr. Roy Wilson, whose additional support in comprehension, writing, and structuring the dissertation proved invaluable. I am also grateful to the students and professors who graciously spared their time and shared their insights during the interview. I extend my thanks to the Bangladeshi Ismaili community for their familial support and assistance during challenging times. Heartfelt thanks to my mother, whose unwavering motivation always propelled me forward, and to my husband, whose steadfast support enabled me to pursue higher education abroad. Lastly, I am grateful to my siblings, whose love and encouragement provided strength and inspiration for me to persevere.

List of figures and tables:

List of acronyms

AUW: Asian University for Women

BBA: Bachelor of Business Administration

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BRAC: Bangladesh Rural and Advancement Committee

COVID: CoronaVirus Disease

IIS: Institute of Ismaili Studies

IO: International Organization

IT: Information Technology

M.Ed: Master of Education

NESP: National Environmental Science Program

NGO: Non-governmental organization

OCED: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

S: Student

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

T: Teacher

TTC: Teacher Training College

UG: Undergraduate

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNO: United Nations Organization

US: United State

Table of Contents

Chapter one

1.1 Introduction:

The term "international student" encompasses individuals who have relocated from their home country to pursue education abroad or those who are not permanent citizens of the country where they are studying (OCED, 2016). Sometimes they have many problems including language barriers, administrative support, culture, educational background, religion, family, economic, and gender issues (Heyn, cited in Almurideef, 2016).

Female graduate students from international backgrounds must navigate various facets of their identities as non-native learners and women in a society with gender norms distinct from those in their home countries (Anh, et al., 2016). All international students face some challenges during their transition period or whole education. However, Afghan students particularly the female are coming from a different background which may have different challenges.

War in Afghanistan has left an indelible impact on the children of the country (UNICEF 2018). Since 2014, despite significant progression in some areas the children and women are still facing severe challenges (UNICEF 2021). The continued insecurity, poverty, drought, civil unrest, internal displacement, and COVID–19 are detrimental to the situation for the children and their families. According to another report from UNICEF (2016), 3.7 million children in Afghanistan are out of school, majority of this population (60%) are girls. Notwithstanding all this number of girls in the school (primary) jumped up from zero in 2001 to 2.5 million in 2018. Before the collapse of the Republic regime in Afghanistan 4 out of 10 in the primary education were girls. According to research by Chauhan (2008), 0.5 % of Afghanistan's population in 2008 was pursuing higher education which is about 36,000 undergraduate students; only 17 percent of this is girls. In

2021 number of women in higher education dramatically increased from 5,000 to 100, 000 (UNICEF, 2023). After the collapse of the Republic Islamic Regime of Afghanistan and the start of the new regime, the education system changed totally. The girls were banned from school and university during this period again.

In this alarming education situation in Afghanistan particularly for women, some fully-funded and partially-funded scholarships were kept open to Afghan students. After the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban some Western countries, and neighboring countries including Pakistan, Iran, India, and some Central Asian countries called to extend student visas for Afghan students and keep open scholarships for them particularly Afghan women (Khan & Niazi, 2021). Among these countries, Bangladesh offers 100s sets of scholarships for Afghanistan, particularly women. According to AUW (2022) which is located in Bangladesh 500 more new set of the scholarship were announced for Afghanistan nationals only in a term.

For my dissertation, I explored the experience of Afghan female students from Afghanistan and its impact on their studies in Bangladeshi universities to better understand what challenges they have in terms of their background from Afghanistan. What do they need to do for betterment and what do they recommend for other Afghan female students? This research is important for two reasons. First of all, every year hundreds of students from Afghanistan join Bangladeshi universities. It is crucial for the higher education of Bangladesh, as well as the universities, to understand the students' prior academic and cultural background, their challenges, and their well-being to address Afghan female students' needs. Secondly, there is a lack of literature about the Afghan female students' experience during their schooling and after the banning of school by the Taliban. After this unexpected situation, Afghan female students have not been able to go to school and they face a huge gap in their studies. The overarching aim of this qualitative research is to

comprehensively explore and understand the multifaceted influences of academic backgrounds and cultural experiences on the higher education journey and adjustment processes of Afghan female students studying in foreign contexts, with a specific focus on their experiences in Bangladesh. A qualitative interview was conducted by interviewing Afghan female students who are studying pre-undergraduate and undergraduate in Bangladeshi universities to better understand which situation they are in and what support they need in academic and non-academic. Furthermore, another interview was managed with professors at Bangladeshi universities who are teaching these students. The purpose of the interview with the professor was to understand the academic performance and well-being of Afghan female students from a teacher's perspective. Subsequently, the methodology will be presented. It covers the overall design, methodology, ethics of my research, consent, and other components that were included in this research. Then, I will present my findings organized by three major themes: Participants' schooling experiences in Afghanistan, their pre-UG and UG experiences in Bangladesh, and finally the coping strategies they are taking in place to overcome these challenges. The research "Exploring Educational Transitions and Cultural Adaptations: Afghan Female Undergraduate Students' Experiences in Transitioning from Afghanistan to Bangladesh" was conducted to investigate into the intricate educational transitions and cultural adaptations experienced by Afghan female students as they navigate the academic environment of Bangladeshi universities. The study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of their perspectives, the challenges they confront, and the adaptive strategies they employ during their educational stay in Bangladesh, considering their unique academic and non-academic backgrounds in Afghanistan.

1.2 Research Questions

Q 1: How does the educational and cultural background of Afghan female students in Afghanistan influence their preparedness and ability to adapt to studying in Bangladesh?

Q2: What specific obstacles do Afghan female students encounter within the academic and broader socio-cultural context during their time in Bangladesh?

Q3: What strategies do Afghan female students utilize to successfully navigate and overcome academic and cultural challenges while pursuing their studies in the diverse academic and non-academic landscape of Bangladesh?

1.3 Problem statement

Access to education is a essential element in development initiatives in Afghanistan, a nation where a considerable segment of school-age individuals have been denied a comprehensive educational experience and instead received a limited, elementary, and often inadequate education (Jones, 2008). Throughout different periods in Afghan history, particularly girls were prohibited from accessing education, leading to millions of girls being excluded from schooling. Following the rise of Taliban to power on August 15, 2021, they mandated the reopening of boys' secondary schools starting September 18, while girls' schools were left unaddressed. Consequently, most girls' schools have remained closed since August, effectively depriving many teenage girls of educational opportunities (Human Rights Watch, 2022). This restriction has significantly negative impact on the future live of these students. "Basically without an education a child, and more especially a girl, is at best socially excluded from society her whole life or at worst killed" (Octavia, 2018).

Despite having a background of poor quality of education and facing imposed restrictions, some Afghan girls manage to secure scholarships and pursue studies abroad. For example, only one university gives a hundred sets of scholarships for Afghan females (AUW, 2022). However, their performance and the challenges they encounter due to their limited background and restricted circumstances remain understudied. Nevertheless, the journey of being an international student can be quite demanding.

International students may encounter difficulties across various domains, such as language barriers, academic difficulties, social and cultural disparities, instances of discrimination, financial pressures, and mental health issues (Beresin & Nadal-Vecins). Bangladesh offers hundreds of scholarships to Afghan students, and many Afghan girls enroll in Bangladeshi universities each year. Nonetheless, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the academic, cultural experiences, and integration challenges faced by Afghan female students studying in Bangladesh, despite their increasing numbers in the country. Therefore, there is a need to investigate their obstacles and integration process thoroughly to provide suitable support and ensure their successful assimilation into the Bangladeshi educational system and society.

1.4 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of the academic and cultural experiences of Afghan female students from Afghanistan on their higher education and adjustment in Bangladesh universities.

1.5 Research Significance

This research is significant as it addresses a gap in the existing literature by focusing specifically on academic background of Afghan female students studying in Bangladesh. By exploring their

experiences and adjustments, this research will contribute to the understanding of the unique challenges faced by these students and provide valuable insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and support services. The results of the research will be used to build strategies and support mechanisms to enable a productive integration of Afghan female students into the Bangladeshi educational system and society.

Chapter two

2.1 Literature Review:

Regarding Afghani cultural norms and academic background, it is crucial to consider the limitations that Afghan students particularly female students face and how these limitations may impact their future performance. This can be due to long-term war and its impact on primary, secondary, and higher education, limited resources, and political instability. Understanding these limitations provides insights into the unique challenges faced by Afghan students and their potential impact on academic preparation and competitiveness. In the literature review, first I will provide contextual background from the education system and the particular challenges of education in Afghanistan. Secondly, I will look at the challenges that international students face during their education in another country as well as the difference between their home country's educations and the coping strategies they take to overcome these challenges.

2.1.1 War and history of education in Afghanistan

"War violates every right of a child, the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to development of personality, and the right to be nurtured and protected" (Machel, 1996). The prolonged war in Afghanistan, spanning a century of conflicts, has inflicted severe violations on the rights of children, compromising their right to life, family, health,

personality development, and protection (Machel, 1996). This enduring state of war, in the 19th and 20th centuries and subsequent events, have detrimentally impacted the country's people, economy, and educational infrastructure. The consequences include mass displacements, refugee crises, heightened vulnerability to diseases, increased mortality rates for women and children, and a significant toll on the overall well-being of the population (Sultani, 2001; UNICEF, 1999, 2001).

2.1.2 History of Formal Education in Afghanistan for female students

The first girl school in Afghanistan was established in Kabul after 1919 by the name of Asmat where 2000 female students were enrolled (Sultan, 2001). In the year 1940, Kabul housed a solitary teacher-training institution attended by 500 students and staffed by 20 educators. By 1950, the institution had experienced growth, accommodating 750 students with an instructional team of 30. Subsequently, in 1960, the number of teacher training facilities expanded to six, enrolling a total of 3,900 students and employing 156 teachers ((UNESCO, 2001, p. 57). In the early 1950s schools were closed for women. Females could participate only in some limited areas. After a change of the government in 1986, new textbooks were established, and the literacy rate doubled among the people both male and female. This means each year 18000 people learned to read and write and by 1989, 2 million people were literate. From 1990 to 2001 the education system was destroyed again and females were banned from attending school in some areas of Afghanistan, particularly Kandahar. Only 3 percent of the females remain educated. However, after the first collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 the girls could go back to school (Sultan, 2001). Also, he adds that after 2001 UNICEF and the Ministry of Education started a campaign "Back to School" in which 2, 744 schools were active in 22 out of 34 provinces of Afghanistan although still Afghanistan lacks schools, 1.6 million children enrolled in primary school, and 90% an unexpected increase of the girls. 27,000 teachers, 36% female were hired.

2.1.3 Textbooks and language of teaching

According to a survey by the US State Department International Programs Section, 9 million textbooks were distributed across Afghanistan. The textbooks were in Dari and Pashto two local and formal languages of Afghanistan. These textbooks covered the school subjects from grades 1-12. Among these are arithmetic, algebra, geometry, science, health, social studies, civics, geography, physics, chemistry, geology, and biology. The curriculum was revised, and the Ministry of Education decided to apply the UNO curriculum which is separated from war and violence. According to this curriculum, the girls' and boys' schools were separated.

2.1.4 Duration of classes in the public schools

The timing of the school hours is not at the standard level due to a lack of infrastructure, school personnel, and teachers. Therefore, the timing in public schools in Afghanistan is 4 or fewer hours per day (Sultan, 2001):

		Timing in public schools of Afghanistan		
No	Types of school based on timing	Timing of Session 1	Timing of session 2	Timing of Session 3
1	**Schools with two session per day**	Time: 07:30 – 10:40 Duration: 45 mints for each subject Grades: 1-3	Time: 12:15-16:45 Duration: 45 mints for each subject Grades: 4-12	NA

2	**Schools with 3 sessions per day**	Time: 07:00-9:30 Duration: 45 mints Grades: 1-3 (coed)	Time: 10:00-13:40 Duration: 45 mints Grades: 3-12 (female students)	Time: 14:00-17:30 Duration: 45 mints Grades: 3-12 (male students

Table 1: School timing in public schools of Afghanistan

After the collapse of the Republic Islamic of Afghanistan and the starting of the new regime (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan or regime of Taliban) in August 2021 education system of Afghanistan faced numerous changes. According to UNICEF (2023), since September 2021, the return to school for all Afghan girls over the age of 12 has been indefinitely postponed leaving 1.1 million girls and young women without access to formal education. Currently, 80% of school-aged Afghan girls and young women – 2.5 million people are out of school. Nearly 30% of girls in Afghanistan have never entered primary education. In December 2022, university education for women was suspended until further notice, affecting over 100,000 female students attending government and private higher education institutions.

2.1.5 Education obstacles in Afghanistan during the Republic regime of Afghanistan

According to Esrar, et al (2023) In the time between (2001-2021) the Ministry of Education was faced with numerous challenges such as a lack of professional teachers, textbooks, classrooms, and teacher training colleges. The most alarming challenge was the lack of qualified teachers in

the schools. Based on the (NESP, 2006) the graduates from TTC can teach classes 1-4 and university graduates can teach classes 5-12. However, according to ministry data, the teacher count rose from 21,000 in late 2001 to 140,000 in 2005. Among them, 29% had less than a 12-year education, 49% graduated high school, and the remaining 22% met the minimum requirements, mostly from past decades' Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs). They also argue that schools encountered diverse challenges during the Islamic Republic, such as substandard construction, instances of bribery for securing admission, favorable exam results, or obtaining certificates. Additionally, they mentioned that hurdles included demands for bribes or mistreatment by ministry staff or principals for teacher transfers, as well as mandates from principals to teach subjects outside their expertise. In war-torn settings, the lack of proper drinking water and equipped toilets, along with the absence of facilities for physiological, health, and hygiene advice, exacerbated challenges for both students and teachers. In their research paper, it was also mentioned that numerous obstacles hindered Afghans, particularly girls, from accessing education, encompassing physical, geographical, and financial barriers, harassment and abuse, insufficient familial support, and early marriage during the Islamic Republic. Additionally, various factors contribute to the overall impediments to education in Afghanistan. As argued by Amiri (2019) poor performance of teachers, poor support from school about the load of assignments skipping classes, and struggling with two subjects English and Math are the main challenges for students.

2.1.6 Cultural and social obstacles in education for Afghan female students

Some cultural norms are causing some barriers attending to school. According to Sultani (2001), elder brothers can take care of family in the absence of their family. They must leave their school and start working to feed their family. Whether they are 12 years old or 18 years old. It was also mentioned that most of the families in Afghanistan allocated their family resources to the studies

of their boys rather than to both girls and boys. According to this narrative, the people believe that the boy will remain with their parents for the rest of his life. However, the girl will leave their parents after they get married. Thus, priority is given to the boy's education. It was also added that in some areas of Afghanistan "Pashtonwalla," there is still a belief that there is no need for girls to study and go to in formal education. This is a verbal code that hinders the education of female members.

In numerous societies, factors such as poverty, security, or cultural influences often result in the education of male students while their female counterparts are disproportionately excluded. Girls, especially the poorest, are four times more likely to be deprived of education compared to boys from similar backgrounds, with lower chances of completing primary school (Amiri, 2019).

As per a report by the World Bank in 2005, the cultural practice of early marriages in Afghanistan poses significant social and legal obstacles to the advancement of female education.

According to research done by Amiri (2019) in Asian countries including Afghanistan, students have some social and cultural challenges in addition to academic challenges. The academic challenges that were found in this research about students' schooling are illustrated by parents and the impact they put from school in their children's minds. For example, when the children are not obeying their parents, they say that if you do so again, I will send you to the school, or I will ask your teacher to punish you. This kind of behavior from parents will lead students to be discouraged from going to school and cause miscommunication and misunderstanding among the students and the school, particularly teachers. Social and cultural challenges included: a lack of parental support in primary and secondary school. The parents are not able to allocate their time for their children and the majority of them do not know the importance of their role in the well-being and good performance of their children. Due to a lack of parental support, the children are not able to do

their homework and some other activities. It all causes the children to physical punishment, emotional harassment stress, depression, anxiety, etc. (Amiri, 2019).

2.1.7 Security Concerns Towards Education in Afghanistan

According to the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan (2006), security concerns contribute to parental reluctance to send their daughters to schools, given that the educational institutions are situated at a considerable distance from their residences. The Taliban in Afghanistan from 2004 to 2005 presented a substantial challenge to the progress of education in the nation, especially in its rural regions (EFSAS 2022). The alliance between ISIS-K and the Taliban resulted in fatal assaults on educational institutions, including the American University of Afghanistan, Kabul University, and those affiliated with the Hazara Community during the Islamic Republic (Esrar, et al, 2023 as cited in Mohammadi and Askary 2021; The Washington Post 2020; Johns Hopkins University 2021).

2.1.8 Poverty and education

According to Mashwani (2017) as cited in (Mojaddidi et al., 2006, p.15) despite the provision of free education for all Afghans across the nation, the pervasive poverty within families remains a formidable barrier to children's education, particularly in rural areas and among girls. The country faces resource constraints, hindering its ability to support economically disadvantaged families in meeting the opportunity costs associated with basic education. In a country with an annual per capita GDP of approximately US$180, the imposition of a user fee amounting to US$6 per yoear per child, coupled with additional expenses for uniforms, books, transportation, stationary, and midday meals, places an overwhelming financial burden on impoverished families.

2.1.9 Returning of Taliban to power and the situation of Afghan women and girls in education

Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 2021 and schools and universities were again banned for girls (Abbas, 2023). For my research purpose, I want to know how it is impacting these girl's higher education abroad as there is no formal education for them. According to Esrar, et al. (2023), it is a concerning outlook for the educational rights of Afghan women and girls. Despite the Taliban's professed moderation during the Doha agreement negotiations, their policies in practice indicate a return to the restrictive ideology of the 1990s when they first came to power in Afghanistan. According to BBC (2022), the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan announced in a statement that schools for girls are banned due to some cultural norms and social challenges till the second announcement from MoE. In the second phase according to another announcement the universities were banned for women and girls till the second announcement, mentioning the reason that the university environment is not according to Sharia law and also due to some security concerns (Esrar, et al, 2023. As cited in Noor 2022). The restriction on education for female students beyond grade six and higher levels has resulted in significant emotional distress, leading to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and overall psychological harm (Neyazi et al., 2022). Limiting women's involvement in the education system beyond primary schools poses a barrier to their potential contributions in various roles such as educators, administrators, researchers, managers, coaches, and supervisors of female dormitories (Ahmadi, 2022). This all has a great negative impact on the Afghan female students well being, their performance, and their future planning.

2.2 International Students and adapting to a new environment

In various learning environments, cultural norms related to communication with teachers or peers, dietary habits, attire, and academic practices, including questioning methods, critical thinking, and

methodologies, may vary across different countries. Also, it's worth mentioning that cultural background plays an important role in the behavior of students in the classroom. The term adaptation in my study is how the students adapt to different cultures, academic setting and how it impacts their learning process. According to Hunter, et al (2023): International graduates experience a re-acculturation process which may involve culture shock and require time and effort to adjust to the home environment. This re-adjustment when re-entering the home labor market significantly affects returnees' social capital. Therefore, their cross-cultural adjustment is often a continuous and ongoing process.

Cultural shock, as posited by Oberg (1960), is characterized as a form of anxiety experienced when individuals transition to a new environment. Xiaoqiong (2008) asserts that the dietary practices of Western countries can induce culture shock among Asian students, with differences in table manners posing a considerable challenge. For instance, the custom of eating with hands is prevalent in certain Asian countries but deemed unusual in Western cultures, necessitating the adoption of utensils like spoons and forks. Anjalin et al. (2017) emphasize the significant role of religious beliefs in the adaptation to a new culture, citing examples such as Hindus abstaining from beef and Muslims avoiding pork. This research finds the challenges and experiences of Asian students and their coping strategies: Homesickness, being overwhelmed by meeting new people, a new culture, a different language, and a mass of academic studies particularly reading and writing; cultural differences make them isolated, and language barriers.

2.2.1 Socio-cultural challenges of international students

A narrative according to (Gautam, et al. 2016): One international student mentioned that in our town we can find people to make friends with and ask for help from them. The people of our town make time for us but in another country, the people are so busy that they do not have any time for

us. Also, in the same article another student mentioned that another challenge is the name of our country which is not familiar to some people and it annoys us. This author found 5 common problems that all international students have in adaptation which are: language, transportation, finances, adjustments, and socio-cultural adaptation.

2.2.2 Academic challenges of international students

Two studies conducted by Saberi (2019) and Darwish (2022) investigated the experiences of Afghan students in the United States, shedding light on academic challenges. These challenges encompassed deficiencies in research skills, obstacles related to English proficiency, concerns with teaching methods, teacher demeanor, and accessibility, and difficulties with critical thinking, reading, writing, and collaboration within group work. The findings of these studies offer valuable insights into the potential academic hurdles that may be explored in my research in an Asian context.

According to Darwish (2022): International students face various challenges when studying in the US, including academic, social, and cultural challenges. One common academic challenge is the gap between the education system in the US and their home countries. International students may struggle with group work and classroom participation, as they may come from educational backgrounds that prioritize rote learning and less student engagement. Additionally, some international students may find it difficult to adjust to the non-hierarchical classroom culture in the US, where students are encouraged to actively participate and share their thoughts. This can result in limited participation, particularly for students from Asian, Middle Eastern, and African countries who have been trained to sit quietly and take verbatim notes.

Afghan women students encounter difficulties adjusting to an international university setting due to their less robust educational backgrounds. This study intends to examine how their experiences

in the educational context of Afghanistan affect them. Through data analysis, the research aims to uncover the precise impact on their education and explore the strategies these students use to overcome the challenges they face.

2.2.3 Coping Strategies of International Students in a Second Country
Based on the findings by Gautam, et al., (2016) some coping strategies are as below:

Regarding language: Some participants asked for help from their friends to improve their English skills. Some other students asked for support from the teacher's assistant to improve their English accent. Some other set in the front sets started saying that professors noticed them as international students and helped them in their English also.

Regarding financial needs and cultural issues: Some students started working to fulfill their financial needs. As their campus did not provide them transportation some of them used to ride a bike (Saberi, 2019). She also adds that international students can share their cultural similarities and differences with their peers and faculty to avoid cultural miscommunication and conflicts. Also, it was mentioned that interaction is a good tool for students to share and learn cultural and social skills. Furthermore, making friends in a second country, and being in touch with family and friends can reduce mental problems like stress and anxiety. Regarding the cultural she adds that as food is different from country to country some students requested to cook food by themselves so that they can feel at home.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Adaptation of international students

- **Academic challenges**
  - Collaboration works
  - Teaching methods
  - Lack of research skills
  - reading and writing
  - Critical thinking
  - Language barriers
- **Non-academic challenges**
- **Homesickness**
  - Isolation
  - Overwhelmed by new culture and new people
  - Culture shock (food)

International Students

Experience and challenges of Afghan female students in Afghanistan

- **Socio - cultural challenges**
  - Cultural obstacles for girls
  - Education is banned for Afghan adult girls
  - Poverty
  - War and insecurity
- **Academic challenges**
  - Lack of qualified teachers
  - Insufficient teaching and learning timing
  - Lack of safe learning environment
  - lack of infrastructures

Coping strategies

- **Academic challenges**
  - Asking support from friends in learning English
  - Asking support from teacher assistant
  - Start talking and be involve in discussion and try to ask question.
- **Social and culture**
  - Part time job.
  - Sharing the culture similarities and differences.
  - interaction
  - Making new friends
  - Being in touch with family and friends
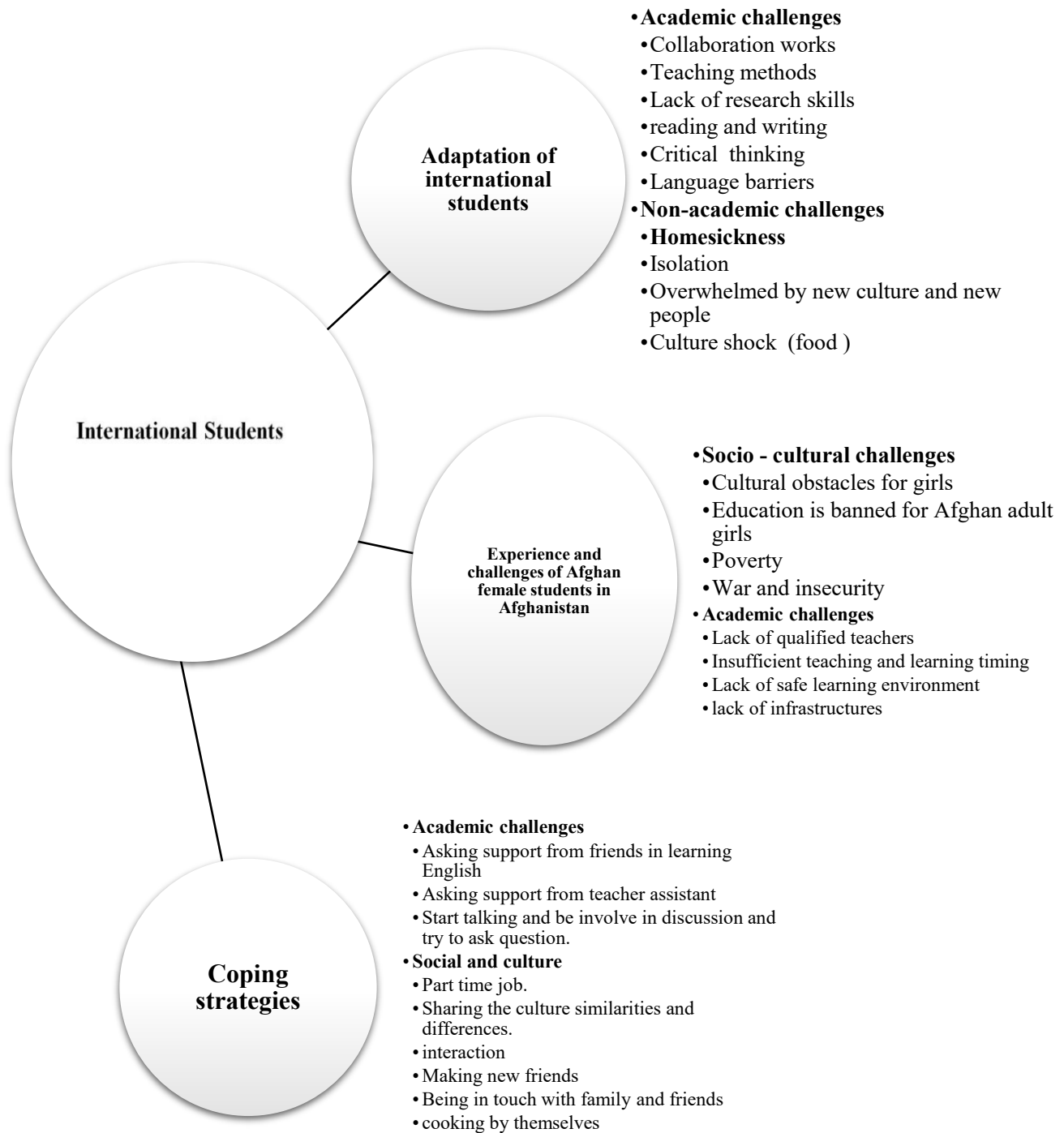 - cooking by themselves

Figure 1: conceptual framework

Chapter three

3.1 Methodology

I employed qualitative research to find out what academic and cultural challenges Afghan female students had/have from Afghanistan, next explored their challenges, the adaptation process in Bangladeshi universities, and finally the coping strategies they take place to overcome these challenges. Qualitative research involves studying real-life situations directly through fieldwork, detailed interviews, and written materials. Researchers use a qualitative approach to understand the context deeply and create detailed case studies. By analyzing patterns and themes across different cases, qualitative research provides rich narrative descriptions (Patton, M. Q. 2005).

3.1.1 Phenomenology approach

This approach focuses on exploring individuals' subjective experiences and understanding the essence of those experiences. In the context of my research title, a phenomenological study would delve into the lived experiences of Afghan female undergraduate students as they transition from Afghanistan to Bangladesh, aiming to uncover the essence of their educational transitions and cultural adaptations. It would emphasize gaining a deep understanding of their perspectives, emotions, and challenges during this transition process. Phenomenology is considered the ideal research method for capturing detailed and vivid data, making it ideal for uncovering cognitive representations (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999 as cited Creswell 2013). This approach is used to make an large amount of data from a small number of people relating their lived experiences (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). In this regard I did interview with some Afghan female students to understand their experience in terms of education and the barriers relating to cultural norms and other obstacles from Afghanistan to Bangladesh. Furthermore, to understanding better their academic performance and better support for them from a teacher's perspective I conduct interviews with 3

professors from different universities of Bangladesh. Through this type of research I got to find detailed information about my participants and how common it is among all the Afghan female students whether in Bangladesh or inside Afghanistan.

3.2 Sampling

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is a method where researchers carefully choose specific individuals or locations to study. This selection is based on how these choices can contribute meaningfully to understanding the research problem and main focus of the study. Researchers must decide who or what to sample, the method of sampling, and the number of samples needed, and ensure that the sampling aligns with one of the five approaches to inquiry (Creswell, 2013). For this study, I interviewed 12 Afghan female students who recently arrived in Bangladesh, not exceeding a year. These students were either in the pre-undergraduate stage or had just begun their undergraduate studies. Additionally, they had completed their schooling in Afghanistan and met the criteria of being accepted into a Bangladeshi university and currently residing in Bangladesh.

3.3 Data Collection:

For this study, I conducted interviews with my participants. Some of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and some others were conducted online through Zoom. As it is argued by Korstjens, I., & Moser, A., (2018) interviews represent a method of data collection where an interviewer poses questions to respondents, either in person, over the phone, or online. In qualitative research, interviews aim to uncover the significance of key themes in participants' life experiences, focusing on understanding the meaning behind their responses. I have used the semi-structured interview so that my participants have flexibility in timing and giving more information.

In phenomenological research, the use of semi-structured interviews is crucial. These interviews provide participants with sufficient space, time, and freedom to share their experiences and reflect on them in a descriptive manner (Diaz, 2015 as cited in Saberi, 2019). By using open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, participants can share their experiences without being constrained by a rigid framework. Initially, I intended to conduct face-to-face interviews since both my participants, and I were located in Bangladesh at the time. However, considering the availability and preferences of my participants, I also conducted some interviews online. For online interviews, I utilized the Zoom application, which all my participants had access to, and we all had a stable internet connection. The interviews were conducted in three languages: English, Persian, and Pamiri, based on the preferences of my participants. While most of the interviews were conducted in English, a few were conducted in the two other Afghani local languages.

3.4 Data Analysis

In managing and analyzing my data, I employed several techniques to ensure accuracy, confidentiality, and relevance to the research objectives. Firstly, I recorded some interviews using Zoom and stored these recordings on my password-protected computer. Some other interviews were recorded by a recorder application with a phone. Immediately after each interview, I transcribed the recordings using the transcription feature in Microsoft Word. Subsequently, I carefully reviewed the transcriptions multiple times, organizing and correcting any grammatical errors. To maintain confidentiality, I deleted the original recordings after transcribing them and used pseudonyms instead of participants' actual names. This precautionary measure was crucial in safeguarding the identity of participants and the confidentiality of the data collected. Regarding data analysis, I utilized both deductive and inductive coding approaches. Deductive coding

involved identifying codes and themes that aligned with existing literature on academic challenges faced by Afghan female students in Afghanistan and international students Hyde, K. F. (2000). This deductive coding process allowed for a structured analysis based on established concepts from the literature. On the other hand, inductive coding involved generating new codes and themes from the raw data obtained from interviews Azungah, T. (2018).This inductive approach facilitated a deeper exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives, allowing for the emergence of new insights and patterns that may not have been evident from existing literature alone. Finally, the data analysis was conducted about the conceptual framework established at the outset of the research.

3.5 Validation of Data:

I aim to ensure that my account accurately reflects the perspectives of the participants in the study. Therefore, I utilize validation strategies, often employing multiple approaches such as confirming data from various sources, having participants review and correct my study, and seeking input from other researchers to assess my procedures (Creswell, 2013). For this study I have used three strategies to give validity and trustworthiness to my findings. Following the analysis of the data, participants were allowed to examine the findings and provide input to ensure that their viewpoints were appropriately represented. This step aimed to validate the accuracy and authenticity of the data collected from Afghan female undergraduate students. Furthermore, a peer debriefing session was held to discuss findings and interpretations, allowing for a variety of perspectives to validate the data. This session involved discussing the experiences and challenges faced by Afghan female undergraduate students in Bangladeshi universities. Peer debriefing is a technique used to verify the credibility of research data (Hail., et al., (2011) as cited in Saberi, 2019). Comments and

feedback from my peer, who are Afghan nationals living in Bangladesh and possess knowledge about the backgrounds of Afghan female students, are valuable. Moreover, they are actively engaged in research related to these subjects.

The third one was triangulation which was employed by comparing data from multiple sources, including interviews with teachers and students from diverse backgrounds and different universities. This approach aimed to enhance the trustworthiness and reliability of the conclusions drawn from the study.

3.6 Ethics of research

The ethical principal and procedures (Informed and Voluntary Consent, Confidentiality of Shared Information, Anonymity of Participants, No Harm Principle, Beneficence, and Reciprocity) are established with the utmost care to safeguard research participants from unethical conduct and ensure their well-being throughout the study Halai, A. (2006). In my research, I informed my participants about my role as a researcher, clarifying that I am pursuing an MA degree and that this study is part of my academic requirements. To ensure their comfort and safety, I provided them with a consent letter before the interview. This letter outlined that participation was voluntary, the purpose was solely academic, and all information would be kept confidential. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any point. To protect their identities, I used pseudonyms (e.g., S1, S2 for students; T1, T2 for professors) instead of real names and omitted specific university names. In quotes I also used pseudonyms such as Gul, Bakht and Halima. Additionally, I encouraged participants to skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering to maintain a safe interview environment.

At the beginning of each interview, I requested permission to record their voices, which all participants granted. Subsequently, I transcribed the recordings and promptly deleted the audio

files. These transcripts are kept confidential, accessible only to me. If I encountered any unclear responses during analysis, I reached out to participants for clarification, and they were willing to assist. All data collected for this study was deleted upon its completion.

3.7 Limitations:

This research encountered limitations regarding participant availability. Interviews had to be scheduled during the day, conflicting with students' classes, leading to rescheduled or cancelled appointments. Some participants withdrew despite the initial agreement due to busy schedules. Others opted for online meetings via Zoom during nighttime hours. Additionally, accessing the girls' hostel for in-person interviews posed a challenge, as only hostel residents were allowed entry, and I was not residing in the hostel. To address this, online meetings were organized as an alternative solution.

3.8 My roles as a researcher

The motivation behind this research stemmed from my personal journey and experiences. As an Afghan female student who completed my Bachelor's degree and schooling in Afghanistan before pursuing a master's degree in Bangladesh, I felt compelled to investigate the common challenges faced by Afghan girls. I aimed to understand these challenges better, explore potential solutions, and offer insights for those struggling with similar issues outside Afghanistan. Drawing from my own educational journey, I noticed stark differences in the education systems of these two countries, particularly in terms of language, teaching methods, and educational quality. In Afghanistan, despite the evident talent among students, cultural norms often hindered their ability to express ideas freely. Additionally, the traditional teaching approach prevalent in Afghan classrooms, where teachers predominantly led discussions without much student interaction,

hindered overall academic performance. I also witnessed exceptionally bright students unable to pursue higher education due to economic constraints or societal and familial pressures. Witnessing such talent being underutilized or thwarted due to cultural barriers deeply affected me and fueled my interest in this research area. While my passion for improving education in my country remains strong, this research serves as a practical step toward addressing these challenges.

Chapter four

4.1 Findings

I conducted 12 interviews with Afghan female students and 3 interviews with three professors who are teaching these students in Bangladeshi universities. These interviews were conducted to explore: Educational Transitions and Cultural Adaptations: Afghan Female Undergraduate Students' Experiences in Transitioning from Afghanistan to Bangladesh. The information about my participants is as follows:

- S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12

- T1, T2, T3

- University A, University B, University C

In total, I conducted interviews with 15 participants, comprising 12 students enrolled in various pre UG and UG programs and 3 professors who have taught or are currently teaching these students. Among the professors, one is pursuing post-PhD studies in an Indian university, another was a senior teacher at one of these universities, and the third is a senior lecturer at a university as well.

The educational experiences of my participants were profoundly impacted by insecurity, political instability, and cultural restrictions in Afghanistan. The schooling system in Afghanistan was

traditional and of poor quality overall, with unprofessional teachers, limited access to technology, and scarce resources. Through this research, it became evident that the students studying in Bangladeshi universities were comparatively privileged. They hailed from economically stable backgrounds, enabling them to afford private English courses outside of school and qualify for higher education in Bangladeshi institutions. However, these participants often recounted witnessing the dropout of academically talented peers due to early marriages, family-imposed restrictions on schooling after initial periods, and concerns about safety, security, and political issues. The stringent restrictions imposed by the Taliban significantly affected the education of these students. With schools and universities banned in Afghanistan, they felt like prisoners in their own homes, leading to feelings of depression, disappointment, and hopelessness. Nearly 90% of the participants attributed their decision to leave Afghanistan to the restrictions placed on work and education. On the flip side, participants expressed satisfaction with the opportunities and overall education system in Bangladesh. While challenges stemming from their backgrounds in Afghanistan persisted, they were generally content with the quality of education provided by Bangladeshi universities. There is a brief education background of my participants:

		Types of school		Number of subjects in post-secondary school	Number of hours per day/each subject	Number of students in a classroom (estimated)
Schooling background of interviewed students						
No	Province	Public	Private			
S1	Badakhshan	Public		16	6	30
S2	Bamyan	Public		16	6	40
S3	Badakhshan	Public		16	6	48
S4	Kabul	Public		16	6	40
S5	Mazar e Sharif	Public		16	6	40
S6	Ghazni	Public		16	6	30
S7	Wardak	Public		16	6	44
S8	Kabul	Public		16	6	40
S9	Baghlan	Public		16	6	35
S10	Badakhshan	Public		16	6	30
S11	Bamyan	Public		16	6	44
S12	Badakhshan	Public		16	6	30

Table 3: Background information of Interviewed Student Participants

Based on the information which was provided by my participants, in total there are 16 subjects in public school and each day they spend 6 hours in school.

4.1.1 Insecurity and its impact on education

This can include exposure to violence, widespread poverty, ongoing insecurity, strained family relationships, disrupted social support networks, limited access to education, and compromised health conditions. According to S3 and S8 security concerns and the terrorist attacks on schools and universities were the reasons that our family either stopped us from going to school or looked forward to sending us out of the country.

> *Well, the thing is, I liked studying abroad since there were not that many opportunities, especially for girls. The conditions were not good, especially after what happened to my elder sister. She used to go to Kabul University, but after the attack and explosion (November 2, 2020) on her university, my family got really worried. They kept telling me I must not set for Kankor public exam; I just needed to learn English and find a scholarship. It was my family that was pushing me to do that, and even though they told me that, I really liked it. But when the Taliban came to power again, I did not` have the chance to go to school or the course anymore. So I was just searching for something, anything, just to get out of Afghanistan, and I prepared myself for it (S3, #9:43. 1.16.2024).*

The continuous terrorist attacks on the educational system not only affected the students' mental well-being but also caused worry among them. Families either prevented their children from attending school or sent underage children away to another country, disregarding the challenges faced in the host country.

> *Initially, it is difficult to making a monumental decision to leave your home, your family, and everything behind. The choice is immensely challenging. Stepping onto the plane and realizing that you're traveling to another country all alone as a girl is quite daunting. I was not even 18 years old when I arrived, so I encountered issues even at the airport. (S3, #9:43. 1.16.2024).*

The instability and insecurity greatly affected the education of Afghan girls, caused by a combination of attacks and political turmoil. These ongoing issues have made Afghan girls victims in the realm of education.

> *I studied in Ghazni province for my 12th grade. When the Taliban took control of our district, schools for girls were closed. Later, when I asked for my 12th-grade diploma to*

study abroad due to the situation in Afghanistan, I was ignored by the school principal. After struggling for six years and facing another difficult day when the Taliban regained power, I decided to leave the country for my education no matter which country but I have to leave Afghanistan. Then I applied and began studying in Bangladesh six years after my high school graduation (S8, #08:00 pm. 2.4.2024)

According to a professor who is teaching these students mentioning that the changes in the regime of Afghanistan has impact on overall preparedness and performance of the Afghan female students.

I believe this transitional period is somewhat distinct because Afghan students studying abroad particularly in Bangladesh can be categorized into two phases following the initial collapse of the Taliban regime. The first phase commenced when Hamid Karzai assumed power, and women in Afghanistan began to prioritize education and higher learning. When I joined university A in 2018, during Ashraf Ghani's presidency, I observed that Afghan students were much more prepared to pursue studies in Bangladesh. They were confident, as there were fewer security threats back home and less trauma compared to previous times in Afghanistan. Despite ongoing issues in Afghanistan, the political climate was conducive to women's education in Bangladesh. Additionally, having an Afghan embassy in Dhaka gave them a sense of guardianship. Overall, the supportive environment, including assistance from both the Bangladeshi and Afghan governments, served as motivating factors for them to study here without fear or apprehension (T1, #11:30 1.23.2024).

The ongoing instability, political turmoil, and security challenges are sources of concern even for Afghan students who are outside of Afghanistan. These students lack a clear sense of their future destinations and lack additional support systems like embassies, which can impact their performance negatively. These issues contribute to mental health issues among Afghan female students.

The regime has completely blocked all kinds of opportunities for women's empowerment. I do not know whether they could go back or not. Or maybe going back to Afghanistan can be a security threat for them. So they are in constant trauma and see here that what will happen to them. So when a human being goes through this type of trauma, it is very difficult for them to actually meet the high expectations of their educational institution (T3, #00.00 12.2.2024).

4.1.2 Cultural norms and its impact on Afghan women

In Afghanistan, various misconceptions exist regarding women's advancement, education, and overall independence. These misconceptions have a detrimental effect on women as well as on Afghanistan's development.

4.1.2.1 Family influence on female educational attainment and marital decisions

For numerous Afghan families, arranging marriages for their children at an early age serves to build positive relationships between families, elevate social standing, and safeguard family honor from being compromised by illegitimate relationships. Conversely, educated boys are seen as an investment that will benefit the family in the future. Consequently, many families determined not to continue their daughters' education beyond thirteen years old, fearing that educated girls may command a higher bride price and deter potential suitors. Nearly all of the participants referred to themselves as exceptionally fortunate Afghan girls. They expressed gratitude for being permitted to pursue higher education overseas, not being pressured into early marriage by their families, and having the opportunity to further their education with their family support.

> *Luckily, the community I grew up in, along with my family and the environment around us, did not impose any limitations on my education. I belong to the Ismaili community. My family was supportive and encouraged me, as did the broader community, which advocated for girls' education at all levels, be it universities or schools, to acquire knowledge. Personally, within my family, our parents consistently encouraged girls even more than boys to pursue education (S11, #17:00. 17.1.204)*

However, they also mentioned that they were witness of the drop out of their classmates due to some restrictions.

> *"yes, there were restrictions in place. For example, one of my classmates had to leave school in Grade 6 because her family did not allow her to continue her education. This*

was the case in some areas of Afghanistan even before the Taliban era. However, in some other parts of the country, there were no such restrictions. It was a custom in their trib that when a girl got their first period. It means they become young; they cannot go out alone (S5, #05:00. 23.1.2024)".

This represents a form of limitation imposed on Afghan girls by their families, stemming from traditional beliefs and cultural norms that persist among some of the population.

I witnessed a friend facing this challenge directly. Despite her aspirations for education and a future, her family insisted she prioritize marriage. They believed that as a young woman, she did not need to pursue university until after marriage, and even then, she needed her husband's permission. Sadly, my friend ended up getting engaged and subsequently focused on family responsibilities, putting her education on hold. This experience deeply impacted me (S2, #16:00. 24.1.2024).

4.1.2.2 Gender Stigma

Stereotypes can be detrimental when they restrict individuals from fully developing their skills, pursuing their careers, or making decisions that align with their personal lives. Some of my participants mentioned that gender stigma is a common thing among the people in Afghanistan.

Girls are often marginalized from academic settings and are expected to remain confined to their homes based on the traditional believes of our people. In addition to gender stigma, there are societal stigmas suggesting that girls lack the ability to achieve prominent roles in society, such as becoming doctors or engineers. Some individuals believe that male voices hold more importance while diminishing the capabilities of girls. Thus, a major cultural challenge revolves around the gender stigma imposed on girls (S7. 1.20.2024).

4.1.3 Teaching – learning practice in public schools of Afghanistan

The world is focusing on the modern education rather than the traditional one. Do the education methods in Afghanistan truly align with modern standards? My research suggests that, in practice,

the education system in Afghanistan falls short of being considered modern. Several participants highlighted the absence of fully project or collaborative work, academic research, or critical thinking in their educational experiences.

4.1.3.1 Collaborative work of students

It encourages students to boost their confidence, improve critical thinking abilities, and collaborate effectively within a team setting. Some of my participants were happy with the collaboration work that they had in Afghanistan during their school time it was mainly in the science subjects. One of my participants from the urban area explained her experience like this:

> *In my class I was in the first position (exceptional students), I participated in many activities, especially group work. This was quite common in public schools. We often worked in groups of two to four students for subjects such as chemistry and biology. Our group activities included tasks like creating charts, writing reports, or making slides, which we then presented to the rest of the class (S6, 16.1.2024).*

Urban students have become familiar with various collaborative methods such as group work and pair work. Additionally, two participants highlighted that they acquired collaborative skills from external sources, particularly NGOs that offer additional educational support to schools, enhancing students' educational qualifications.

> *I've been involved in various activities both in and outside of school. Apart from my school studies, I actively engaged in social initiatives, such as serving on a committee focused on youth development which was provided by an international NGO. At school, I participated in projects like cleaning the school surroundings, and I also joined several study groups and smaller projects (S5, 23.1.24).*

The NGOs provided different kinds of opportunities for those who were active and enthusiastic to learn and improve.

> *I've been involved in numerous activities since my school days. One notable program was the mentorship program which was provided by an international NGO. It involved students excelling in their classes assisting those with lower grades, which I did for over three years. It focused on group activities where we formed small circles to help students struggling with various subjects like math, science, history, and geography. Later on, an IO arranged an academic visit to Kenya, Africa, in 2017. This program centered on group activities, leadership, community service, and cultural diversity. Throughout my schooling, both primary and secondary, I've actively participated, sometimes as a mentor or group leader, gaining valuable experiences and learning from everyone involved, including teachers, instructors, and fellow students. It was a fulfilling journey for me (S4, 1.15.2024).*

However, the situation differs for students who have completed their school in rural areas. There appears to be a disparity in the quality of education between these distinct regions.

> *"I recall that during school, we had minor activities in certain subjects, particularly English, but for other subjects, we didn't engage in any specific or collaborative activities like group work. Sometimes we did have group work in English class only" (S7. 1.20.2024).*

4.1.3.2 Teaching methodology

During all 12 interviews, my participants indicated that the classroom approach in Afghanistan was either totally teacher-centered or partially teacher-centered.

> *in Afghanistan, the focus is mostly on the teachers. They come in, just teach, and students are expected to listen without much interaction. This approach doesn't involve students much, which I find disappointing. I believe students should be actively engaged. Unfortunately, during my time, the emphasis was on teachers, and I didn't agree with that approach (S3. 1.16.2024).*

From the discussion of my participants, I guess the students were interested in student-centric approaches more than the teacher-centric approaches, although none of them found a perfect student-centric approach during their school time in Afghanistan.

> "*The teaching approach varied among teachers; some were supportive and allowed us to communicate any issues, while others seemed indifferent and uninvolved, which hindered our learning experience (S1. 2.4.2014)*".

4.1.3.3 Academic research

After reviewing the interviews with my participants, it became clear that they had no prior exposure to research, and they encountered the term for the first time during their studies at Bangladeshi universities

> "*No, there was no mention of research at all back my school in Afghanistan. We only had books on subjects like biology, geography, English, math, and so on which was all theoretical. But looking back, I realize they were somewhat pointless, and at that time, we didn't focus on such things as we do not know anything about practical works or research but only memorizing the lessons*" (S5. 23.1.2024).

4.1.3.4 Critical thinking

During the school time of my participants in Afghanistan, they had limited knowledge about critical thinking.

> "*Unfortunately, I did not know anything about critical thinking till the date I came to Bangaldesh. We did not have such a subject to explain what critical thinking meant for students in Afghanistan. I did not encounter it in my school or in the nearby schools where I lived*" (S11. 17.1.2024).

4.1.3.5 English language leaning

Studying abroad requires proficiency in English as it is vital for communication, accessing a wide range of articles available in English, and pursuing higher education at international universities. During my interviews with participants, all of whom graduated from public schools, it seems that public schools in Afghanistan primarily focus on teaching two local languages, Persian and Pashtu. There is limited emphasis on English language in these public schools. Consequently, my participants learned English either through private tutorials by paying fees or through free English learning programs organized by international organizations, sometimes conducted after regular school hours in certain public schools.

> *During school, our English textbooks was quite basic. Although we had textbooks, they were not extensive. The main issue was with the teachers, as they weren't specialized in teaching English. For instance, sometimes the math teacher would teach English, or vice versa. That was the situation. So, I didn't study academic English during school. Later on, I joined private courses where I paid a significant amount of money to learn English (S7.1.20.2024)*

> *At school, we had English books, but unfortunately, we lacked professional teachers to teach the subject effectively. This was particularly true in my first school, where we didn't have skilled English teachers. As a result, I had to attend external courses to learn the English language properly (S9. 1.24.20240*

> *Due to the lack of improvement in our school system, particularly in teaching English, I had to find alternative ways to learn the language. In Afghanistan, many public schools, including mine, don't prioritize English education. For instance, in my high school, my English teacher, who was an English Literature graduate, was teaching basic English alphabets to 11th-grade students, which seemed illogical. This reflects the poor English education system in Afghanistan, leading many students to seek private courses for learning English. Personally, I learned English was provided freely for our school by an International Organization (S2 .24.1.2024)*

The data shows that each class typically has around 30 students. However, only a few students among them have the opportunity to learn English through private tutoring. Meanwhile, other

students who may excel in other subjects do not have access to scholarships or opportunities to continue their education.

4.2 Educational Pursuits of Afghan Female Students in Bangladeshi Universities

The reasons behind Afghan girls choosing Bangladesh to pursue their bachelor's degrees vary. According to the findings from my participants, some left Afghanistan due to the lack of educational and employment prospects for girls under the Taliban regime. Others were driven by a strong aspiration to earn an international university degree, prompting them to apply to universities in Bangladesh.

> *To be frank, my decision to leave Afghanistan and started my studies in Bangladesh was the poor education system in Afghanistan. I saw this move as a valuable opportunity to enhance my academic profile significantly. The limitations of the educational curriculum in Afghanistan and the potential for greater progress were key factors that led me to seek education elsewhere (S7 . 1.20.2024)*

Majority of the participants mentioned the reason that the restricted education system in Afghanistan forced them to go for studies in Bangldesh.

> *The primary reason behind my decision to leave Afghanistan and study abroad was the rise of the Taliban. Prior to their resurgence, I had no intentions of leaving my country and preferred to continue my education locally. However, with the deteriorating situation and the Taliban's control preventing girls from attending universities, my only option was to seek scholarships abroad. Fortunately, I found this opportunity, which allowed me to escape the difficult circumstances back home and pursue my education elsewhere. This is what motivated me to come here (S6. 16.1.2024).*

4.3 Subject of study in Bangladeshi universities

The participants for my interview were people who joined Bangladeshi universities recently either pursing UG or pre-UG. I have found some students who are studying a specific field such as IT, BBA, and some others who are currently studying pre-UG to be well prepared for UG.

Participant from UG

"The field I am studying in Bangladesh is economics, which is also the major I studied in Afghanistan for three terms. Therefore, it's not particularly challenging for me to continue studying this subject because most of the curriculum, topics, and contents are similar" (S7 1.20.2024).

Participant form pre UG

In the pre UG, initially, we focused on mandatory subjects such as comprehensive reading, writing, English language, and mathematics from the first level to the sixth level of study for the undergraduate program. As we progress, additional subjects like computer studies are introduced in the next levels, and advanced topics are covered as we move up. Furthermore, subjects related to Women's Health, humanities such as ethics and critical thinking, and an additional elective subject are also part of the curriculum. Recently, new subjects like Integrated Science have been included in the program. The subjects I mentioned earlier were part of the previous semester, and we also had classes focused on presentations and in-depth discussions (S2. 24.1.2024).

4.4 Teaching – learning practice in Bangladeshi universities
4.4.1Teaching Methodology

The teaching methods employed by Bangladeshi universities are drastically different from what the students had previously experienced in Afghanistan. They express satisfaction with these methods, noting that Bangladeshi universities focus on a student-centric approach. Here, students have opportunities to share their thoughts, receive feedback from teachers, and the overall teaching and learning process is centered around the students' needs and participation.

In Bangladesh, students delve deeply into their chosen fields, especially after completing the 10th grade. Consequently, Afghan students may find themselves lacking in-depth knowledge compared to their Bangladeshi counterparts. This has been a significant difference I've observed during my time here (S2. 24.1.2024)

From this interview it seems that the method is more practical not only memorizing as it was explained in Afghanistan teaching and learning methods.

what stands out to me here is that instructors in Bangladesh mainly focus on the students. They encourage, listen to, and actively engage with their students, encouraging

participation in classes. In my country, it was different; the instructor covered everything, and there wasn't much emphasis on student participation or engagement. However, in Bangladesh, active participation is encouraged and expected (S11. 17.1.2024)

4.4.2 Academic Research in Bangladeshi Universities

The students who are studying for their undergraduate degree in Bangladeshi universities got familiar with research and they are doing it practically.

> *"Yes, in Bangladesh, I gained experience in academic research. Since I'm a business student, our faculty assigned us to work in teams. Our task was to interview an entrepreneur, specifically focusing on women. We were supposed to inquire about how they started their business, their number of employees, management details, etc" (S8 . 2.4.2024)*

4.4.3 Research Challenges

As the Afghan students are not familiar with research, they face some challenges. In Bangladesh where the Afghan students are doing their research they have issues in communicating with Bangali local people as they cannot speak any local language but only English.

> *I asked my mentor that I do not know how to go to field and how should I proceed if the interviewee cannot speak English. As the research was totally new for me and I did not know how to start and finish research (S1. 2.5.2024).*

4.5 Educational Variances in Bangladesh and Afghanistan

The research has found some significant differences between the two education systems of the two developing countries. The difference whether minor or huge has a great impact on the outcome or result of the children in their future education or career.

> *The contrast between the education systems of Afghanistan and Bangladesh is notable. I can't classify my current university in Bangladesh as highly developed or top-tier; it's*

more of a moderate-level institution. However, the academic approach here is quite challenging, which I find perplexing. The teaching – learning language is English, and the method is modern in which focus is mostly on practical and experiment ((S5. 23.1.2024).

In addition to language and the teaching learning methods there are some other significant differences in terms of understanding and the way of learning.

> *In Afghanistan, education mainly involved rote memorization of theories without much emphasis on critical thinking. However, in Bangladesh, critical thinking is essential for analyzing, learning, and understanding concepts deeply. I lacked experience in critical thinking, which led to several challenges during my first and second semesters. Exams often asked questions related to the context of Bangladesh, requiring estimations or explanations that I struggled with due to my limited knowledge. This lack of critical thinking skills negatively impacted my grades and made things quite challenging for me (S8. 2.4.2024).*

Not only language, methodology, learning methods and critical but there is difference in curriculum and the facilities such as technology as well as it was found in my research.

> *The initial variation lies in the curriculum. Our curriculum in Afghanistan is notably lacking compared to what is offered in Bangladesh. Another aspect is the learning environment, followed by the utilization of technology. These factors contribute to the differences between the education systems of Afghanistan and Bangladesh. However, I must clarify that my assessment is based on specific aspects (only my current university) rather than a general evaluation of the entire system of both countries (S7. 1.20.2024).*

4.6 Preparedness of Afghan Female Students for Higher Education in Bangladeshi Universities

Although the students' participants had mentioned some issues regarding the critical thinking, research and overall collaborative works and sharing ideas they were happy with the mathematics performance and the English that they have learned in Afghanistan.

> *The main factor that prepared me for studying in Bangladesh was English proficiency. Unlike the mostly theoretical approach in my previous education, English became crucial in my preparation. I underwent English language training at two reputable centers in Kabul. Despite coming from a village school with limited resources and unskilled*

teachers, I managed to complete the course in a year. Subsequently, I completed my English courses in just six months, which was significantly shorter than the typical two to three-year duration. This experience underscored the value of English proficiency in my readiness for studying in Bangladesh (S8. 2.4.2024).

 I have had interview with professors who have had different ideas about the preparedness of

Afghan female students studying in Bangladeshi universities.

Language poses a significant challenge, not just for Afghan students but also for other girls from countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. It becomes especially problematic when studying STEM subjects like science. However, I believe these are common issues faced by many students. What I see as a more critical challenge for Afghan female students is mental health. Constantly being under the shadow of security threats and worrying about the situation back in their country makes it extremely hard to concentrate and participate actively in class. Therefore, there's a crucial need for mental health support to address these challenges (T3. 12.2.2024)

Perspective of other professors about the Afghan female student's preparedness and performance*:*

Afghan students, both male and female, displayed sincerity and eagerness to learn, actively participating in class discussions, group work, and completing homework diligently. They also received feedback positively and maintained a high level of attentiveness in the classroom. Academically, they were on par with Bangladeshi students, meeting expectations and demonstrating capacity and active participation. The only notable difference might be in language proficiency, as some Afghan students faced challenges with expressing ideas fluently in English (T2. 2.4.2024)

According to the professor's viewpoint, Afghan girls, in addition to mental health issues and

language barriers they have difficulties in communication and seeking support from faculty

members.

I've worked with a few Afghans female students and noticed that, in some instances, they seem less prepared for academic endeavors in a foreign country compared to their male counterparts. There's a tendency among Afghan female students to hesitate when seeking help from faculty or reaching out to others for assistance. Additionally, while they often possess good communication skills, they may sometimes appear less engaged in classroom activities. This observation is not universal, but rather occasional. Personally, I've noticed instances where female Afghan students may feel overshadowed by their male peers (T1. 1.23.2024).

4.7 Cultural adaptation of Afghan female students in Bangladesh

This lack of awareness can lead to misunderstandings and difficulties in adapting, a phenomenon often referred to as "culture shock." There can be different types of cultural shock.

4.7.1 Food

The food recipes and flavors vary from one country to another, and these differences can be quite surprising for international students, often causing a bit of a shock.

> *One issue I've faced, which I still struggle with, is related to food. It could be due to the spiciness, or the way certain dishes are prepared (S6. 16.1.2024).*

Adaptation with food took months for students:

> *For the initial two months, adapting to the local food was extremely challenging. The cuisine was quite different from what we were accustomed to, often leaving us hungry throughout the day. So yes, food presented a significant challenge* (S2. *24.1.2024)*

The dining etiquette varies significantly from one country to another.

> *One of the differences I encountered there was the way they eat food with their hands. It was not done in a manner that I considered proper, unlike our tradition where we also eat with our hands but in a more refined manner. This was quite shocking to me (S4. 1.15.2024).*

4.7.2 People

A person's behavior can be influenced by the culture in which they were raised. What may be considered positive or acceptable in one culture might be viewed differently in another.

> *Initially, I hated the people here. It felt uncomfortable when people would stare at you when you were out. However, as time passed, I've grown accustomed to everything. Perhaps it's because I've learned how to interact and communicate effectively with others (S3. 1.16.2024).*

Navigating the trains and conversing with locals in their native language, which is quite distinct, poses a challenge. Many residents in the city do not speak English, making communication with them quite difficult, especially initially (S6. 16.1.2024)

"Yeah, culture. Yeah. One thing that really shocked me was the crowded people and also the way that people looked at us. That really really shocked me" (S7. 1.20.2024)

4.7.3 Weather

The weather in Afghanistan is cold in fall and extremely cold in winter, humid in spring and hot in summer. However, the weather in Bangladesh is totally different from the weather in Afghanistan. In all seasons it is humid, high temperature and rainfall except for a month in winter. At the start it may be difficult for the Afghan students to adapt with this kind of weather.

"I struggled to adjust to the weather as it was quite warm here, which made me sick for about three to four weeks" (S3. 1.16.2024).

4.8 Coping strategies

International students have various methods at their disposal to tackle both academic and non-academic challenges. Adjusting to a new environment and situation is inherently challenging and requires time. Alongside time, support from the university, the host country, and the students themselves plays a crucial role in overcoming these hurdles.

To overcome on these challenges, international students can seek assistance from their university, as noted by a professor who teaches Afghan students.

Regarding adaptation of Afghan female students: Two key points I believe are crucial. Firstly, improving the learning environment is essential. Although it's good, there's room for enhancement. Another aspect to address is providing professional medical care, particularly for Afghan girls. It's important not to repeatedly bring up their country's war-torn status, as such questions can be distressing and create unnecessary stress. I suggest that the authorities at University C include guidelines in their policy to avoid inquiries about the situation in Afghanistan, as these inquiries can be unsettling and disruptive (T3. 1.20.2024)

In Bangladesh, caution is necessary. Implementing university programs for safety and providing mentoring support are crucial, especially for Afghan and Central Asian students who may face cultural challenges. Universities should intervene to facilitate cultural integration and address personal issues effectively (T3. 12.2.2024)

Both student participants and professors noted that Afghan students commonly face difficulties with English, especially in writing. From a teacher's perspective, there is a proposed solution for this issue:

"The Writing Center at University C is invaluable for academic assistance, particularly for undergraduates needing help with writing and English skills. It would also be beneficial to have tutoring support from alum"(T2.4.2.2024 & T3. 12.2.2024)

Afghan students typically lack prior research experience and encounter numerous challenges. They may benefit from support in the form of a gatekeeper or translator. One of the student participants expressed this sentiment, stating that language was a major obstacle during fieldwork due to interactions with non-English speakers. In response, the university provided a proficient English-speaking companion to assist during fieldwork.

"My faculty advised me not to worry as our team member would gather the data, and my role was to compile and write it. However, I felt that interviewing someone who could communicate in English would have been more beneficial for our research" (S8. 2.4.2024)

Effective communication skills are crucial for student success, and the research revealed that some Afghan female students faced challenges in communicating with others. One participant expressed this concern:

Effective communication is essential; engaging in conversations with others and learning from their experiences can greatly benefit international students, helping them become more successful in their endeavors (S6.16.1.2024)

Stress is a common occurrence in daily life, arising from various sources such as academic pressures, work responsibilities, feelings of homesickness, and so on. However, there are effective strategies that individuals can employ to tackle these challenges. These strategies may involve

engaging in self-provided entertainment or seeking guidance from a psychologist. My participants shared several stress management techniques:

- o *I rely on myself to identify what truly brings me joy and helps me stay calm, reducing stress levels. This often involves engaging in prayer and getting sufficient rest through sleep (S4 1.15.2024)*
- o *When I feel stressed and mentally under pressure, I start dancing which reduces my stress. Moreover, sometimes go for painting and sometimes I go for writing poems (Sultana, 1.16.2024).*
- o *Hanging out with friends, talking to my family and friends in Afghanistan help me to reduce my stress (S1.2.5.2024)*
- o *Eating food, sharing my problems with a friend and cooking Afghani food reduces my stress. (S5. 16.1.2024).*
- o *In the recent years the university hired psychologist for us. Accessing these psychologists is too easy. Sometimes when I am overwhelmed I can refer to them and they do support me (S1. 2.5.2024)*

Chapter five

5.1 Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the academic and cultural backgrounds of Afghan female students from Afghanistan influence their experiences in higher education and adjustment within Bangladeshi universities. This discussion chapter will discuss the research findings concerning the participants' experiences in Afghanistan, addressing the challenges they face in Bangladeshi universities and analyzing these findings concerning the existing literature reviewed in this research. Additionally, this chapter provides recommendations and conclusions based on the findings.

The findings of this study suggest that Afghan female students generally do not come from a background of quality education, which poses some challenges for their higher education endeavors. However, it is also mentioned that these students now have access to quality education in Bangladeshi universities and express satisfaction with their educational experiences. These

findings highlight several challenges faced by participants due to the traditional and classical education system prevalent in Afghanistan. The issues the students had from Afghanistan are not well-versed in collaborative work, a significant aspect of modern teaching and learning methods. According to Halley et al. (2013), engaging in regular group work fosters a strong sense of community within the learning environment, boosts confidence, enhances critical thinking abilities, and promotes effective collaboration within teams. However, the findings suggest a disparity in familiarity with collaboration work among students based on their educational background in urban or rural areas of Afghanistan. While some participants expressed satisfaction with collaborative work experiences in Afghanistan, particularly in scientific subjects, others noted the lack of exposure to such practices during their schooling mainly for those from rural areas. Interestingly, NGOs and international organizations have played a role in introducing collaborative work opportunities in public schools, indicating a positive shift in educational methodologies. However, the study also shows that Afghan students in Bangladeshi universities are well-acquainted with collaborative work and generally content with its integration into their academic curriculum.

Another significant finding relates to the participants' limited knowledge of critical thinking and academic research, essential components of modern education. Academic research involves formulating hypotheses, reviewing existing literature, collecting and analyzing data, and drawing conclusions, all of which were unfamiliar concepts to the participants prior to their studies in Bangladesh. The lack of exposure to research and challenges in conducting research projects, including language barriers, emerged as key issues faced by Afghan female students. Shavkatovna (2021) emphasizes the importance of developing critical thinking skills from an early age, as it

enhances decision-making, problem-solving, research abilities, creativity, and curiosity among students.

The findings also highlight a shift from traditional teacher-centric approaches in Afghan education to more student-centered methodologies in Bangladesh. Modern teaching methods focus on active learning, analytical thinking, and fostering interest and enjoyment among students. However, Afghan students encountered some challenges upon entering Bangladesh universities, such as language barriers, stress, mental health issues, and communication difficulties.

Notably, Afghan female students exhibited hesitancy in sharing their ideas and participating actively in classroom discussions, possibly influenced by patriarchal cultural norms favoring male students in education and decision-making. This finding aligns with existing literature indicating disparities in education based on gender; girls facing greater obstacles to accessing and completing education (Amiri, 2019).

Furthermore, Afghan students experienced cultural shock upon transitioning to Bangladeshi universities, encountering differences in food, social behaviors, weather, and social interactions. These challenges, although initially daunting, were gradually overcome through various coping strategies, including joining writing clubs, communicating with peers and professors, seeking support from university faculties, and engaging in stress-reducing activities like dancing, painting, and cooking traditional Afghan dishes. The findings underline the importance of enhancing educational support, promoting cultural integration, and providing mental health resources to facilitate a positive learning experience for international students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds such as Afghanistan.

5.2 Recommendations

- Afghan female students, due to their disadvantaged academic backgrounds, cultural limitations, and the political insecurities they face, are particularly vulnerable when studying abroad, leading to mental health issues and subsequently poor academic performance. Therefore, it is recommended for their universities to take into account their unique circumstances and create a safer teaching-learning environment that prioritizes their mental well-being.

- Providing pre-arrival briefings on cultural aspects for every international student entering a new country can facilitate better cross-cultural understanding within educational institutions.

- Universities can ensure the availability of psychological services specifically tailored for international students to address their mental health needs.

- International students from countries with limited English proficiency, such as Afghanistan, require additional support and resources to improve their English language skills.

- Given the sensitive political and social situation in Afghanistan, where women face significant challenges and restrictions, Afghan international students often encounter stressful inquiries about their country, the plight of Afghan women, and their post-graduation plans. Universities should implement policies to discourage asking such sensitive questions to alleviate stress among Afghan students.

5.3 Conclusion

This research has shed light on numerous challenges faced by Afghan female students, both in terms of their academic pursuits and non-academic aspects. One of the central revelations is the stark contrast between the traditional educational approach prevalent in Afghanistan and the modern teaching methodologies expected in higher education abroad. The traditional system, characterized by a teacher-centric approach devoid of research opportunities, practical learning experiences, and critical thinking emphasis, has left Afghan students unprepared for the rigors of higher education in foreign countries. These limitations have resulted in a lack of familiarity with collaborative work, research methodologies, and critical analysis, posing significant challenges to their academic success and adaptation abroad.

Moreover, international students, including Afghan females, encounter a distinct set of challenges that are both cultural and academic in nature. These challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, unfamiliar academic expectations, and social integration issues. However, amidst these challenges, the research also shows various coping strategies employed by these students. These strategies encompass efforts to enhance language proficiency, active communication with peers and faculty, participation in additional educational programs, and embracing the cultural nuances of their host country.

Overall, the findings underscore the need for targeted support and interventions to assist Afghan female students and other international students facing similar challenges. Academic institutions must prioritize initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between traditional and modern educational approaches, offering language support programs, providing cultural orientation sessions, fostering inclusive and supportive environments, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges proactively, educational institutions can create

more conducive environments for the academic and personal success of international students, ultimately enhancing their overall learning experiences and outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent Letter Title: Exploring Educational Transitions and Cultural Adaptations: Afghan Female Undergraduate Students' Experiences in Transitioning from Afghanistan to Bangladesh.

Dear Participant,

Greetings!

I am Sidiqa Amani, a master's degree student at BRAC University, conducting research for my thesis. My thesis title is " Exploring Educational Transitions and Cultural Adaptations: Afghan Female Undergraduate Students' Experiences in Transitioning from Afghanistan to Bangladesh." As part of my master's degree requirements, I am working on this research project, and I kindly request your cooperation in providing responses to the following questions. Please be assured that all information you provide will be kept strictly confidential, and your responses will be used

solely for academic research purposes. If you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you may skip it. However, I encourage you to provide honest and accurate answers based on your beliefs.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sidiqa Amani

M.Ed. Student, BRAC University.

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

Signature and date:

_____

Appendix B

Interview Tool for Afghan female students joined recently into Bangladeshi Universities

Interviewee detail:

Name of participants	
Province	
District	
Current location	
University	
The current level of studies	
Interview time	

Education background						
Name of the school Attended in Afghanistan	Types of school		Years you attended		Number of subjects in post-secondary school	Number of hours per day/each subject	Number of students in a classroom (estimated)
	Public	Private	From	To			

Questions

Education experience from Afghanistan and in Bangladesh

1. Have you ever participated in collaborative activities, such as group projects, pair work, or class activities during your post-secondary education, and if so, could you elaborate on those experiences?

2. In your classroom, what teaching methods were employed, and to what extent do you believe they were centered on student-centric approaches?

3. Have you been involved in any academic research at any educational institution in Afghanistan?

4. Share your insights and experiences regarding challenges related to research skills.

5. From your perspective, what does critical thinking entail?

6. To what degree did your previous educational institution contribute to the development of your critical thinking skills and prepare you for tertiary education in Bangladesh?

7. Reflect on your experience of learning English in Afghanistan and how it assisted your adaptation to the new educational environment in Bangladesh.

8. What influenced your decision to pursue studies in Bangladesh?

9. Could you share details about your current field of study and the reasons behind choosing this particular field?

10. In your perspective, what notable differences exist between the education systems of Bangladesh and Afghanistan?

11. How would you describe the process of transitioning from the education system in Afghanistan to that of Bangladesh?

12. In what ways did your educational background in Afghanistan contribute to your preparedness for academic endeavors in Bangladesh?

13. What specific challenges have you encountered during your studies in Bangladesh?

Cultural experience in Afghanistan

1. Was there any cultural restriction for you in Afghanistan that you think prevented you from a better education? What is your viewpoint on how it have effected on girl's education

2. What kind of differences is existing in the two cultures between Afghanistan and Bangladesh?

3. What were some cultural shocks that you faced with while coming to Bangaldesh? Can you please give me example?

4. What is your overall experience of Bangladesh?

5. What challenges you have faced in settling in Bangladesh?

6. Is there anything you what to add?

Coping strategies and reflections:

1. How do you manage the stress or pressure in Bangladesh regarding to your academic or non-academic experiences?

2. How you connect with your peers or joining in a gathering in Bangladesh?

3. What coping strategies you have to overcome some of the academic and cultural challenges you have there in Bangladesh?

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Interview Tool for Teachers teaching Afghan female students in Bangladeshi Universities

Participant's name: _____

University:_____

Designation: _____

Interview Time: _____

Location: _____

Questions:

1. How would you describe the overall academic preparedness of Afghan female students transitioning from Afghanistan to Bangladesh?

2. In your experience, what are the common academic challenges faced by Afghan female students in the Bangladeshi university system?

3. How do you perceive the cultural adjustments that Afghan female students need to make when transitioning to Bangladesh for their studies?

4. From your perspective, what strategies have proven effective in helping Afghan female students navigate the academic hurdles in Bangladeshi universities?

5. Have you observed any specific challenges related to language barriers among Afghan female students, and how are these addressed in the classroom?

6. In terms of cultural adaptation, what support systems or initiatives do you believe are crucial for the successful integration of Afghan female students into the Bangladeshi university environment?

7. How do you see the role of cultural sensitivity in your teaching approach, especially when dealing with a diverse group of students, including Afghan females?

8. Can you share any experiences or success stories of Afghan female students overcoming academic or cultural challenges in your classes?

9. From your perspective, what improvements or additional support measures could enhance the educational experience of Afghan female students in Bangladesh?

10. In terms of cultural integration, what role do extracurricular activities and community engagement play in the lives of Afghan female students studying in Bangladesh?