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Afghan Migrant Women in Politics: Overcoming Barriers to Civic Participation in Host Countries

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Abstract

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Keywords: Afghan Migrant Women, Political Participation, Sociocultural Barriers, Institutional Barriers, Gender-Sensitive Policies

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Abstract

The study investigates systemic restrictions blocking Afghan migrant women from engaging in political processes in Germany, the USA, and Iran. Wearers of cultural limitations through gender regulations face language complexity while traditional social requirements maintain women in classic marginalization while institutional processes enact discriminatory rules and lack of political participation barriers prevent civic engagement. The analysis demonstrates how patriarchal structures, along with built-in discriminatory frameworks, generate sustained exclusion patterns through the application of constructivist and feminist theories. Studies show that leadership development programs built in local communities when combined with political mentoring services and gender-specific administrative reform in child care and immigration systems, achieve maximum impact. The participation of Afghan women will increase substantially by integrating grassroots activity with reforms to structural institutions. The research results of this study serve as foundational information for legislative and civilian institutions to build programs enabling Afghan women's civic development and inclusive equality.

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Introduction

The decades of civil war dispersed thousands of Afghan people who relocated to Germany, the United States, and Iran as refugees. Afghan women experience compounded difficulties after migrating because they occupy two roles simultaneously between women and migrants. Resilient Afghan migrant women struggle to provide meaningful

contributions to their new societies because they must surmount many political and civic participation hurdles. Several obstacles undermine integration and empowerment, according to research evidence that stems from cultural, structural, and systemic issues.

The fundamental challenge that Afghan migrant women face during settlement in new countries involves language and cultural mismatch. German



authorities require standardized language proficiency from residents to gain access to academic institutions as well as job positions and political involvement (Schmidtke, 2020). Many rural Afghan women alongside women from underprivileged zones face significant barriers to language acquisition because formal educational opportunities remain still limited for them. Afghan migrant women living in the United States battle to comprehend bureaucratic structures that feel unusual to their culture (Wong & Tejada 2019). Their lack of cultural understanding and language skills hinders their ability to join political discussions and local civic organizations that determine policy standards.

The institutional racism of the receiving countries makes women migrants from Afghanistan avoid civic participation. The studies have indicated that Afghan refugees in Iran have limited privileges in the public domain and face social challenges that break their access to opportunities (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2018). There are two major constraints that hinder women's economic engagement in Afghanistan by producing unfavorable conditions that harm women's bodily health and psychological well-being for political activism. Furthermore, the lack of legal recognition for many Afghan migrants in countries like Iran exacerbates their exclusion from political and social engagement.

Some specific difficulties in Afghanistan are causes of rising challenges for women in the country. Women who work and reside between the United States and German territories face the challenge of how to balance the traditional bowed down to family responsibilities and the liberal freedom of the new cultures of these two states (Akbari & True, 2024). The adoption of middle-of-the-road moral standards between the local and the foreign causes a reduced national voter turnout and political representation.

Afghan migrant women are not indifferent to their integration problems; they still try hard to become full members of the new society. It is due to the integration of several local organizations with community networks that Afghan women get an important entry point to engage in civic activities and enhance their leadership skills. Language programs,

apart from vocational training and mentorship support, build Afghan women into strong community leaders (Sharifan et al., 2020).

There are too many traditional Afghan values, cultural norms, and practices that limit women's political participation, as well as bureaucratic barriers. The current study focuses on the challenges that reign supreme in the way Afghan women migrants engage in civic participation and then proceeds to recommend strategies for bettering their chances of involvement in politics. Negative institutional routines along with misunderstanding and biased perceptions lead to the exclusion of Afghan migrant women in host society activities (Alemi, 2023).

In its dual focus on identifying barriers to gender-responsive policies, while elaborating these in relation to community-driven initiatives mutually benefiting policymakers, civil society organizations, and international development agencies, this study presents valuable insights. This research shows that Afghan women must be inclusively empowered because their civic activities extend into social spheres to which they also belong. This migration gender analysis unearths essential truths with strong implications for action toward equal chances of integration of Afghan women.

Theoretical Framework

This research uses the Combined Constructivism Theory from the Feminist International Relations and Human Security Approach to study the options for Afghan migrant women's public activity. This theoretical framework can be used to analyze Afghan women's public engagement in international settings in which researchers can explore political choices and gender-based dominance structures along with societal expectations.

According to the constructivist approach, social constructions of people are primarily based on the fact that those belonging to a culture apply cultural beliefs and norms with the shared meaning to create identities in political participation. The level of political and civic activity of the inhabitants of the nation depends on how Afghan women are perceived in other nations. Also, due to traditional gender-based

belief systems, Afghanistan women are restricted to only carrying out public life because women belong only as homemakers with no public action. Gender stereotypes, which perpetuate the illusion of female powerlessness posited in Germany's cultural integration programs also fail to deal with ideas of cultural gender dynamics. The input of Afghan women is characterized by the presence of various barriers which it assumes from community understandings of dress code standards and language restriction according to constructivist theory. Understanding society-produced norms allows us to see what barriers Afghan women face when engaging in leadership and civic activities (Shayan, [2015](#)).

The gendered relationships of power transparently explain how Afghan migrant women experience removal from political and civic lifestyle involvement. Through this approach, it analyzes both transnational patriarchal systems that ostracize women and restrain their chances for social participation. Gender roles have undergone persistent change because of patriarchal traditions combined with Afghanistan's long-running conflicts thus restricting women's abilities to participate in public decision-making processes (Hamidi, et al., [2021](#)). The migration process for Afghan women increases existing gender disadvantages caused by persistent discriminatory practices in receiving host countries. Policymakers overlook gender-specific requirements which result in reduced Afghan women's participation during political processes (Kuschminder, [2017](#)). Feminist IR theory promotes problem-solving power structures that maintain women's exclusion from political participation through advocacy efforts to create policies that promote equal opportunities (Fotaki & Pullen, [2023](#)).

According to human security theory, security only reaches its full extent when people can live well maintain control over their lives, and feel socially connected to their community. According to this framework, Afghan migrant women must actively participate in civic and political processes because this participation fits into their general security strategy. Women who remain outside of public activities become susceptible to direct social isolation and

financial dependence along with organized institutional mistreatment. Women in Iran who are Afghan nationals struggle to obtain legal rights because of this they cannot establish civic participation through available opportunities. Through investments in women's education combined with language learning programs and political awareness development, host countries build stronger human security outcomes for these individuals within their communities. Through the human security approach, host societies must establish spaces that enable Afghan women to express themselves and participate fully in their communities (Abbasi-Shavazi, et al., [2018](#)).

Multiple theoretical approaches combine to create a powerful analytical base that examines Afghan migrant women's civic status along with political engagement. According to Feminist IR theory structural hazards which constrain women's involvement together with imbalanced power dynamics require gender-aware policies (Milczarek, [2018](#)).

Literature Review:

Sociocultural Barriers to Political Participation

Traditional Afghan cultural standards control the level of women's involvement in both public affairs and politics. Traditional Afghan social traditions restrict women to their family homes while they offer no encouragement for public involvement. Evidence shows that these traditional norms survive in migration host countries since these countries may strengthen patriarchal control in Afghan migrant communities (UNHCR, 2023). Traditional male-controlled networks in Afghan communities enforce maintaining traditional gender roles upon female members who thus receive restricted participation authority in political matters. Due to cultural norms Afghan migrant women encounter systematic challenges in participating in public political activities.

Successful political advocacy together with increased political awareness requires both language proficiency and access to education. Basic proficiency in new languages becomes difficult for Afghan migrant women because formal education remains

out of reach alongside missing language training programs. The European Commission identifies caregiver duties which primarily placed on women in the population as a primary reason for their minimal educational progress. Afghan women who lack adequate language skills face barriers when trying to participate in political discussions and acquire necessary information or join decision-making actions which push them deeper into citizenship isolation (European Commission, [2021](#)).

Within Afghan migrant cultures, religious expectations combine with community norms which restrict female visibility and activism in public settings. Women refrain from taking part in politics or civic life due to conventionally interpreted rules of religious practice and cultural norms that demand the avoidance of negative reactions from their communal members. The dual standards placed on Afghan women who want to participate more actively in civic life push them into conflicting situations where they need to meet family demands together with community cultural norms. Afghan women's political authority over their advocacy for rights is diminished as a result of pressure to be invisible in public (Nehan, [2022](#)).

Institutional Barriers in Host Countries

Host countries create extensive legal obstacles that ultimately impede Afghan migrant women from joining political processes. Availing of German citizenship remains difficult for Afghan women because their naturalization process extends over many years and delays their ability to vote in elections and seek public office (BAMF, [2022](#)). The lengthy procedure for immigration creates deeper obstacles for female Afghan migrants because they often don't have access to financial means appropriate documents or adequate assistance to handle bureaucratic paperwork so political rights stay elusive to them.

Many host countries fail to develop integration policies that account for gender-specific obstacles migrant women experience so they create specialized programs for language learning together with child care assistance. CEE pathways are ineffective in maintaining targeted political empowerment

programs that serve Afghan female citizens. Host-country institutions maintain structural biases leading to increased exclusion because Afghan women encounter combined gender and racial discrimination blocking their path to leadership roles and membership in civic organizations (Horgan, [2021](#)).

Since their migration women from Afghanistan continue to have minimal representation in both political bodies and decision-making offices across their host countries. The absence of Afghan women in political institutions stems primarily from structural biases combined with insufficient networking opportunities alongside limited mentorship that would serve to break down political barriers (Nehan, [2022](#)). The visible lack of representative figures who share their background works as an additional barrier for Afghan women who want to participate in civic society. The exclusion of specific Afghan migrant women's challenges from policy processes occurs because their voices remain unrepresented (Bakare et al., [2024](#)).

Effective Strategies and Policy Interventions

Afghan migrant women receive empowerment through grassroots organizations that help develop their political understanding and community participation. The UN Women ([2021](#))-supported programs established discussion spaces for Afghan women and delivered resources to help them learn leadership techniques and initiate advocacy work. Communities benefit from blending educational tools with network growth because these approaches teach women essential political understanding and create protective social systems that drive powerful civic involvement.

Migrants in Sweden and Canada demonstrate higher political engagement because of specialized entrepreneurial mentorship schemes. In these programs, Afghan migrant women acquire alignment with established leaders who explain their experiences to help them build skills and establish networking connections. Migrant women participating in mentorship programs learn confidence-building techniques and real-world collaboration abilities,

resulting in notable host community inclusion advancements.

Female immigrants show stronger civic participation when immigration programs welcome new citizens and accept gender-neutral admission criteria. According to OECD (2022), nations adopting gender-responsive reforms that integrate childcare support in integration classes and leadership programs establish environments for political engagement. New reforms provide Afghan migrant women with complete access to integration processes and actual influence to help their new society.

The combination of grassroots efforts, which unite with mentorship projects along with policy advancements, produces strategic tools for breaking down institutional and sociocultural hurdles to enhance Afghan migrant women's civic and political achievement.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a methodical research design that examines Afghan migrant women's political and civic participation barriers and proposes effective strategies for their greater involvement. The research examines sociocultural problems together with systemic barriers Afghan migrant women meet through analysis of academic literature as well as policy reports along with case studies primarily aimed at Germany the United States and Iran.

Previous Literature

This study builds upon previous literature research that investigates Afghan migration together with gender dynamics across host countries. Afghan women encounter two types of marginalization because they are both female in male-dominated societies and newly arrived migrants. Studies within Germany demonstrate that language difficulties present the main difficulty that leads Afghan women to fail at civic integration. Schmidtke demonstrates how inaccessible language training creates double marginalization for the female population with care duties particularly affected (Schmidtke, 2020). Why do Afghan women face challenges within the United States? They must find stability between their

Afghanistan gender expectations and the emphasis on individualism in American society (Connor & Krogstad, 2016). The findings presented in existing research equip analysts to address larger sociocultural and systemic barriers.

Policy Analysis

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2023 together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) create essential policy reports that detail institutional barriers while also outlining interventions for Afghan migrant women. Achieving rights and accessing services in Iran faces obstacles because of strict legal systems that block Afghan migrants. According to Abbasi-Shavazi and his fellow researchers, Iranian Afghan women face economic vulnerability and political exclusion because they work in undocumented sectors without legitimate work permits so they are confined to informal labor markets (Abbasi-Shavazi, et al., 2018). The programs exhibit limited success with women who need support handling childcare duties together with isolation challenges. Through policy analysis, researchers discover which containment methods succeed for Afghan women alongside potential areas for improvement (Kuschminder, 2017).

Case Studies

Case studies examine successful community-led initiatives through practical examples from Germany, the United States, and Iran. Through programs and leadership development initiatives, Germany enables Afghan women to build competence and boost their self-assurance and leadership potential (Schmidtke, 2020). The Afghan Women's Organization for Refugees creates social networks across the United States that foster civil engagement for women and provide access to voter outreach courses and leadership development classes (Wong & Tejada, 2019). Despite Iran's restrictive policies the country presents challenges that grassroots initiatives led by international NGOs have overcome by delivering education along with vocational training to Afghan women. These detailed examinations help show why

tailoring strategic solutions to special local barriers remains essential.

Ethical Considerations

Secondary data forms the foundation of this research which eliminates requirements of informed consent and data protection. Each source mentioned throughout this work receives detailed documentation that protects academic integrity while acknowledging the authors of the original content. The research respects the dignity of Afghan migrant women through its detailed historical examination and political evaluation combined with an emphasis on their strong leadership and active decision-making role.

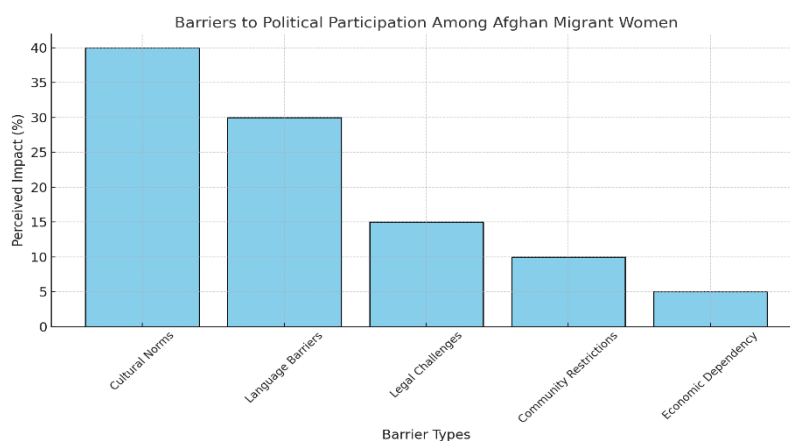
Discussion

The road to political and civic participation for Afghani women is hindered by cultural norms that create obstacles in residential and community domains. In traditional Afghan society, women face internal familial rules that bar them from moving freely outside household spaces. Host countries strengthen family barriers through discrimination practices that target Afghan women because of their cultural background, religious faith, and immigrant status. Women in Afghanistan encounter economic

barriers that block essential access to education and work resources to prevent them from enjoying meaningful civic engagement. Financial requirements keep Afghan women perpetually trapped in powerless circumstances, preventing participation in politics and government activities.

The institutions of receiving countries provide comprehensive obstacles for migrants, which block their entry into civic participation. The formal requirements of citizenship administration in Afghanistan create delays that prevent women from casting votes and running for office or sustainable work in political organizations. Different German government departments extend naturalization requirements across multiple years, which leaves many Afghan women unable to acquire citizenship so they cannot participate in political matters (BAMF, 2022). Most immigration policies in host countries lack gender consciousness because they overlook essential female needs such as childcare support during language and civic exams, which impact women more heavily. Gender-neutral policies in existence create a structural system of barriers that stops women in Afghanistan from reaching vital resource access alongside essential network capabilities that enable civic and political advancement.

Figure 1



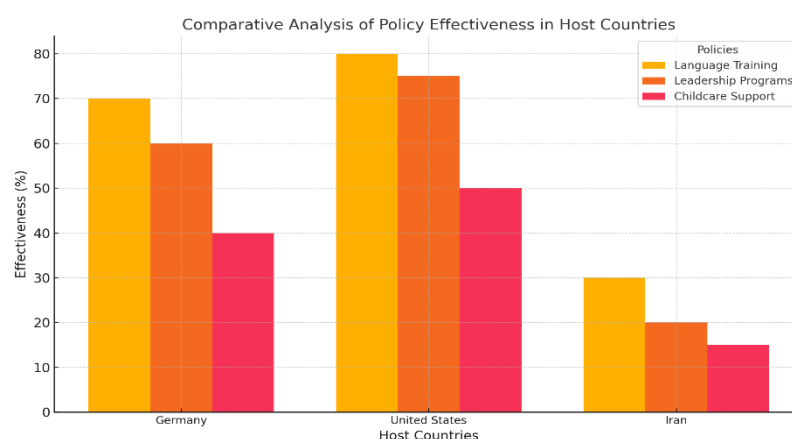
The study shows that host countries implement varying degrees of obstacles to integration. Afghan women face two key obstacles to political integration in Germany because of their long naturalization

procedure and flawed language training initiatives. The American host country possesses better political participation outlets that help Afghan women through mentoring programs and community networks yet

these women face the double challenge of combating cultural prejudices while respecting family traditions in their civic involvement. Political participation in Iran exists within severe limitations that stem from government-constructed legal hindrances and social

restrictions. Afghan women residing in Iran face barriers as political representation is limited so they must operate within informal and clandestine advocacy networks rather than formally affect policy changes (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2018).

Figure 2



Community-based solutions constitute the most promising method for increasing Afghan women's inclusion in political and civil society processes. Women's associations together with grassroots organizations in Afghanistan create protected environments where people can have conversations and build capability while conducting advocacy and service delivery. Women who participate in these groups learn essential abilities to operate successfully within the political institutions of their new countries. Organizations based in Germany and the U.S. succeed in conducting workshops about leadership development and advocacy which have enabled Afghan women to expand their community leadership (Schmidtke, 2020).

Public engagement strengthens through implementing policies that promote inclusiveness. Host nations must establish refugee and migrant policies that recognize and address problems that specifically challenge Afghan women. Integration program success depends on childcare support which combined with equitable political mentorship opportunities creates improved participation by women migrants. The simplification of naturalization requirements combined with specialized programming such as leader training for immigrant

women will prevent Afghan women from remaining excluded from civic life along political participation. Organizations working in civil society should create partnerships with policymakers to develop and execute these inclusive measures.

Through media representation and digital advocacy, Afghan women can now speak out about their concerns while building networks that seek change. Digital platforms create open access along with privacy protection for Afghan women who want to exchange stories address difficulties and lead change instances. Through social media campaigns together with blogs and online forums Afghan women now participate in political discussions and spread awareness about their problems through channels that outmaneuver traditional constraints. These digital platforms let users from international networks while strengthening solidarity between separate territories (UN Women, 2021).

Conclusion

The structure of barriers faced by Afghan migrant women in political participation grows out of cultural pressures together with legal restrictions which combine with social discrimination systems. The effective resolution of these obstacles demands joint

efforts between community programs capacity development initiatives and gender-sensitive legislative changes that forge accessible engagement routes. The researcher recommends that future studies about women empowerment in Afghan culture should focus directly on empirical examinations of

women's authentic experiences. The implementation of these insights will generate comprehensive knowledge about their distinct challenges to instruct the creation of targeted solutions for maximizing political and civic engagement.

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