

Educational Challenges of Afghan High School Students in Iran from the Perspectives of English Language Teachers: Tehran Province

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Purpose: It is more than 30 years that Afghan people immigrate to Iran. This paper aims to find out the educational challenges Afghan High School students face in Iranian schools based on English teachers' perspectives in Tehran province.

Methodology: This research is qualitative and its kind is deductive. Based on the theoretical foundations of migration, relevant studies, especially the research of Sadegh Mousavi et al. (2019), Shishehgran and Haji Dehabadi (2018), and Songhori et al (2014) components of educational challenges were compiled. Guba and Lincoln indices (1994, quoted by Mohsenpour, 2013) were used to validate the components. The tool of this study is a Semi-structured interview based on the accredited components. Data analysis has been done by the use of Braun and Clarke's thematic method (2006). The number of English teachers who have taught Afghan students for more than four years in public schools and participated in this study was about 32 (17 female and 15 male).

Findings: The findings show that parents of these students rarely come to school to ask about the educational progress of their students, Afghan students adapt to the content of Iranian textbooks and the curriculum as the result of having a close relationship with Iranian culture, some students work after school to help their family financially. Regarding citizenship, Afghan students consider themselves differently as first-class Iranian citizens, second-class citizens, and some do not care about the issue of citizenship in Iran because they consider life in Iran to be temporary and intend to immigrate to European countries. Among the female students, no delinquency or victimization was observed by the English teachers, but the male teachers had heard of a few cases such as buying and selling drugs and consuming them. Considering that Afghan students are interested in learning English and its skills, it is necessary to take advantage of the presence of English teachers in reducing the educational challenges of students.

Conclusion: This can be achieved by holding compensatory classes by these teachers themselves. This leads to more social communication between students and their English language teachers and to a large extent causes a kind of social control in preventing the occurrence of delinquency and delinquency. It is also suggested that the English language curriculum should pay attention to multiculturalism and anti-racism, and the necessary programs to familiarize school administrators, parents of students, teachers, and Iranian students, as well as parents of Afghan students and the students themselves should be provided.

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1. Introduction

Iran has been the destination of immigrants from regional countries such as Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan for many years. But the number of Afghan immigrants to Iran has been more than other countries. With 951,100 registered refugees, Iran is the second host country for these refugees (UN Refugee Agency, 2019). The Iranian government has estimated that between 1.5 and 2 million undocumented Afghan refugees live in Iran (UN Refugee Agency, 2020). Education, after security and economy, has been one of the most important factors in attracting Afghan refugees to Iran (Mirzaei, 2017). According to the general population and housing census of 2015, about 1, 583, 979 unregistered Afghans live in Iran. Most of this population is in urban areas (Ministry of Interior, 2016). Examining the provincial distribution of foreign immigrants in Iran shows that most of the foreign refugees in Iran, 96% of whom are from Afghanistan, live in Tehran province (Sadeghi, 2008). This migration, which is a type of forced migration, is unhealthy and accompanied by destruction (Jamshidiha and Anbari, 2013) and has had inevitable consequences for both the source and host communities.

The policy orientation of the Iranian government has been focused on the return of Afghan immigrants since the 1380s (Sadeghi, 1388), but the second and third generations of these immigrants have not had much desire to return to their homeland. Meanwhile, contextual and structural variables such as age, higher education, length of stay in Iran, and open levels of social integration have had a significant effect on the emigration intention of returnees (Abasi Shawazi, colleagues, 2015). It should be kept in mind that the populations of the second and third generations of Afghan immigrants in Iranian society have gained a superior economic and social position in Iranian society compared to the previous generation (Mahmoudian, 2007).

The children of these immigrants need education, and that's why the country of Iran has made arrangements for these children to attend Iranian schools. According to Reza Dost (1401), before the recent changes in Afghanistan, about 500,000 students were studying in Iranian schools, after these changes, this number increased to 700 students, and 60,000 students in universities. The Islamic Republic of Iran does not have the necessary infrastructure to educate this number of students and has only been able to follow this issue with temporary planning.

The presence of this number of Afghan children in Iran shows the necessity of examining their educational challenges. Since adolescence is a sensitive period and has its special issues, when it is connected with immigration, it leads to the emergence of various problems that can create destructive effects on the academic progress of students and their social development. Since the challenges of Afghan students in high school have not been investigated so far, the present study intends to examine the educational challenges of these students from the perspective of English language teachers in high school.

2. Methodology

This research is qualitative and its kind is deductive. Data analysis has been done by the use of Braun and Clarke's thematic method (2006). Methodological researchers have recently stated that the thematic method itself can be considered a qualitative method (Brown and Clark, 2013, Novell et al., 2017). As Braun and Clarke (2006) noted "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting (themes) within data." It can organize your data and describe them in detail and also interpret different aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). It has six phases "Familiarizing yourself with your data", "Generating initial codes", "searching for themes", "reviewing themes", "defining and naming themes", and "producing the report" (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Statistical population

- English language teachers in high schools in Tehran province who had Afghan students in their classes
- University professors in the field of sociology

Sample size

- 32 high school English teachers in Tehran province (17 female teachers and 15 male teachers) having more than the four-year experience of teaching Afghan students
- Five university professors in the field of sociology (two professors in the process of compiling the desired components to examine the educational challenges of students and three professors in the accreditation phase and checking the content validity of the components)

Research tool

Based on the theoretical foundations of migration, relevant studies, especially the research of Sadegh Mousavi et al. (2019), Shishehgrana and Haji Dehabadi (2018), and Songhori et al (2014) components of educational challenges were compiled. Guba and Lincoln indices (1994, quoted by Mohsenpour, 2013) were used to partially validate the components. This was done by using the techniques of reliability and transferability through researchers' self-review and data alignment, and reliability through the accurate guidance of information collection and researchers' alignment. After the accreditation of the components, the content validity and reliability of these components were examined by sociology professors and finally five components "cultural", "academic", "administrative", "social", and "economic" were considered to examine the challenges. Most of these components include some sub-components as follows:

"Cultural" sub-components include language problems, religious differences, Iranian students' clashes with Afghan students, acceptance of Afghan students by Iranian students, teachers' attitudes towards Afghan students, Afghan students' view towards Iranian culture, and Afghans' view towards their own Afghan culture. "Academic" sub-components include the attention of Afghan parents towards the academic progress of their children, the level of education of the parents of Afghan students, the acceptance of Iranian English language textbooks Afghan students, the dropout status of Afghan students, educational interruption, Afghan students' cognitive skills, the level of preparation of Afghan students to study in different grades in high schools, and the problems of moving Afghan students. The "Administrative" component had no sub-components. The "social" sub-components included Afghans' academic perspective and their future, career perspective and their future, delinquency and victimization, clothing and appearance of students, isolation, marriage, Afghan students' perception of the concept of citizenship in Iran, dissatisfaction of parents of Iranian students, and dissatisfaction of school principals. The sub-components of the "Economy" include the cost of education, poverty, and child labor. A semi-structured interview form was prepared based on these compiled components and sub-components.

3. Findings

As it is said five components of "cultural", "academic", "administrative", "social", and "economic" are taken into consideration. The results of this investigation are as follows:

1. Cultural component

The Cultural component includes seven sub-components of religious differences, Iranian students' clashes with Afghan students, acceptance of Afghan students by Iranian students, teachers' attitudes towards Afghan students, Afghan students' view towards Iranian culture, and Afghans' view towards their own Afghan culture.

1-1. Language problems

Although the lived experience of English language teachers has been taken into consideration, since the Persian language is also used in English language classes, therefore, in this sub-component, both the Persian language and English language were considered. 1) It was determined that most of the Afghan students in high schools have no problem with Persian language skills, but most of their accent is different from Iranian

students, even though they were born in Iran. Of course, there are Afghan students who do not have any accent when speaking in Persian. 2) In English skills, Afghan students were divided into two groups, either weak or very good. Most of the teachers admitted that Afghan students are not average in English. Of course, they also pointed to the fact that those Afghan students who have the opportunity to participate in language classes in the private institute have better English language skills. A very important point in this section was the teachers' emphasis on the perseverance of Afghan students to get needed marks and pass the English course, and to be graduate. 5) English language course was important for most of the students who intended to immigrate for a job or continue their education in European countries, these students made more efforts in learning English language skills.

1-2. Religious differences

It was found that Afghan students in these schools had both Sunni and Shia religions, and sometimes teachers do not notice the difference between them. Of course, it is noteworthy that English language teachers in the junior high school (7th, 8th, and 9th grades) teach only two hours a week and in the senior high school in the 10th and 11th grades in theoretical branches - experimental sciences, mathematics and physics, the field of literature and humanities, and the field of Islamic sciences and education teachers teach only three hours a week, but in the twelfth grade, it is increased to four hours a week. In the technical and professional education in the tenth and eleventh grades two hours a week and in the twelfth grade no hours of English language teaching is considered. In fact, approximately two hours per week of students' education is devoted to learning English in the 6 academic years of the high school period—both junior and senior. This is a limited time that affects teachers' lived experience in understanding the challenges of Afghan students in high schools.

1-3. Iranian students' clashes with Afghan students

In the investigation of this sub-component, it was observed that 1) there is almost no clashes between Iranian and Afghan students in girls' schools, and Iranian students in girls' schools have accepted Afghans. One of the teachers stated that "an Afghan student fell to the ground and was half-conscious in class, an ambulance came, and I remember that the Iranian students were crying a lot and were worried about her. I myself went to the hospital with the Afghan student to take care of her and decrease their worries". Just one clash reported, an English teacher had observed that an Iranian student had insulted an Afghan student that "Go away, you are Afghan!" which with the intervention of one of the teachers who talked to her that "these are immigrants, you must be friends with them" the case was solved.

2) But in boys' schools, the attitudes are somehow different. Most of the teachers admitted that the relationship between Iranian students and Afghan students is not good. In explaining their opinion, they noted, "I don't want to say that it is racism, but there is no good relationship between Iranian and Afghan students.", "Iranian students' insulted Afghans by the use of some adjectives", "They deal with Afghans out of arrogance", and "They are in their own team, for example, if there are 20 students, 10 Afghans, and 10 Iranians separately. Without communication", "Afghan students feel that they are strangers in the region". In only one case, a male teacher noted the existence of intimacy between Iranian and Afghan students, he noted that Iranian boys jokingly told the Afghan students that "You have come to take our place".

But one thing is common among both girls' and boys' students, they were sensitive towards those Afghan students who had better academic progress compared to Iranian students, and "They had to some extent nationalistic view."

1-4. Acceptance of Afghan students by Iranian students

In the investigation of this sub-component, it was found that 1) the new generation of Iranian girl students accepts Afghan students and have no problem with them, but it was Afghan girls who were "conservative". Afghan students sometimes in their writings complained about how they were looked down upon by Iranian

society, 2) the acceptance rate of Afghan boys' by Iranian students in schools is very low, especially in schools where there is a large population of Afghans.

1-5. Teachers' attitudes toward Afghan students,

The investigation of this sub-component showed that 1) most of the English teachers do not make any difference between Iranian and Afghan girl students and do not treat them inappropriately. Even the teachers are more sensitive to the educational problems of these students and have compassion for them and believe that Afghan students are very hardworking. For example, a teacher said that "teachers have more compassion towards Afghans" or "I show more compassion towards them." Because they don't have money to go to language classes, I help them more. There is a positive atmosphere in our school regarding the presence of Afghan students." The only case that a teacher in a girls' school with a large number of Afghan students observed was that a teacher had told the Afghan students that "In an open country, anyone can enter" and this had caused the resentment of the Afghan students. A remarkable point considered in some teachers' speech was that "I think that I am somehow serving the children of Afghanistan. We are creating a foundation for Afghan children" or "if the number of Afghan students decreases in classes, we can work on Iranian students more", 2) most male teachers do not make any difference between Iranian and Afghan boy's students. One of the teachers said, "The teachers liked them because they were responsible, if they did not get good marks, it was because of working, these children were calm and had good morals." Only one male teacher said that "teachers don't want to go to the classes with a large number of Afghans." One teacher said that in a village, "we have a school where 4 out of 30 students are Iranians in one class.", or in a girl's school, "there were 15 students which three of them were Iranians."

1-6. Afghan students' view of Iranian culture

In this sub-component, we come across three points of view: 1) the majority of teachers believed that students feel close to Iranian culture and consider themselves as Iranians, "I feel that they have accepted that they are Iranians." They do not see themselves as strangers in Iran. Their behavior is like Iranians and they are completely the same, only can be recognized by their faces" or "Afghan educated people mostly believe that once Afghanistan was a part of Iran and they have no negative feedback towards Iranians" and "Some of them liked to look like Iranian children. They didn't like to have an Afghan accent". 2) A limited number of teachers said that there are a group of students who are not interested in Iranian culture, and not even in Afghan culture, they are interested in European and Western culture like Germany and Australia, one of the teachers said about Afghan students that "they like to go to other countries."

1-7. Afghan' view of their own Afghan culture

In the surveys, it was found that Afghan students are divided into three categories: 1) Most of the teachers stated that Afghan students did not talk about their culture. According to one of the teachers, "Afghan students do not talk about their culture and They feel closer to the Iranian culture" or "These children talked about their hardships and left everything behind, they had nothing to be proud of in Afghanistan" 2) A limited number of teachers have also stated that some of their Afghan students wanted to preserve their own culture "They don't like to look like Iranians and wants to keep their distance, they like to look Afghan and they like to keep their own authenticity", 3) some other teachers said that some Afghan students do not think of Iranian culture or even Afghan culture, these students prefer to follow European culture since they think of immigrating to Europe.

2. Academic component

"Academic" sub-components include the attention of Afghan parents towards the academic improvement of their children, the Education level of parents of Afghan students, the acceptance of Iranian English language textbooks by Afghan students, the dropout status of Afghan students, educational interruption, Afghan

students' cognitive skills, The level of readiness of Afghan students to start studying in different grade in high school, and the problems of moving Afghan students.

2-1. the attention of Afghan parents towards the academic improvement of their children

The investigation shows that most of their parents do not visit the schools to check the academic progress of their children and do not have much interaction with the principals and teachers of the school "because 80 to 90 percent are not financially strong and the number of children is large, parents cannot pay attention to the academic progress of their children." Of course, parents visit schools when they are invited to get the report card, they go." One of the teachers stated that "parents never came at all, they only come to get report cards, but they never have any expectations or complaints," or another said that "academic progress of Afghan students are somehow important for some parents, but most of them are workers, and they don't have a chance to check their children's progress." Of course, according to a limited number of teachers, some parents visit the school to check the status of students.

2-2. Education level of parents of Afghan students

A number of teachers have stated that they do not know the education level of the parents of Afghan students, and some have said that the parents do not have much education and that some of them are illiterate. One of the teachers stated that "The education level of most of them is low ".

2-3. Acceptance of Iranian English language textbook by Afghan students

All the teachers stated that the students can easily communicate with the content of the English textbook and they have no particular problem with the content. One of the teachers stated that "I think it depends on the teacher's method, for example, there is a lesson in the English textbook related to travel. In order to attract them I ask them first if you want to travel what should you do."

2-4. the dropout status of Afghan students

Most of the teachers stated that they have not encountered Afghan students who drop out in both girls' and boys' schools. Only one case, "It happened when they were forced to work since they are the supporter of their family. They did not attend the class, but they took part in the exams' sessions, the school also cooperated." and the girls' school a teacher mentioned the issue of girls' marriage. "This year maybe one got married and left school. There is another married girl, since other students do not know the principal of the school let her stay in school for now."

2-5. Educational interruption

The majority of teachers stated that they did not face the academic interruption of Afghan students. But two teachers faced Afghan student interruption. The female teacher said, "I took a form and asked their age, many of them are one year older and there was a break due to family problems. Many of them need to work." And the male teacher said, "Yes, I faced educational interruption, for example, I myself saw that a student who worked last year, came this year and wants to repeat the same grade."

2-6. Afghan students' cognitive skills

The answers of the teachers were divided into three categories: 1) They are like Iranian students, 2) The other group believed that "they are either slow minded or smart". 3) Afghan students were good in terms of cognitive skills, and in the teacher's explanation, he said that "they are good, we had a careless case, but the majority were good, they didn't have time to study, they went straight from school to work or they worked at night."

2-7. the level of readiness of Afghan students to start studying in different grades in high school

The majority of teachers noted that due to the three-month summer vacations and also the school closures during the Corona period in the last year, Afghan students are not ready to start learning English in different grades of high school (except the seventh grade, which is the beginning of English language education). That is why teachers taught them the main points as the background in order to be able to teach them new materials at the very beginning of this year. There were students who remember all the main points of English language skills since they participated in English classes in private institutes.

2-8. the problems of moving Afghan students

There was no such problem with moving Afghan students. A female teacher said, "No, they were here and they became natives here." From the beginning, they lived in this region because their parents could be in the factory or they are janitors and guards. A male teacher said, "Very few, they stayed in one place, I did not face with such a problem, and they didn't get fired."

3. Administrative component

The vast majority of teachers admitted that in previous years students had problems in registering, but recently they have not seen any problems in the registration of Afghan students. Registration is free for Afghan students and if they have the registration documents, they will be registered in the school. One of the teachers said, "I did not see they had a problem with registration", and the other said, "The school is very cooperative with these children and their families."

4. Social component

The "social" sub-components included Afghans' academic perspective and their future, career perspective and their future, delinquency and victimization, clothing and appearance of students, isolation, marriage, Afghan students' perception of the concept of citizenship in Iran, dissatisfaction of parents of Iranian students, and dissatisfaction of school principals.

4-1. Afghans' academic perspective and their future

Based on what female teachers said, Afghan girls are divided into two groups, those who are weak, do not see any educational future for themselves, and those Afghan girls who are studying hard are willing to continue their education if their family does not prevent them. A number of male and female teachers admitted that Afghan students would like to migrate to other countries to continue their education. One of the female teachers said, "some of them have big dreams and they said they want to be researchers, they study hard so that the hardships of the family will be less", another teacher also said, "they want to leave Iran, about 90 percent of Afghan students want to go." That is why they pay special attention to learning English. One of the teachers of Afghan boy students said that "their goal is only to get a diploma and enter the job market, I have not seen them say that they want to become engineers, they are not extravagant". Teachers also noted that if it is possible, they will migrate to European countries to work. On the whole Afghan girls are more interested in continuing their education.

4-2. Afghans' career perspective and their future

In fact, the career prospects of Afghan students can be divided into three categories, those who enter the job market after graduation, those who were considering migrating to other countries to find a suitable job, and those who were willing to find a suitable job through studying in other countries. Those girls who want to enter the job market after getting their diploma to want to work in hairdressers or nail salons, and some factories. But some of the girls were not hopeful that they would be able to find a good job in Iran, a teacher said, "Some are not very hopeful and they say, we don't know if we will be able to find a good job in the future, because even for Iranians there is no job, but we try".

Boys are more willing to get a diploma and continue their father's job as a worker, "construction work, or just work as a laborer for a source of income." Some of them work in different production workshops such as tailoring workshops, they become professionals in that. A male teacher noted, "One student proudly told me that this suit was sewn by Afghans, which refers to the good quality of sewing." As you can see, the prospects of girls and boys are different in terms of the type of work, and girls start working in hairdressers or nail salons or in production workshops, while boys start construction work, working in markets or workshops. They have a look at migrating to other countries as one of the female teachers noted "someone said that I will go to another country to achieve my dreams through scientific progress".

4-4. Delinquency and victimization

Female teachers have mostly stated that they have not noticed delinquency among Afghan female students, but they have heard such a thing happens in boys' schools. A number of male teachers stated that they were unaware of their students' delinquency and had not heard anything, but some said that "yes, I have heard, the issue of drugs is discussed, they both consume and distribute, but cases are very little." Some male teachers have talked about students being tired and sleepy in the classroom due to working after school hours. They noted that one of the factors of delinquency was "child labor".

4.5- Clothing and appearance of students

According to the teachers of both male and female students, it was found that these Afghan students all dress like Iranian students, and follow the rules and regulations of the school in terms of clothing. According to a female teacher, "Students have uniforms and they are the same", according to a male teacher, "They looked like Iranian students".

4-5. Isolation

Female teachers' responses to this sub-component include items such as "Afghan students are isolated, although they have a good relationship with Iranian teachers", and "They talk to Iranian students, but they feel like strangers". "Afghans are isolated on a case-by-case basis" and male teachers noted, "I didn't have an isolated student in my class", and "some are disappointed and some on the contrary, some are rude, they are not balanced". According to the teachers' statements, what is certain is that the isolation of Afghan students has been observed in the classrooms, which of course the amount varies in schools.

4-6. Marriage

Marriage is another component of the social challenges of Afghan students. As seen, some Afghan families do not pay much attention to the education of girl students because they want their daughters to get married which is affected the efforts of students to study. In examining the opinions of female teachers, it was mentioned that marriage is one of the factors of female students dropping out of school. On the other hand, one of the teachers said that due to the high amount of money that the Afghan groom's family has to pay to the girl's family, some girls run away with an Afghan boy who does not afford the marriage expenses according to Afghan customs. And after marriage, they reconnect with their families, again. That is why the principals of girls' schools where Afghan students attend are very careful about their Afghan girl students. One of the teachers said that "Afghan girls think they are Iranians, except for the case of marriage. If he could not afford the amount of needed money, he run away with a girl to get married, that is why principals of the schools and their assistance are careful." On the other hand, this point creates a concern for male students who have to bear the expenses of marriage.

4-7. Afghan students' perception of the concept of citizenship in Iran

Based on the experiences of English teachers the perception of Afghan students as citizens are divided into three categories. 1) Some of them consider themselves first-class Iranian citizens. Teachers said, "I feel that

they see themselves as first-class citizens, but they proceed conservatively so as not to cause any problems.", "They don't consider themselves as second citizens." or "They consider themselves Iranian citizens and they want their own rights. Iranians collect taxes from us, that is why they consider themselves as the first citizens", 2) Some other teachers said, "They considered themselves as second citizens and were upset and compared themselves with happy Iranian children, and saw themselves as involved in supporting their families" or "they usually consider themselves a level lower than Iranians" 3) some other teachers said, "Afghan students see Iran as a passing place and are not 100% satisfied living in Iran." Another female teacher said, "One teacher may tolerate the harsh behavior of some Afghan students, but not another one. Sometimes teachers face harsh behavior of Afghan students." Another teacher said, "They see themselves as guests in Iran and are not comfortable, and do not consider Iran as their home". It seems that Afghan students' perception of the concept of citizenship in Iran falls into three categories, they consider themselves as first-class citizens in Iran, second-class citizens in Iran, and look Iran as a place of transition, which shows that they don't have any attachment to Iran in order to consider themselves as first or second citizens.

4-8. the dissatisfaction of parents of Iranian students

Investigations showed that female English teachers in girls' schools did not notice the Iranian parents' dissatisfaction with the presence of Afghan students in schools. As one of the teachers said, "I did not see Iranian parents having a problem". But in boys' schools, some teachers have stated that they have noticed the dissatisfaction of Iranian parents. For instance, a teacher stated that "Yes, I heard that some Iranian parents said that they did not register their children to other schools as the result of a large number of Afghan students there." Finally, it can be said that the parents of Iranian students in girls' schools have not expressed dissatisfaction with the presence of Afghan students, but this dissatisfaction has been observed to some extent in boys' schools.

4-9. the dissatisfaction of school principals

In the girls' schools, the English language teachers did not notice any dissatisfaction from the school administrators regarding the presence of Afghan students, one of the teachers in the girls' school stated that "I did not see the particular problem. Our best children are Afghans". There was only one report in girl school regarding hygiene, "The principal always asked Afghan students to take a shower, and clean under their fingernails." In boys' schools, teachers gave different answers regarding the dissatisfaction of the school principals, for example, "No, we didn't have any dissatisfaction at all" or "It definitely was." Based on the answers, it can be concluded that the principals in the girls' schools were not dissatisfied with the presence of the students, and just asked them to take care of their hygiene, but in the boys' schools there were two categories that some principals had no problem with the presence of the Afghan male students and some have had dissatisfaction with the presence of Afghan students.

5. Economy component

The sub-components of the "Economy" sub-component include the cost of education, poverty, and child labor.

5-1. the cost of education

One of the teachers said, "Their school is public and there is no registration fee." It says that sometimes parents, both Iranian and Afghan help schools financially. Afghan students afford the normal expenses of school. Normally principals of schools provide financial support to needy students with the help of benefactors for both Iranians and Afghans.

5-2. *Poverty*

Regarding poverty, the teachers stated that they did not notice poverty among Afghan students considering their appearance and the style of their clothes. One of the male teachers said that "It is because everyone in an Afghan family works, therefore they are not poor", on the other hand, one of the female teachers said that "It is possible, but the children are independent and I do not know, because everyone looks the same." only one of the female teachers pointed out that when I wanted to order a supplementary book for them, some of them asked for a discount." As it seems, poverty is not considered as one of the important sub-components in the educational challenges of Afghan students.

5-3. *Child labor*

According to the teachers, there are some Afghan students who work after school. Most families live in places where their children can go to school and work at the same time. One of the female teachers said that "Most of the children work either in production or tailoring workshops." They go directly to the workplace after school, or they work at home," or another said, "Yes, in our school there are many who work, but not all. They go to work in the afternoon and work as doctor's secretaries, or sellers. One of the male teachers noted that the students work in the "tailoring, pottery, and glass workshops" after school. Another male teacher said that "They try to live somewhere to work and study, but their first priority is to work, the number of children in the family is large, and they cannot make ends meet by just the salary of their father." According to the statement, it was found that among Afghan students in high school (junior and senior), there are children who work after school, both among girls and boys. But their type of work is different from each other. Girls work as doctor's secretaries, sellers or in clothes production or tailoring workshops, or work at home—like cleaning vegetables. But the boys are busy in tailoring workshops, pottery making, or buying scraps.

4. **Conclusion**

This part follows by introducing the research problem, discussion part, and conclusion. One of the countries that Afghans choose to immigrate to is Iran. The children of these immigrants are in need of education, therefore, preparations were made for the education of these children in Iran. Reza Dost (1401) noted, "Before the recent political changes in Afghanistan, about 500,000 students were studying in Iranian schools, after these changes, the number increased to 700 students."

The presence of this number of Afghan children in Iran shows the necessity of examining their educational challenges. Considering the sensitivity of the teenage period and Afghan students' interest in learning English language skills, this research intends to examine the educational challenges of these students from the perspective of English language teachers in Iranian high schools. This research is qualitative and its kind is deductive. Data analysis has been done by the use of Braun and Clarke's thematic method (2006).

The tool was the semi-structured interview, whose questions were based on components extracted from the theoretical foundations of migration, and relevant studies, especially the research of Sadegh Mousavi et al. (2019), Shishgaran and Haji Dehabadi (2018) and Songhori et al. (2015). Guba and Lincoln indices (1994, quoted by Mohsenpour, 2013) were used to validate the components. The reliability of these components was examined by sociology professors and finally five components "cultural", "academic", "administrative", "social" and "economic" were considered to examine the challenges. Apart from the "administrative" component all others include some sub-components.

Investigations showed that many components and sub-components of educational challenges are the same among Afghan male and female students, but in some cases, differences have appeared.

Several sub-components were defined in the cultural component. The two parts can be discussed in language e sub-component—Persian language and English language. It was determined that Afghan students do not have any problems in Persian language skills, just some of them have different accents which refer to the part

they lived in Afghanistan. In the English language section, they are divided into two categories, those who are in a high level of English language skills, and those who are very poor. According to the teachers, there was no middle level, neither among girls nor boys. Of course, the role of private English institutes is worthy of consideration, moreover, since some Afghan students are eager to immigrate to European countries, they pay special attention to learning English language skills. English teachers did not report any particular religious difference between students in the class. They noted it is because our subject is mostly technical and did not address religious issues. Regarding clashes between Iranian students with Afghans, it was noted that Iranian students have accepted Afghan students to a large extent, and there is rarely an inappropriate interaction between students. But in boy schools clashes between Iranian and Afghan students have been observed. Iranian teachers did not have any different attitudes towards Afghan students in classes, but they believed that if the number of teachers and classes could be increased there would be a balance between the teaching time per week and the number of students. In such conditions, teachers could pay more attention to the educational progress of both Afghan and Iranian students, and help them to solve their problems in class. Of course, the teachers knew that the Afghans are calm and try to get marks and some good marks in any way. Regarding culture, Afghan students had different views some want to look Iranian and consider themselves Iranians, and some were not interested in Iranian culture, nor Afghan culture, but were interested in European countries. Scholars in the education field consider multicultural education, especially in host countries. Imani (2015) in his research states in the case of migration, multicultural education should be taken into consideration in order to provide services with regard to cultural diversity and to prevent the confrontation of different cultures. Ashuri and Sadeghi (2019) also emphasized on teaching multicultural components to primary school students in order to improve multicultural literacy. These two scholars came to the conclusion that teaching multicultural components has increased multicultural literacy in "peaceful coexistence" and "increasing understanding and tolerance" more than other issues.

It was found that regarding the academic component, the majority of Afghan parents did not pay much attention to the academic progress of their students, but they go to school to get the report card if they are asked. The level of education of Afghan parents was low or illiterate. Afghan students also had no problem with the content of English language textbooks, regarding the situation of dropping out of school, according to the experience of English language teachers, it can be said that most of them did not drop out of school, they normally try hard to get their diploma anyway, unless they plan to get married or are forced to drop out of school due to family financial problems. It is noted that interruption in education was not common during high school period, but there were a few Afghan students who did not attend in classes for one year but returned to school again the next year to continue their education. Regarding the cognitive skills of Afghan students, It is found that Afghan students were either very good or very weak in learning English language skills, according to the majority of teachers, there was no middle level among them. At the beginning of the academic year, Afghan students, like other Iranian students, did not have the necessary preparation to start the new grade due to the school summer vacation, especially considering the Corona issue, so the teachers had to remind them of the basic points of the previous years. Another important point is that they did not move from one school to the other, most of them continued their education in the same school, except in the necessary cases when the father of the family had to move to another place or city to another work. Afghan students did not have many administrative challenges for registration. The administrators' perspective of Afghan students is among the sub-components of the social component. Based on what English teachers said the female students were divided into two categories, those who were studying hard and willing to continue their education in Iran or other European countries, and those who were weak in their education and did not imagine any future regarding education. These students were more willing to get a diploma and start working, either in Iran or if possible in European countries. In general, female students were more interested in continuing their studies even out of Iran. Regarding their future career, Afghan students were divided into three categories, those who wanted to enter the market immediately after receiving the diploma, those who wanted to immigrate to other countries, and those who wanted to get a suitable job in other countries through

education. Regarding the sub-component of delinquency and victimization, it should be noted that delinquent students are actually the victimized ones who have committed illegal activities due to the circumstances. Among the female students, no delinquency or victimization was observed by the English teachers, but the male teachers had heard of a few cases such as buying and selling drugs and consuming them. This finding is in fact in line with Hirschi's theory, he has proposed in his comprehensive social control theory that the probability of committing criminal acts is lower among people who belong to social groups such as family, school, etc. (Vold, 2008).

On the other hand, Mahdavi and Sharifi Raini (2017) made the connection between delinquency and the process of socialization. They said that paying attention to the education of Afghan children in internalizing values and also the process of socialization of these children should be properly formed so that in the future and at the ages of adolescence, and youth, they should not be considered as a threat to the health and safety of society. That is why they pointed out that these children need the necessary education to reach a higher level of literacy and culture. In this way, they do not feel inferior to their Iranian peers and do not engage in norm-breaking and delinquent actions.

Mahdavi Thabit et al. (2019) have pointed out in their research that in the criminal policy of the United States, preventive social programs such as teaching children's social skills, school management, classroom management, reorganization of school levels or their classes and increasing self-control that follows from cognitive behaviors or behavioral instructional methods are considered. In Canada, it is done with child crime prevention programs such as daily child care and parenting skills training with children. In Iran, prevention programs are implemented in schools, organizations, cultural institutions, social partnerships and associations, and NGOs as well.

Tehran Correctional Center is a place for the maintenance, reformation, and education of delinquents who are less than 18 years of age. About 30 percent of the 148 children in this center were Afghans¹ in 2018. This percentage of Afghan children was just in the Tehran Correctional Center, which is not a small number. It is somehow inconsistent with the findings of this study, which considers a small number of Afghan students to be delinquents. Of course, due to the complexity of the issue, it should be taken into account that the teachers' point of view refers to those Afghans who registered in English public Iranian schools and to some extent socialized with Iranian society. It is not clear what percentage of these Afghan children in Correctional Center are among Children enrolled in schools. That is why there is a need for other researchers to investigate this issue.

Female students mostly wore uniforms like Iranian students while attending school, and male students dress like Iranians as well. Regarding isolation, it was found that some Afghan students feel isolated in schools. In terms of marriage, the school principals should be very careful since some Afghan girls run away to marry an Afghan guy who cannot afford to pay the asked amount of money to braid's family.

Citizenship is another sub-component that is concerned in this study. It was found that some Afghan students consider themselves first-class Iranian citizens, second-class citizens, and some do not care about the issue of citizenship in Iran because they consider life in Iran to be temporary and intend to immigrate to European countries. Reza Dost (1401) also pointed out that "Afghan immigrants and refugees use Iran as a transit route to Europe in order to reach European countries. In fact, the Islamic Republic of Iran has borne the costs of Europe in maintaining immigrants and asylum seekers in the country. Parents of Iranian students in girls' schools have not expressed dissatisfaction with the presence of Afghan students, but this dissatisfaction has been observed to some extent in boys' schools. Regarding the satisfaction of administrators in high school, it was said that some administrators did not make any difference between Iranian and Afghan students, and some were dissatisfied with the presence of Afghan students.

¹ <https://www.irna.ir/news/-access2/10/2023>

Considering the economic component, it was found that Afghan students do not have much problem spending their education expenses, and poverty was not seen much among students. Regarding child labor, the teachers said that a significant number of boys are working in various centers such as sewing workshops, pottery, and bazaar after the hours of education in schools. Girls are also busy as doctor's secretaries or sellers or working at home (cleaning vegetables). Researchers do not have a positive view of the child labor issue. Shah Mardi (1999) considers child labor to be an obstacle to the growth and flourishing of children's talent and creativity, and it hinders the excellence of children's human personalities and endangers the future of society. It is considered that "child labor is a symbol of the lack of responsibility and commitment of micro and macro social systems, intra-border and trans-border to children's rights". Bagheri Todashki (2013) mentions that the harmful effects of working children do not remain in the same period of childhood and will continue until adulthood, and as a result, society will be deprived of many efficient and competent people.

It can be concluded that Afghan students are interested in learning English and its skills, which is why it is necessary to take advantage of the presence of English teachers in reducing the educational challenges of students. This can be achieved by holding compensatory classes by these teachers themselves. This leads to more social communication between students and their English language teachers and to a large extent causes a kind of social control in preventing the occurrence of delinquency and victimization. It is also suggested that the English language curriculum should pay attention to multiculturalism and anti-racism, and the necessary programs to familiarize school administrators, parents of students, teachers, and Iranian students, as well as parents of Afghan students and the students themselves should be provided. The issue of multiculturalism should be formulated in order to accept the multicultural debate and mutual respect for each other, and also make an effort for peaceful coexistence and the promotion of understanding and tolerance.

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