

Psychological Impact of Taliban's Religious Police on Female Students in Bamyan City: A Study from 2021-2024

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ABSTRACT

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With the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 and the re-establishment of their Islamic Emirate, female students were introduced to the term "Religious Police". The activity of this police is focused on monitoring the performance of people and propagation and prevention of them by the values and orders of the Taliban. The purpose of this article is to explore the psychological impacts of the Taliban's religious police on female students in Bamyan City from 2021-2024. A qualitative method was used in this research and data was obtained through the analysis of interviews with three psychologists and questionnaires from 33 Female Students in Bamyan city. The questionnaires for this research were set up online through Google and were given to respondents using the "convenience sampling" method. The findings of this research showed that the restrictions applied by the Taliban's religious police have caused many mental disorders in female students. When they are faced with the Taliban's religious police, palpitations, pallor, tremor, and stuttering are the most important symptoms that appear to them. Right now, many Female Students in Bamyan City are struggling with insomnia, anhedonia, hopelessness, depression, loss of control, low self-esteem, and pessimism due to facing the Taliban's religious police.

Keywords:

Propagation of Virtue, Prevention of Vice, Religious Police, Taliban, Female Student.

1- Introduction

Since August 15, 2021, the de facto government of the Taliban has ruled Afghanistan for the second time.¹ In the first days of its government, it announced the cancellation of the last constitution of Afghanistan. It thus declared its deep opposition to the citizen's rights and fundamental rights of Afghan citizens. Although this government has maintained many of the structures of the executive branch of the government by the 2004 constitution, it has declared its strong opposition to institutions defending the rights of women and girls, such as the Independent Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, in the same vein closed these institutions. The Taliban prevented women from attending many governmental offices and limited girls' education to 6th grade. In addition, the Taliban declared women's voices as private parts and forbade them to look at Sharia non-Mahram². According to the Taliban, "Whenever an adult woman leaves her house for a necessary need, she has to cover her voice, face, and body" (The Law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, 2024: Article 13). The Taliban government has classified women's voices as specific vices outside the house, and they consider it to be prevented (Ibid, 2024: Article 22, paragraph 10).

From the very beginning of their government, the Taliban formed special forces under the title of "Religious Police" to implement their vision regarding women, and to implement this, they created a ministry entitled "Ministry of propagation of virtue, prevention of vice and hearing complaints". To legitimize the administration of this ministry, the Taliban government arranged a special law in an introduction, four chapters, and 35 articles. According to the sentence of the Taliban leader, this law was officially published by the Ministry of Justice of the Taliban on July 31, 2024, and the "Ministry of Propagation of Virtue, prevention of Vice and Hearing Complaints" is responsible for implementing its sentences to all citizens of the country (The Law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, 2024: Article 4 and 5). According to this law, women are not allowed to go out without hijab and without their Sharia Mahram, drivers are not allowed to transport women without Sharia Mahram. Furthermore, the mixing and sitting together of men and women have also been strictly prohibited (Ibid., 1403: Article 20).

The ratification of this law by the leader of the Taliban was met with clear opposition from various human rights institutions and countries. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Annalena Baerbock described this law as "about 100 pages of hate against women" and added that this law deprives Afghan women of their dignity, rights, and voice. In agreement with Ms. Baerbock, human rights defenders, international organizations, the European Union, NATO, and the United States called the existence of such

¹ The Taliban's first period in power lasted from September 1996 to December 2001.

² Sharia Mahram are the relatives with whom marriage is not allowed in Islam and wearing hijab is not necessary in front of them.

a law an insult to basic human rights¹. However, for over three years, the Taliban has applied many restrictions on girls and women in Afghanistan, even in the absence of the above-mentioned law. From August 2021 to now, the religious police of the Taliban have been monitoring all the activities of women and girls, including clothing and makeup in public places, governmental offices, universities, and schools. Their opposition to the presence of girls in universities and schools goes to the extent that currently, those female students who graduated from educational institutions before the Taliban came to power, are not allowed to attend the educational institutions to go through the procedures for attaining their certificates. They have asked them to send their fathers or brothers to universities and schools to attain their certificates. The unprecedented implementation of such restrictions has imposed many psychological and mental disturbances on the girls and women of Afghanistan.² In the meantime, after closing the doors of schools and universities, Female students and university students have had the most exposure to the forces of the Taliban religious police. This research is determined to explore the psychological impacts of the activities of the religious police on Female Students and university students, to discover how much, it has affected the psyche of female students in Bamyan city.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Research

The Taliban government is the caliphate version of the Islamic government and they consider the implementation of Islamic principles as one of the main goals of their government. According to sociologists: in governments whose main claim is to implement religious sentences over all affairs of a society, social supervision and control are considered as of its basic functions. Because one of the main concerns of religions is monitoring and controlling people's affairs. In other words, religion plays an important role in controlling society by bolding important values and norms and holding people responsible for their common destiny. From the point of view of some sociologists, religious governments try to control society by strengthening the important and basic values and norms that are directly tied to their collective destiny; not by applying violence and force to the members of a society creating difficulties and affecting their collective destiny.³ (Cosser, 2000: 200).

1. Kawa, Amin. (1403). "Reactions to the Taliban law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice". 8 Sobh Daily Newspaper, available in the following link:
<https://8am.media/fa/reactions-to-the-law-of-enjoining-the-good-and-prohibiting-the-evil-of-the-taliban-it-is-a-horror-letter-insulting-human-dignity/>

². According to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024), the newly enacted law has led to feelings of hopelessness, depression, and anger among girls and women in Afghanistan. This commissioner adds that one-fifth of people in Afghanistan suffer from severe mental problems.

³. By proposing the law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the Taliban has determined to forcefully implement values, many of which threaten the collective fate of half of the Afghanistan people. The Taliban's approach is far away from the path of strengthening Islamic values and norms and persuading people to accept Islamic rules and is a concrete example of violating the Holy Qur'an. It is stated in the Holy Quran: "There is no compulsion in religion" (Surah Al-Baqarah: verse 256). This verse clearly states that there is no compulsion in the religion [Islam]. However, Islam has a completely fair view of women's rights,

In the third article of The Law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the Taliban discussed the terminology of some terms related to the activities of religious police. In this article, religious police called Muhtasabeen [plural form of Muhtasab] are said to be a person or persons who have been given the authority by the leader of the Taliban to propagate virtue and prevent vice. This law defines virtue as a word or action that is considered good by Sharia, and in the same way, vice is the opposite of virtue and refers to a word or action that is considered bad by Sharia. In this way, according to the mentioned law, propagation of virtue is defined as “commanding the followers of the prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, and to follow the Sharia” and prevention of vice is defined as “forbidding the perpetration of vices” (The Law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, 1403: Article 3). Thus, what we know as the religious police are people in white clothes who are in charge of monitoring the behavior and actions of citizens and imposing severe restrictions on their lives; which have especially affected the lives of women and girls.

3. Literature Review

With the implementation of the Law on propagation of virtue and prevention of vice, the consequences of this law and the activities of the Taliban’s religious police gained widespread attention in academic and media circles, institutions and social networks, provoking numerous protests and objections. Most world leaders and human rights organizations voiced their opposition to the ratification and enforcement of this law within the framework of a declaration. United Nations organizations such as United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have studied the consequences of the implementation of the law on propagation of virtue and prevention of vice. In the latest report published by the United Nations High Commissioner on October 10, 2024, it shows that half of the population of Afghanistan is affected by mental anxieties. Also, the subject of the activities of the religious police is regularly reported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), which is published monthly under the title “Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan”. For instance, we can refer to the reports published by these two organizations in April and June 2024 and October and December 2023. In all these reports, the situation of women’s human rights has been specifically addressed and it has been stated that “the authorities of the ruling power continue to apply and announce restrictions on women’s rights to work, education and freedom of movement...” (UNAMA, 2023: 2).

especially their right to education, and education has been suggested for both men and women without exception. But the Taliban government believes in a strict reading of Islam; However, if we look at the issue correctly, the Taliban have a completely wrong interpretation of Islam, because nowhere in Quran or other reliable sources of Islam; the education of women is prohibited, but wherever it is mentioned, it uses a general term that can be applied to men and women. Their religious police, in order to implement their rulings, especially the ban on women’s education, which are against the general principles of Islam.

The Afghanistan Women's News Agency (AWNA) also published research in March 2024 under the title "Study of the Mental and Psychological State of Female Students after the Closure of Universities and Schools in Afghanistan". In this research, 45 female students were interviewed and they were specifically asked about education after the return of the Taliban, and whether or not they should seek help from a psychologist according to the impacts which they have suffered due to this situation. The findings of this research show a 50% increase in mental illnesses among girls in the last two years. In this research, there is no mention of female students encounters with religious police and the consequences of their activities on girls. Therefore, except the latest report of the United Nations High Commissioner regarding the psychological impacts of the activities of religious police, other researches of the mentioned organizations have raised the issue of the effects of the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women and girls in general. No one has specifically examined the psychological effects of the activities of the religious police on girls. It can be said that the present research is considered to be one of the first research that has investigated the psychological effects of the activities of the religious police on school students in Bamyan City.

4. Research Hypotheses

1. It seems that the activities of the religious police have increased the level of anxiety and stress among female students in Bamyan city.
2. It seems that the restrictions imposed by religious police in Bamyan city have led to an increase in hopelessness and depression among female students in this city.
3. It seems that the activities of religious police have led to a decrease in the self-esteem and self-efficacy of female students in Bamyan city.
4. It seems that most of the female students in Bamyan city have the experience of facing the Taliban religious police and they live in fear of facing them again.

5. Research Methodology

In this research, a qualitative method was employed. The data of this research was gathered using a questionnaire containing eighteen questions and an interview with three psychologists containing six questions. The questionnaire was designed in two formats: the first part comprised seventeen closed-ended questions where respondents were asked to select their preferred options. The second part included one open-ended question where respondents could share their opinions. After drafting, the questionnaire was reviewed by one specialist who has several years of experience as a psychologist in Bamyan city. Based on her feedback, the questionnaire was finalized and set up in an online Google form.

Considering current security issues, the questionnaires were distributed to female students in Bamyan city through messaging apps. Responders were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire, and ultimately,

the collected data were analyzed using Excel and SPSS software; the results were presented descriptively. The interviews of this research with psychologists in Bamyan City were also conducted online through the Zoom platform, and the data obtained from the interviews has been analyzed according to the dimensions and axes proposed in the general framework of this research.

The statistical population of this research consists of female students above the sixth grade who have not been able to continue their education after the Taliban imposed restrictions. It was supposed to give several questionnaires to female students who were between the ages of 13 and 18, but due to compliance with the conventions related to children's rights¹ and the necessity of their parent's permission, questionnaires were not distributed to female students under 18 years of age. Hence, questionnaires were distributed to students over 18 years old.

Using the "convenience sampling" method, we managed to distribute the questionnaires to 41 female students. Ultimately, after the specific period, 33 questionnaires were collected, 12 respondents (36.33%) were aged between 18-20 years, 10 respondents (30.33%) were aged between 21-33 years, and 11 respondents (33.33%) were aged more than 24 years. Three respondents (9.1%) were busy studying online, 25 respondents (75.75%) said that their education was postponed, and 5 respondents (15.1%) had left education and were busy with everyday life. Also, we conducted interviews with three women² who work as psychologists in Bamyan city.

6. Research Findings

In this research, relying on the personal experiences of the authors, the opinions of the aforementioned expert, and the review of the sources that we mentioned in section three, several psychological factors were provided to the responders in the form of the questionnaire. These psychological factors show the impacts of the activities of the Taliban's religious police on female students. In this research, all psychological factors were divided into three parts: 1- Anxiety and Stress; 2- Depression and Hopelessness; and 3- Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy. In addition, the experiences of facing religious police were also considered as one of the main parts. The total of these parts and details are listed in table number (1):

¹. The requirement for parental consent to research minors is recorded in many legal documents, the most significant of which include:

A) Convention on the Rights of the Child: "No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his/her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his/her honor and reputation. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks." (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989: article 16).

B) Declaration of Helsinki: "For a potential research subject who is incapable of giving informed consent, the physician must seek informed consent from the legally authorized representative. These groups should not be included in research unless the research is necessary to promote the health of the population represented and this research cannot instead be performed on legally competent persons." (Declaration of Helsinki, 1964: part 25).

C) UNICEF Ethical Guidelines for Research with Children: "All research involving children must ensure that the rights and well-being of children are respected and protected. Parental or guardian consent must be obtained when children cannot provide informed consent themselves." (UNICEF Ethical Guidelines for Research with Children, 2015: part 1).

². Considering current security issues they are referred by nickname throughout this research.

Table 1: All Parts of Psychological Impacts of Religious Police on Female Students

No.	Experiences of Facing Religious Police	Anxiety and Stress	Depression and Hopelessness	Self-Steem and Self-Efficacy
1	Number of Times Facing Religious Police	Increase in Stress Levels upon Leaving the House due to the potential Facing Religious Police	The Extent of Increased Hopelessness and Depression due to the Preventing of Education	The Rate of Decreased Self-Steem
2	The Objective of Religious Police Encounters with Female Students	Behavioral Changes in Public Places due to Fear of Facing the Religious Police	The Reduction in Future Success Prospects	The Occurrence of Feelings of Incapacity in Solving Life's Problems and Challenges
3	Type of Emotion While Female Students Facing Religious Police	Physical Symptoms of Anxiety when Female Students Facing Religious Police	The Occurrence of Depressive Symptoms such as Excessive Fatigue, Reduced Interest in Activities, and a Diminished Sense of Self-Worth	The Occurrence of Feelings of Self-Doubt and Pessimism
4		Consequences of Facing Religious Police	The Extent of Feeling a Lack of Control over One's Life and Personal Decisions	The Reduction in Motivation to Strive for and Achieve Future Success

In order to clarify the psychological impacts of the activities of the Taliban's religious police on female students against all the factors listed in the table above as main parts of psychological impacts, we suggested a list of psychological impact signs to all respondents and they be able to choose their desired signs freely. Meanwhile, five options Likert was also used. Five options were placed so that each respondent indicate to the impacts of the activities of religious police to themselves as "Very much", "Much", "Medium", "Little" and "Very Little".

In the interviews that have been conducted with practicing psychologists, questions were asked about the psychological impacts of the activities of religious police on female students in Bamyan city. Interviewees told sad stories about the current situation of female students. They described the mental state of female students in three words: Fear, Hopelessness, and lack of Self-Confidence. According to interviewees believe, disengagement from educational institutions, restrictions on the clothing and grooming of girls and restricting them from going out and traveling, which has aggravated depression among female students. Interviewees in Bamyan city shared the experiences of their clients in the interview. According to them, many female students are experienced sleep disorder and chronic headaches after they faced religious police. What the respondents have told in response to the questions that have been provided in open-ended form is consistent with the narrative of the interviewees. In the following, we examine the parts that we

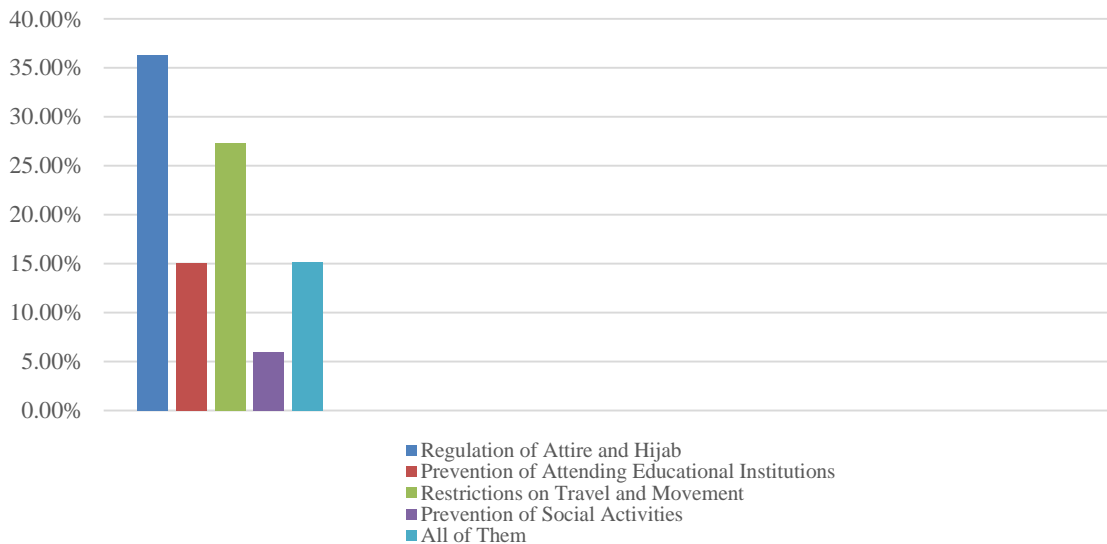
have identified regarding the psychological impacts of the activities of religious police on female students under separate sections.

6.1. Experiences of Facing Religious Police

In this section, the respondents were first asked to share the number of facing they had with religious police. Based on respondents, 24.3% (8 individuals) once, 21.2% (7 individuals) two times, 21.2% (7 individuals) three times, and 33.3% (11 individuals) more than three times have faced religious police. When the respondents were asked about the purpose of the confrontation of religious police with them. Among the respondents, 36.3% (12 individuals) regulation of attire and hijab, 15.1% (5 individuals) prevention from attending educational institutions, 27.3% (9 individuals) Restrictions on travel and movement, 6% (2 individuals) prevention of social activities, and 15.2% (5 individuals) have said all the mentioned criteria as the purpose of confronting religious police.

In this way, the respondents were asked about the negative feelings they experienced facing religious police. Among the respondents to this question; 30.3% (10 individuals) sense of fear, 30.3% (10 individuals) stress and pressure, 33.3% (11 individuals) feelings shame, stress, and fear. Among them, 6% (2 individuals) of the respondents did not experience any negative feelings after facing religious police. The result of this investigation can be seen in Figure (1).

Figure 1: The Objective of Religious Police Encounters with Female Students



The interviewees also have had the experience of facing religious police several times. One of the interviewee's narration is as follows:

My first facing was in the Kota-e Sangi¹ Area, this is one of my worst memories. I was on my way when one of the religious police passed by me and hit me on the back with a whip. I suddenly experienced severe pain and rage. My whole being trembled from the impatience, and anger had taken my throat. I did not understand at all what my sin was. The shopkeepers around were looking at me strangely and saying that he whipped me because I wasn't wearing a mask. From now on, even when I hear the name of the religious police, my body trembles, and I feel fear and anxiety.

Most of the interviewees, narrate the same narrative with a slight change of facing Taliban religious police. The interviewees, who work as psychologists in Bamyan city, believe that such a treatment is so unpleasant for them, who are adults, let alone to examine the effect of such a procedure on the psyche of girls under 18 years old. They believe that We will certainly reach some terrible findings.

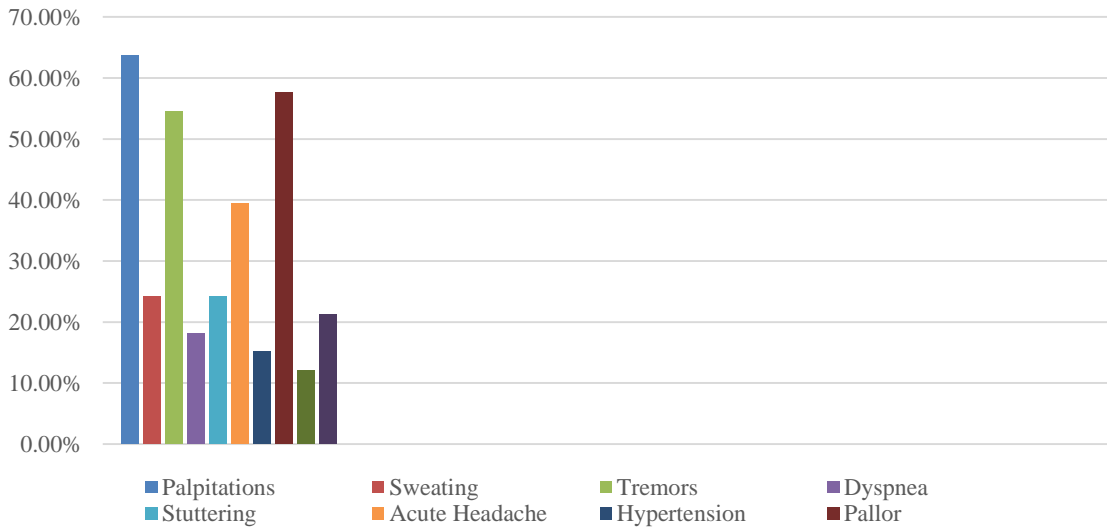
6.2. Anxiety and Stress

The presence of religious police has significantly increased the level of anxiety and stress among female students in Bamyan province. Among the participants in this research, 45.5% (15 individuals) have emphasized “very much” that they experience severe anxiety and stress when leaving home due to the possibility of facing religious police. Among the respondents, 27.3% (9 individuals) are “much”, and 24.2% (8 individuals) to some extent pointed out that they are under pressure and stress when facing religious police, and 3% (1 individual) of the respondents said that does not feel stressed or anxious while leaving the house and the possibility of facing religious police.

In addition, 48.5% (16 individuals) of the respondents have changed their behavior “very much” due to the fear of dealing with religious police in public places and according to the willingness of Taliban to wear Hijab and not go out of the house without sharia Mahram. Among them, 39.4% (13 individuals) have changed their behavior “much”, 6% (2 individuals) have changed their behavior to some extent, and only 6% (2 individuals) have said that they are still against the willingness of Taliban and have accepted the risk of not being accompanied by their sharia Mahram during their trips; nevertheless, female students have bitter experiences of facing Taliban's religious police. Figure (2) shows the result obtained in this regard.

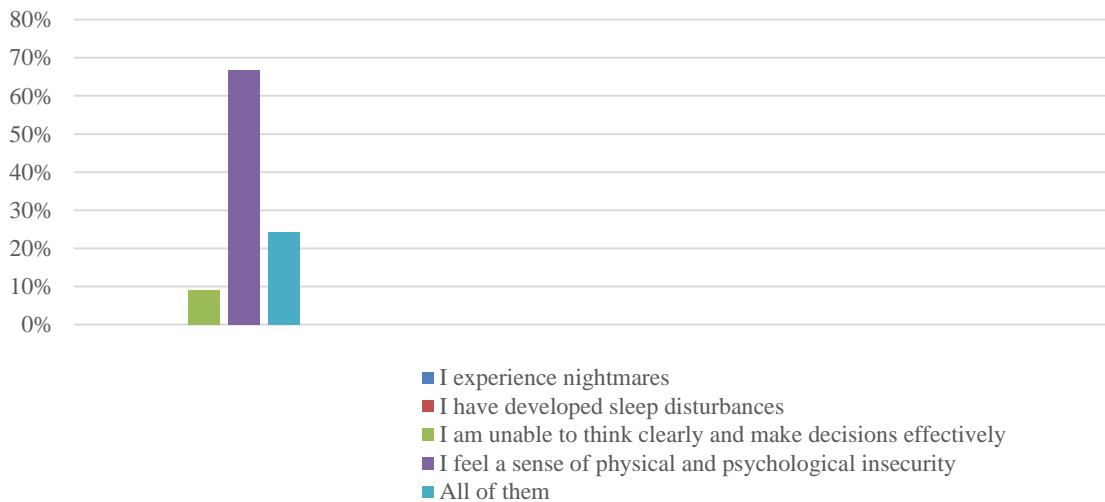
¹. One of the busy areas at the beginning of West Kabul

Figure 2: Physical Symptoms of Anxiety when Female Students facing Religious Police



Based on the above figure, 63.6% (21 individuals) of the respondents have experienced an increase of palpitations while facing religious police. Similarly, 24.2% (8 individuals) sweating, 54.5% (18 individuals) tremors, 18.1% (6 individuals) dyspnea, 24.2% (8 individuals) stuttering, 39.4% (13 individuals) acute headache, 15.2% (5 individuals) hypertension, 57.6% (19 individuals) pallor, 12.1% (4 individuals) muscle spasms, and 21.2% (7 individuals) chest pain as physical symptoms of stress and anxiety when facing religious police of the Taliban. Facing religious police, in addition to the symptoms of immediate stress and anxiety, has led to certain consequences among female students as well. So, the most important consequences are reflected in Figure (3).

Figure 3: Consequences of Facing Religious Police



Based on the contents of the above figure, it can be seen that 66.7% (22 individuals) of the respondents suffer from severe physical and mental insecurity after facing religious police. Also, 9.1% (3 individuals) of the respondents have lost their ability to make individual decisions and said that they cannot think properly. Among them, 24.2% (8 individuals) of the respondents reported nightmares, sleep disturbances, loss of decision-making power, and a feeling of physical and psychological insecurity as the consequences of facing religious police.

The interviewees also mentioned Pallor, increased Palpitations, Tremors, Hypertension, and sweating are the symptoms that the female students experienced while talking to religious police. As one of the respondents said; “All the girls, including myself, have a terrifying image of religious police in our minds. Even if our hijab is complete; we still feel a sense of fear. This has prevented us from feeling safe in society and constantly living with anxiety and stress.”

6.3. Depression and Hopelessness

Depression and hopelessness are the most common effects that the presence of religious police has had on female students. According to the interviewees, hopelessness, and lack of positive perspective for the future are the only words that female students are concerned with. These psychologists describe the mental health of girls in Bamyán city as critical. One of the interviewees, quoting from their client: “Since the Taliban came to power in the country, I wish for death every day.” This interviewee emphasized many times in their speech that many of the girls who visit them at least have thought about suicide one time. In addition, not allowing girls to study higher than elementary school, has brought a completely unfavorable and dark future for girls and caused them to lose their passion for education. One of the participants in this research expressed hopelessness and regret that “maybe I won’t see the university again...” One of the interviewees, who also works as a teacher, talked about the hopelessness of girls in the current situation like this:

I am a teacher, after the closure of the schools, the girls are in hopelessness. We teach female students above grade seven in the form of a course, but their motivation is very little compared to previous years. When I tell them to study, they say to which hope we should study. We can’t participate in Kankur¹. Work outside. So why do we study? Unfortunately, one of them committed suicide last year. Nilofar was in the 11th grade of the school. She was one of the distinguished students of her class. When I searched for the reason for her suicide, it was because of the school issue. Nilofar wanted to become a doctor and she buried her dream with herself.

The data obtained from the questionnaires also show a significant increase in the level of depression and hopelessness among the respondents. In such way that, among the participants in this research, 97% (32

¹ Entrance exam to university.

individuals) have emphasized “very much” and “much” that due to the ban on education and learning, the continuous supervision of religious police on their behavior and their activities; they have lost their hope for the future and severe depression symptoms threaten them. The participants in this research were also asked about decreasing success rates in the future. In response to this question, 84.8% (28 individuals) said “very much” and “much”, 9.1% (3 individuals) said to some extent, and 6.06% (2 individuals) said “little” and “very little”. Among the respondents, 81.8% (27 individuals) said that they have symptoms of depression such as excessive fatigue, decreased interest in activities, and self-worthlessness. Among them, only 18.2% (6 individuals) said that they had less depression symptoms. The results obtained in this regard can be seen in the table below.

Table 2: The Rate of Increased Hopelessness and Depression Among Female Students Due to Constant Surveillance by Religious Police

Factor	Response	Number of Respondent	Percentage
The extent of increased hopelessness and depression due to restrictions on education and learning	Little and very Little	0	0%
	To some Extent	1	3%
	Much and very Much	32	97%
The decrease in future success rates	Little and very Little	2	6.06%
	To some Extent	3	9.1%
	Much and very Much	28	84.8%
The prevalence of depressive symptoms, such as extreme fatigue, loss of interest in activities, and feelings of worthlessness	Little and very Little	0	0%
	To some Extent	6	18.2%
	Much and very Much	27	81.8%
The degree of perceived lack of control over one’s life and personal decisions	Little and very Little	2	6.06%
	To some Extent	7	21.2%
	Much and very Much	24	72.7%

Based on the content of the above table: Another significant consequence of the actions imposed by the Taliban’s *religious police* on female students in Bamyán city is the erosion of autonomy over personal life and individual decision-making. Due to the enforcers’ extensive interference in the personal affairs of these students, 72.7% (24 individuals) in this research confirmed, to a “very much” or “much” degree, their perceived lack of control over their personal lives and individual decisions. In addition, 21.2% (7 individuals) to some extent, and 6.06% (2 individuals) said “little” and “very little” about the lack of control over their lives and individual decision-making.

6.4. Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Self-esteem and self-efficacy are two important notions that are related to the level of valuing and respect of people towards themselves in psychological literature. That is to say, self-esteem and self-efficacy are

an indication of the degree to which a person sees themselves as an important and valuable person and is aware of his efficiency and usefulness as a member of society regardless of special abilities or achievements, he considers themselves an efficient and respectable person in the society (Rahmati, 1403). The interviewees in this research believe that the constant presence of Taliban religious police lead to a decrease in self-esteem and self-efficacy among female students in Bamyan city. According one of the interviewees:

Girls and I who were studying at Bamyan University were forced to see the Taliban religious police once a week, and this caused fear and panic among everyone and caused lack of motivation in our study. And reducing our commuting in public places and establishing our social relations. These issues have had a lot of negative impacts on me. Currently, my concentration has decreased and I have low self-confidence, and because of being a girl, my self-esteem in society has decreased. It is not the end; many girls have hated their existence.

Based on the statement of the respondent above, it is clear that the feeling of pessimism is one of the obvious consequences of monitoring the religious police on the everyday life of female students. One of the participants in this research says: “I feel hopelessness when I see that the government [religious police] makes decisions for us and asks us to act according to their beliefs and laws. This is the highest level of violence and humiliation.”

This respondent considers the fact that the Taliban decides instead of them so that is equal to the lack of efficiency of girls in the society and believes that when someone else decides for us so we have no value in society. The interviewees believe that the injection of such a view by religious police has reduced self-esteem among the new generation of girls and leads to a sense of lack of self-efficacy among them. The results of investigation in this regards can be seen in the following table.

Table 3: The Extent of the Reduction in Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy due to the Interference of Religious Police in all Aspects of Life

Factor	Response	Number of Respondent	Percentage
The extent of the reduction in self-esteem	Little and very Little	3	9.1%
	To some Extent	9	27.2%
	Much and very Much	21	63.6%
Feelings of incapacity in resolving life’s problems and challenges	Little and very Little	1	3%
	To some Extent	5	15.1%
	Much and very Much	27	81.8%
Feeling of pessimistic view toward himself/herself	Little and very Little	3	9.1%
	To some Extent	5	15.1%
	Much and very Much	25	75.8%

The extent of diminished motivation to exert effort and achieve future success	Little and very Little	5	15.1%
	To some Extent	5	15.1%
	Much and very Much	23	69.7%

Based on the contents of above table, 63.6% (21 individuals) of the respondents, their self-esteem decreased “much” and “very much”. Among them, 27.2% (9 individuals) have spoken “to some extent” and 9.1% (3 individuals) have said “little” and “very little” about the decrease in their self-esteem. 81.8% (27 individuals) of the respondents said “much” and “very much”, 15.1% (5 individuals) “to some extent”, and 3% (1 individuals) said “very little” about their inability to solve their problems and challenges.

75.8% (25 individuals) said they as “much” and “very much”, 15.1% (5 individuals) said “to some extent”, and 9.1% (3 individuals) said as “little” and “very little” felt pessimistic towards themselves. In addition, 69.7% (23 individuals) said “much” and “very much”, 15.1% (5 individuals) “to some extent”, and another 15.1% (5 individuals) said “little” and “very little” that their motivation to try and achieve success in the future has decreased.

7. Discussion

The results of the research confirmed that the activities of religious police in Bamyan city have had a negative impact on the mental health of female students in this city. 97% of the respondents said that with the arrival of the Taliban, their depression and hopelessness have increased and the supervision of religious police has put their future in a halo of uncertainty. Most of the female students are afraid of encountering religious police, who are also known as “Moral Policing”, and in order not to facing them, they try to obey their orders. For example, 87.9% of the respondents in this research said that they have complied their clothing and make-up style to religious police instructions because of avoiding facing them. It is true that the continuation of the current situation will threaten the young girls’ generation in society or lead them to extremism. The opposition process of religious police with girls’ lifestyles and keeping them away from education have forced all girls to stay at home. In the first step, this will result in having a confused, tired and depressed generation for the future.

The actions of religious police have imposed harmful psychological and emotional effects on female students. In addition to feelings of anxiety, depression and hopelessness; girls in an extreme environment and social restrictions have also lost their identity. From the point of view of religious police, girls should stay in their homes and they should not be allowed to go outside and in public places. The religious police strongly believe in extremist beliefs and by generalizing these beliefs, they intend to prevent the emergence and growth of hidden talents of female students. To burden them as those who are only subordinate to men. So, the activities of religious police have led to the isolation and disconnection of girls from the society.

On the one hand, this has deprived them of society and social support, and on the other hand, it has led to the reduction of social and individual growth opportunities. Psychologists in Bamyán city have also considered anonymity, obedience to men, social isolation and deprivation of social support among the factors that have led to an increase in mental disorders among female students.

Thus, it is true that religious police in some cases do not face girls directly, their activities and programs in society increase the number of diseases and mental disorders among female students. In other words, subordination of women and girls to men, confining them at home, not allowing them to work and social activities, prohibiting education and such things that are the headlines of the actions of the Taliban; it has severely damaged their mental health and has imposed harmful and irreparable effects on their mental and emotional well-being.

And the last important point, the Taliban orders are not acceptable in a legal and logical framework. Because the Taliban declared the Afghan constitution abrogated upon arrival and acted according to its own rules. Now this group calls itself the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and claims to establish the Islamic government of Muhammad Prophet era. It has not yet been clearly determined according to which method and based on which argument they issue their codes, because even in the view of Islam there are contradictions in traditions of Muhammad Prophet, hadiths, and the opinion of contemporary scholars. So in such a situation it seems reasonable that even an Islamic government should have a comprehensive instruction¹ according to the orders of Islam, so that its actions and enacting new and normal laws are reasonable and have basis.

8. Conclusion

The first hypothesis of this research was that the religious police activities have increased the level of anxiety and stress among female students in Bamyán city. The findings and results of the research have fully confirmed this hypothesis. This research found that 72.8% of the respondent's experience severe anxiety and stress while leaving home due to the possibility of facing religious police and fear that they will face religious police on the way. In addition, 66.7% of the respondents said that they suffer from extreme physical and psychological insecurity after facing the religious police. The results of the interviews with the interviewees also indicate an increase in anxiety and stress among female students in this city. Interviewees who work as mental health counselors in Bamyán city, confirm that the mental health of female students is critical due to the confrontation with religious police, also they confirmed that the most number of people visiting their clinics are female students affected by the harsh treatment of religious police.

¹ As in the international community, two countries; Iran and Pakistan with the official names of "Islamic Republic of Iran" and "Islamic Republic of Pakistan" did this and have a constitution.

The increase in hopelessness and depression due to the confrontation with religious police and the restrictions imposed in “The Law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice” is the second hypothesis that has been completely confirmed in this research. 97% of the respondents in this research have confirmed that the orders and plans of the religious police hinder their progress and their actions have not only caused them to lose hope for a desirable future; rather it has led to severe depression among them. 81.8% of the respondents spoke about the occurrence of depression symptoms such as feeling exhausted and not interested in doing everyday activities, which all indicate the negative effects of the religious police on female students in Bamyan city.

Two other hypotheses of the research were also confirmed. The obtained data showed that the actions and performance of religious police have reduced the self-esteem of female students and led them to be pessimistic about themselves. The excessive strictness of the Taliban forces, in addition to increasing the psychological pressure on female students, has also led to the creation of a deep gender gap in the country. Right now the actions of the Taliban have caused girls and women to be considered as second-class citizens and all kinds of violence which result in the escalation of mental disorders among female students have been intensified.

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