



## The Role of Online Educational Platforms in Enhancing Women's Capacity in Afghanistan

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**Abstract.** The advancement of online educational platforms offers promising opportunities for improving educational access and empowerment, particularly for women in Afghanistan, where traditional barriers often limit their participation in formal education. This study aims to examine how online learning contributes to the educational attainment, skill development, and socio-economic empowerment of Afghan women, while also exploring the challenges they face in utilizing these platforms. A quantitative survey method was employed, gathering responses from 150 female students enrolled in an online university across four faculties: Medical, Computer Science, Education, and Economics. The participants, aged between 20 and 25 years, provided insights into their experiences with online education through structured questionnaires utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. Results reveal that a significant majority of participants acknowledged the positive impact of online platforms on their academic knowledge and skills. However, challenges such as limited internet access and inadequate digital devices were commonly reported, posing barriers to full participation. Furthermore, many women expressed increased confidence and empowerment from engaging in online education, with opportunities emerging for entrepreneurship and digital work. Cultural and family expectations were also identified as factors restricting the full benefits of online learning for some participants.

**Keywords:** Online Education, Women Empowerment, Afghanistan, Digital Learning Platforms, Educational Attainment.

### 1. Introduction

The advancement of digital technologies and the proliferation of online educational platforms have significantly transformed the landscape of education, especially in developing countries like Afghanistan. In particular, these platforms have played a pivotal role in enhancing the capacity and empowerment of women who, due to socio-cultural, political, and security constraints, often face limited access to traditional education. Online education offers Afghan women a flexible, accessible, and often safer alternative to in-person learning, allowing them to overcome barriers associated with gender norms, geographic isolation, and economic constraints [1], [6], [10].

In Afghanistan, where systemic gender inequality has historically impeded women's participation in formal education and the labor market, online educational platforms serve not only as a medium for academic growth but also as a vital tool for socio-economic empowerment [15], [19]. The integration of digital tools and virtual classrooms provides women with access to global knowledge resources, professional networks, and skill development opportunities [4], [22]. This is particularly critical in conflict-affected and conservative areas where attending physical schools or universities may be culturally or physically dangerous for women [6], [10]. Moreover, these platforms are increasingly

#### Article info

**Submitted:**

2025-3-9

**Revised:**

2025-5-29

**Accepted:**

2025-6-3



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being used to develop entrepreneurial skills and promote e-commerce among women, empowering them economically and facilitating their entry into the digital economy [1], [3], [7], [11], [12]. For example, e-learning modules in business management, digital marketing, and information technology enable women to create online businesses and gain financial independence [5], [14], [20]. This digital shift has also contributed to narrowing the gender digital divide and has promoted women's participation in national development [15], [17].

Research shows that information and communication technology (ICT) interventions, including the use of mobile learning, online courses, and virtual mentorship programs, have a profound impact on increasing women's educational outcomes and self-efficacy [8], [13], [16]. Platforms tailored for Afghan women, often provided in native languages and designed with cultural sensitivity, have proven effective in boosting engagement and retention rates [4], [17], [18]. Furthermore, the rise of artificial intelligence and smart learning environments enhances personalized learning experiences and fosters deeper interaction and motivation among female learners [8], [9]. In light of these developments, this paper aims to explore the role of online educational platforms in enhancing women's capacity in Afghanistan by analyzing their impact on learning, digital inclusion, entrepreneurship, and overall empowerment. Drawing on contemporary studies and data from 2015 to 2025, this research contributes to understanding the potential of technology-driven education as a transformative force for Afghan women [2], [21].

In Afghanistan, women face significant barriers to education due to prolonged conflict, restrictive cultural norms, and limited access to educational infrastructure. While online educational platforms present a promising alternative to traditional learning, their potential remains underutilized among Afghan women. Many face challenges such as lack of internet access, low digital literacy, limited availability of localized content, and societal constraints that discourage female participation in online spaces. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining how these platforms can effectively enhance women's educational outcomes, skill development, and economic empowerment. Without understanding these dynamics, policy and program interventions remain poorly informed and ineffective. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of targeted strategies to support women's inclusion in the digital learning ecosystem. Therefore, it is critical to explore the effectiveness, accessibility, and broader implications of online educational platforms for Afghan women in order to harness their full potential for gender empowerment and societal progress.

The integration of online educational platforms has significantly transformed access to education globally, particularly for marginalized populations, including women in developing countries. In Afghanistan, where traditional education avenues have often been disrupted due to conflict and cultural restrictions, digital platforms offer an alternative means for women to acquire education and develop skills remotely and flexibly [1][4]. Several studies underscore the transformative potential of digital learning in enhancing women's capacity and agency. Hakimi et al. [15] highlight that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) empowers Afghan women by increasing their access to knowledge and professional opportunities, thereby challenging existing gender norms.

Online education platforms facilitate not only formal education but also skill-based learning that can lead to economic participation. As emphasized by Ahmed et al. [19], digital tools can bridge the urban-rural divide by bringing educational content to women in remote regions, helping them engage in entrepreneurial ventures or secure remote

employment. Similarly, Fazil et al. [8] found that the adoption of AI-driven educational technologies in Afghan universities has positively influenced female student engagement and academic performance, suggesting that well-designed e-learning systems can contribute significantly to women's capacity-building.

However, these benefits are not without limitations. Women in Afghanistan face various obstacles to effective participation in online education, including low digital literacy, limited internet access, and socio-cultural opposition [6][10]. Sofizada [6] notes that despite an increasing number of digital learning initiatives, actual female participation remains low due to infrastructural gaps and restrictive gender norms. Furthermore, Bhatt [12] and Suganya & Thenmozhi [2] explore similar challenges in South Asia, indicating that the empowerment potential of online platforms can only be realized when contextual barriers are adequately addressed. Moreover, the social and economic impacts of e-learning on women's lives are substantial. Studies such as those by Hakimi et al. [14] and Stander [5] show that access to digital education has enabled women to engage in entrepreneurship, improve household decision-making, and increase their visibility in traditionally male-dominated sectors. These findings align with global perspectives on the role of digital education in fostering inclusion and empowerment.

This study seeks to understand the transformative potential of digital education in the Afghan context. Specifically, it will examine how online platforms enhance women's knowledge and skills, identify the key barriers they face in digital learning, and evaluate the broader impact of online education on women's social and economic empowerment. These objectives will guide the investigation and help frame targeted solutions to improve women's access to digital education. By addressing these areas, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how technology can support gender equity in fragile settings like Afghanistan.

## 2. Method

This study employs a quantitative research approach using a survey method to investigate the impact of online educational platforms on the educational attainment, skill development, and empowerment of women in Afghanistan. The survey method was chosen because it allows for the efficient collection of standardized data from a relatively large sample, enabling statistical analysis and generalization of findings.

### 2.1 Participants and Instrument

The participants consisted of 150 female students enrolled in various faculties of an online university in Afghanistan, including Medical (60 participants), Computer Science (40 participants), Education (30 participants), and Economics (20 participants). All participants were within the age range of 20 to 25 years, ensuring a homogeneous demographic profile for focused analysis. A structured questionnaire was developed based on the study's research objectives. The questionnaire included demographic questions and 5-point Likert scale items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), designed to measure participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of online learning platforms, challenges faced, social and economic empowerment, and cultural barriers.

### 2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The survey was administered electronically to the participants via online forms to ensure ease of access and convenience, given the nature of their online education environment. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was assured to encourage honest and unbiased feedback. The collected data were analyzed using

descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and means, to summarize participants' demographic information and response patterns. The analysis aimed to identify trends related to educational benefits, access challenges, empowerment outcomes, and socio-cultural influences among Afghan women engaged in online learning. This research method ensures a systematic and reliable way to capture the experiences and viewpoints of female online learners, providing valuable insights into the role of digital education platforms in enhancing women's educational and socio-economic status in Afghanistan.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result

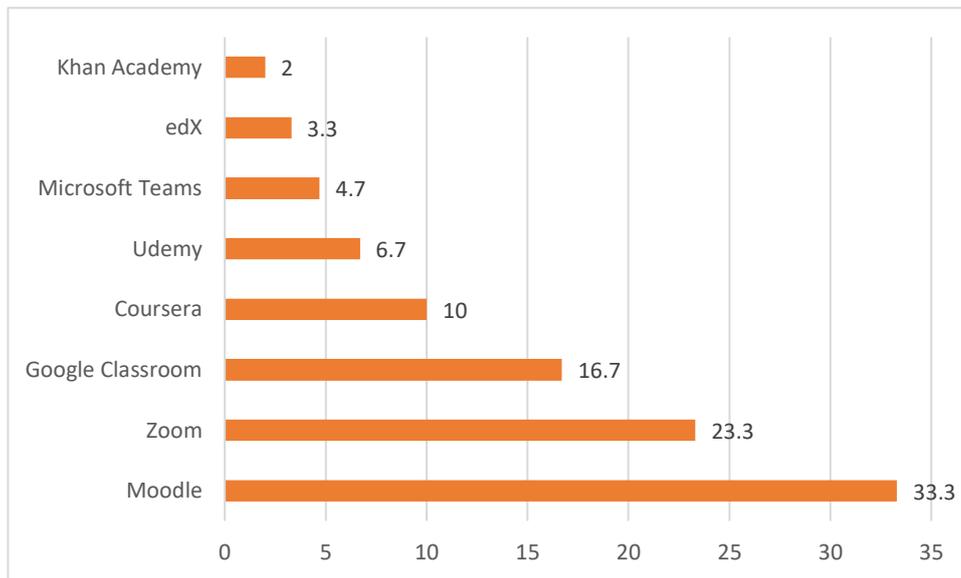
This section presents the demographic profile of the participants involved in the study. A total of 150 women enrolled in online university programs participated, representing four different faculties. The participants' ages ranged uniformly between 20 and 25 years, reflecting a young adult student population typical of university settings. The largest group came from the Medical faculty, accounting for 40% of the total participants. Computer Science followed with 26.7%, Education with 20%, and Economics with the smallest representation at 13.3%. This distribution highlights the varying interest and enrollment levels of female students across different academic disciplines. Understanding this demographic breakdown is essential for contextualizing the study's findings and ensuring that the analysis considers the diversity of academic backgrounds. The following table summarizes these demographic details clearly.

**Table 1.**  
**Demographic**  
**Profile of**  
**Participants**

Faculty	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)	Age Range
Medical	60	40	20–25
Computer Science	40	26.7	20–25
Education	30	20	20–25
Economics	20	13.3	20–25
Total	150	100	20–25

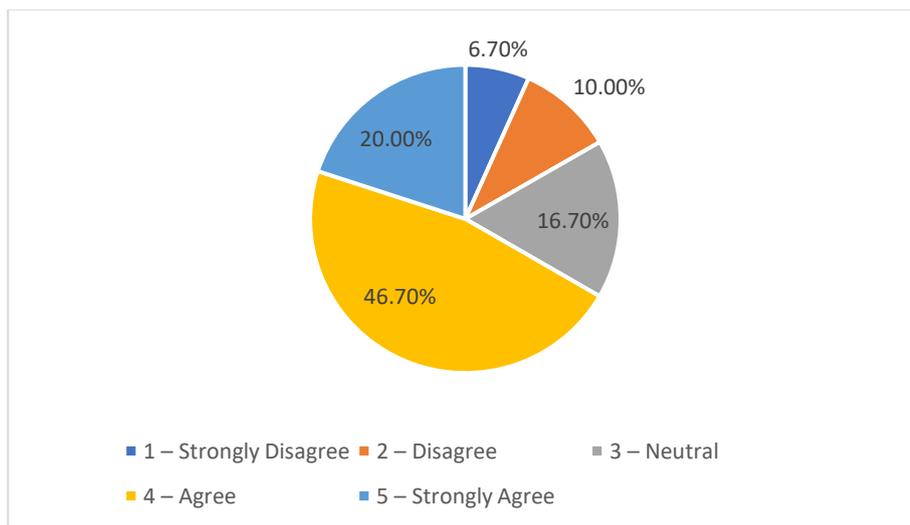
Table 1 shows a diverse representation of female students across four faculties, with Medical students constituting the largest group. The participants are uniformly aged between 20 and 25, which suggests a focused study on young adult women in higher education. The higher percentage in Medical and Computer Science faculties may indicate stronger enrollment or interest in these fields among women using online platforms. Conversely, the lower participation from the Economics faculty could reflect either fewer enrollments or less engagement with online education in that area. This demographic distribution provides a foundation for analyzing the impact of online educational platforms across different academic disciplines.

Participants were asked to indicate the primary online educational platform they use for their studies. The responses reveal a variety of platforms preferred by the students, reflecting different functionalities and accessibility. Moodle emerged as the most popular platform, followed by Zoom and Google Classroom, indicating a preference for platforms that support interactive learning and institutional use. Coursera and Udemy, known for offering diverse courses, were less frequently used as primary platforms but still had notable adoption. Platforms like Microsoft Teams and edX had lower usage, possibly due to institutional preferences or accessibility issues. This distribution highlights the diverse ecosystem of online learning tools that Afghan women engage with in their academic pursuits.



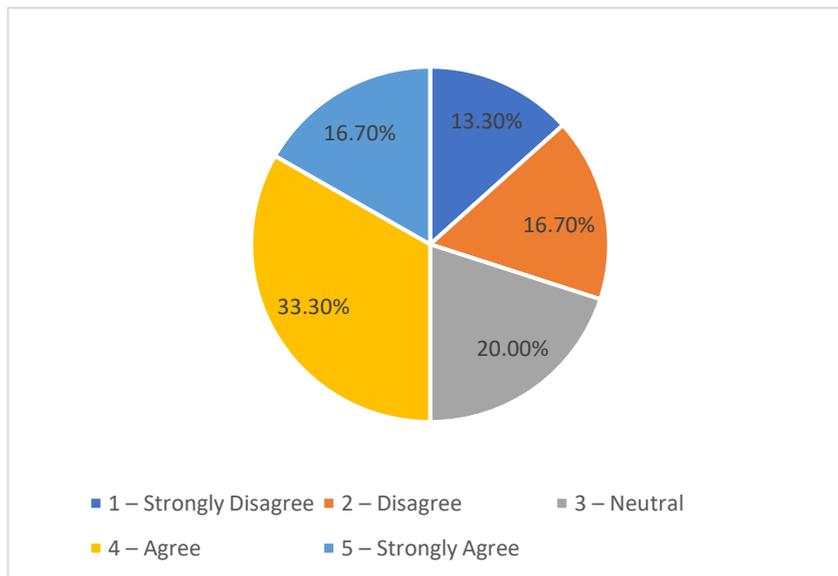
**Figure 1.**  
Distribution of Participants by Primary Online Educational Platform

The results indicate Moodle is the most widely used platform, likely due to its integration with university learning management systems. Zoom ranks second, reflecting the importance of live virtual classes and meetings. Google Classroom's popularity also suggests that many institutions favor its simplicity for assignments and communication. Coursera and Udemy, while popular globally, show moderate use, possibly reflecting limited internet access or language barriers. The lower percentages for Microsoft Teams, edX, and Khan Academy may be related to less institutional support or student familiarity. Overall, the data illustrate a preference for platforms that combine structured course delivery with interactive components.



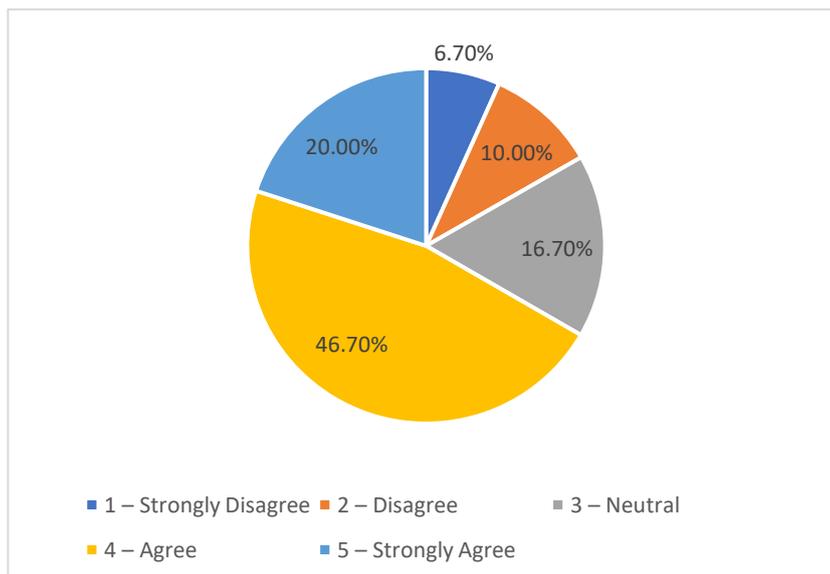
**Figure 2.**  
Responses to the Impact of Online Learning Platforms on Academic Knowledge and Skills

The data in Figure 2 shows that the majority of participants perceive online learning platforms as beneficial to their academic knowledge and skill development. Specifically, 46.7% agree and 20% strongly agree that these platforms have improved their academic abilities. This indicates a positive attitude toward the educational value of online platforms. However, a smaller portion remains neutral (16.7%) or expresses disagreement (16.7% combined for disagree and strongly disagree), suggesting that not all participants experience the same level of benefit. These mixed perceptions could be influenced by factors such as platform usability, internet access, or personal learning preferences. Overall, the results highlight the important role of online platforms in enhancing learning for many Afghan women students while also pointing to areas that may need improvement.



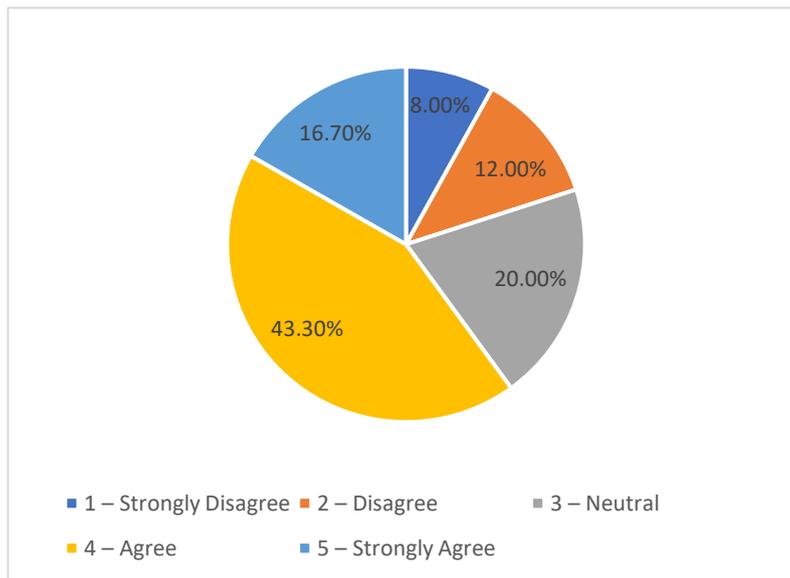
**Figure 3. Responses to Challenges Faced in Accessing Online Education**

Figure 3 presents the responses related to challenges such as poor internet connectivity and lack of digital devices when accessing online education. A significant portion of participants (50%) agree or strongly agree that these challenges affect their online learning experience, highlighting infrastructural barriers common in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, 30% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree, which may reflect better access or adaptive solutions among some students. The 20% neutral responses indicate uncertainty or varied experiences. These results suggest that while online education offers opportunities, accessibility remains a critical issue for many women students, potentially limiting their full participation and benefits from e-learning platforms.



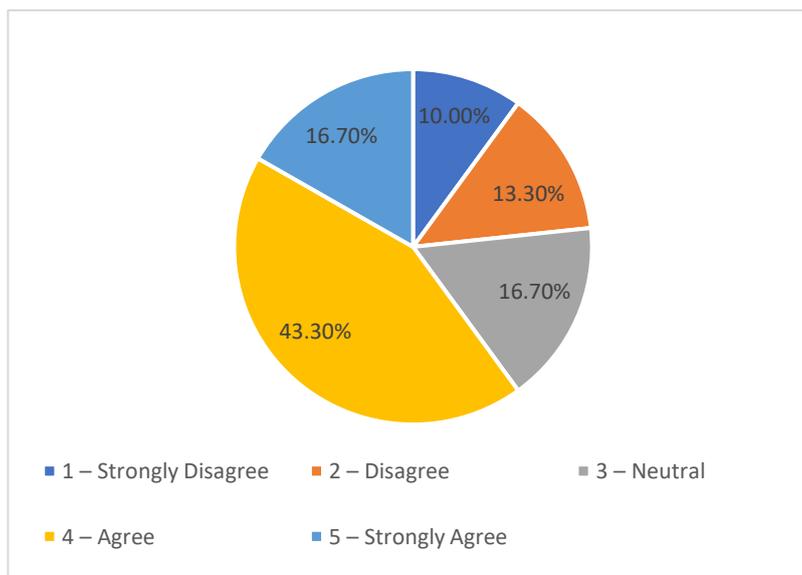
**Figure 4. Responses on Confidence and Empowerment from Online Education Participation**

Figure 4 shows that the majority of participants (66.7%) agree or strongly agree that participating in online education programs has increased their confidence and sense of empowerment. This suggests that e-learning platforms play a crucial role in boosting the self-esteem and agency of women students in Afghanistan. About 16.7% of respondents remained neutral, indicating either mixed feelings or uncertainty regarding empowerment. A smaller portion (16.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, possibly reflecting those who have not yet experienced significant empowerment through online education. Overall, these findings underscore the positive social impact of online educational platforms in enhancing women's personal growth and empowerment.



**Figure 5.**  
Responses on  
Online Learning  
Providing  
Opportunities for  
Entrepreneurship  
or Digital Work

Figure 5 illustrates that a significant majority of respondents (60%) agree or strongly agree that online learning platforms have provided them with opportunities to explore or prepare for entrepreneurship or digital work. This reflects the important role of e-learning in equipping women with skills relevant to the digital economy and entrepreneurship, which can enhance their economic empowerment. The 20% neutral responses suggest some uncertainty or lack of clarity about these opportunities, possibly due to limited exposure or experience. Meanwhile, about 20% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that barriers such as lack of resources or insufficient platform features may limit these opportunities for some women. Overall, the data highlight the potential of online education to open new economic pathways for women in Afghanistan.



**Figure 6.**  
Responses on the  
Impact of Cultural  
or Family  
Expectations on  
Access to Online  
Education

Figure 6 shows that a substantial portion of respondents (60%) agree or strongly agree that cultural or family expectations limit their ability to fully benefit from online education. This highlights the significant socio-cultural barriers that Afghan women face in accessing and engaging with online educational platforms. These expectations may restrict their study time, mobility, or overall participation, thereby impacting their educational progress. Meanwhile, 23.3% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting some women experience more supportive environments. The 16.7% neutral responses may indicate mixed feelings or uncertainty about the extent of these

limitations. Overall, this data underscores the need to address cultural and familial constraints to maximize the benefits of online education for women in Afghanistan.

### 3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role online educational platforms play in enhancing the academic knowledge and skill development of women in Afghanistan. Consistent with prior research, the majority of participants agreed that these platforms have contributed positively to their educational attainment and skills improvement [6], [10], [15], [17]. This aligns with global trends where digital learning serves as a catalyst for increasing women's access to quality education and overcoming traditional barriers [1], [4], [19]. However, despite the benefits, the study also reveals persistent challenges faced by women, including limited internet access, lack of digital devices, and unstable connectivity, which adversely affect their engagement with online education. These findings reflect the infrastructural and socio-economic constraints widely documented in Afghanistan and similar developing contexts [4], [13], [18], [21]. Such barriers continue to restrict the full potential of digital education, necessitating targeted policy interventions to improve infrastructure and affordable technology access [8], [16].

A critical dimension highlighted in the results is the impact of cultural and family expectations on women's ability to utilize online education fully. The significant percentage of respondents acknowledging socio-cultural limitations confirms earlier studies emphasizing traditional gender norms as formidable obstacles to women's educational and professional advancement [10], [15], [19]. These socio-cultural factors not only limit access but also affect women's confidence and participation, underlining the need for community awareness programs and supportive family environments [7], [14]. Importantly, the empowerment dimension emerges strongly from the data, with many participants reporting increased confidence and opportunities for economic participation through online learning platforms. This supports the growing body of literature linking digital education with women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, and socio-economic inclusion [1], [2], [3], [11], [12], [20]. Online education facilitates skills acquisition relevant to digital work and entrepreneurial ventures, offering pathways for financial independence and societal participation [5], [7], [14].

The interplay of education, empowerment, and socio-cultural constraints reflects a complex environment where technology alone cannot guarantee progress without supportive social structures. The need for integrated strategies that combine technological access, cultural sensitization, and economic opportunities is evident [9], [10], [15]. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and effective models for scaling digital education in patriarchal societies like Afghanistan [21], [22]. In conclusion, while online educational platforms provide a transformative opportunity for Afghan women, addressing infrastructural challenges and socio-cultural barriers remains crucial to maximizing their potential for academic achievement and empowerment [6], [15], [17].

## 4. Conclusion

This study underscores the important role of online educational platforms in expanding Afghan women's access to learning, skill development, and empowerment. These platforms have helped overcome traditional barriers such as geographic isolation and restrictive cultural norms by offering flexible, accessible education. However, challenges like unreliable internet, limited access to digital devices, and socio-cultural expectations continue to hinder full participation. Despite these obstacles, many women

report gains in confidence, economic involvement, and entrepreneurial opportunities, showing that online education can be a powerful tool for both personal and societal transformation.

To maximize its impact, several recommendations are proposed. Improving infrastructure through better internet access and affordable devices is essential, especially in rural areas. Digital literacy programs should be implemented to equip women with the skills needed to use online platforms effectively. Addressing cultural resistance through awareness campaigns and involving community leaders can foster greater acceptance of women's education. Courses should also be made locally relevant, practical, and tailored to women's career goals. Creating support networks and mentorship opportunities can enhance learning experiences, while inclusive policies and financial support will encourage broader participation and reduce dropout rates.

## 5. Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere thanks to their colleagues for their valuable feedback and support throughout the course of this research. Their constructive suggestions greatly contributed to the quality of this work. Appreciation is also extended for the collaborative spirit that enriched the research process.

## 6. Declaration

**Author contributions and responsibilities** - The authors made major contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

**Funding** - This research did not receive external funding.

**Availability of data and materials** - All data is available from the author.

**Competing interests** - The authors declare no competing interests.

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