Quarterly Journal of Social Development 19 (3), Spring 2025, P. 249-276

Transnational Ties and Identity Dynamics of the Second-Generation Afghan Diaspora in Isfahan, Iran

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DOI: 10.22055/QJSD.2025.49083.3043

Abstract:

The Afghan diaspora in Isfahan, Iran, constitutes a vibrant and diverse community that actively sustains its Afghan identity through extensive transnational engagements across social, cultural, economic, and political domains. This study investigates the transnational activities of second-generation Afghan migrants in Isfahan, aiming to identify the factors that either facilitate or hinder these connections. Specifically, it examines the influence of discrimination experiences, religious participation, age, education, and income on the intensity and nature of transnational involvement. Data were collected from 259 participants using a purposive snowball sampling method and a standardized questionnaire designed to assess transnational practices. Statistical analyses, conducted with SPSS and AMOS software, confirm that second-generation Afghans in Isfahan maintain robust transnational ties in all dimensions, with particularly strong engagement in cultural and social spheres, followed by economic and political activities. The findings reveal that experiences of discrimination significantly amplify religious participation, which plays a pivotal role in strengthening transnational activities within the community. Additionally, education and religious identity emerge as key drivers of transnationalism, while gender shows no significant effect. These results highlight the complex interplay of social, cultural, and structural factors in shaping the transnational identity of the Afghan diaspora in Iran. The study underscores the importance of addressing discrimination through targeted policies to foster social integration and reduce reactive transnationalism, providing critical insights into the dynamics of identity, belonging, and cross-border connections among second-generation Afghan migrants in Isfahan.

Key Concepts: *Afghan Diaspora, Transnationalism, Discrimination, Religious Participation, Second Generation*

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Introduction and Problem Statement

The Afghan diaspora in Iran represents a significant and diverse community, encompassing various ethnic groups that openly express their Afghan identity in multifaceted ways. This community has undergone substantial transformations in its composition, social structures, and role as social actors within Iran. The Afghan diaspora in Iran grew significantly during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s and continued to expand through the civil wars and the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s. Over four decades of conflict, natural disasters, chronic poverty, food insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic, and, most recently, the political upheaval following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021 have exacerbated the suffering and displacement of Afghans. While precise statistics on the number of Afghan migrants abroad are unavailable, estimates suggest approximately 8 million individuals have been displaced from their homes or country due to conflict, violence, and poverty (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020*). The migration of Afghans to neighboring countries, particularly Iran, constitutes a significant form of international migration, with an upward trend in recent decades (*Pourahmad & et. al, 2014*).

The Afghan diaspora in Iran has been shaped by a combination of economic necessities, historical contexts, and socio-political complexities. Understanding these dynamics and their connections to the homeland is critical for addressing the challenges faced by the host society. Cohen (1997), argues that migrants often maintain ties with their country of origin due to collective memory, nostalgia for homeland myths, aspirations for an ancestral homeland, and a collective commitment to its preservation, revival, and prosperity (*Hatami, 2021*). With the emergence of transnationalism as a new focal point in migration studies, research has shifted from examining migrant integration and assimilation in host countries to exploring their transnational activities over the past two decades. Transnationalism can be understood as a process through which many contemporary migrants construct social fields that span geographical, political, and cultural borders (*Hatami, 2017*). Most studies have focused on the first generation's cultural and social domains, examining the extent and nature of these ties. In recent

years, limited research has explored the second generation, investigating their transnational ties and material and emotional connections to their parents' homeland (*Portes, 2001; Alba & Nee, 2003*). As Hatami (2020) notes, "diasporas consistently engage with their homeland due to numerous incentives for boundless interactions".

Research indicates that these ties remain robust in cultural, social, and economic dimensions among the second generation (*Portes & et. al, 2009; Perlmann, 2002*). Beyond serving as agents of development in the host country, diaspora communities can simultaneously act as sources of tension and conflict in their country of origin, as exemplified by the Cuban diaspora in the United States (*Hatami, 2017*). Given the significance of this topic, the researcher argues that homeland ties among the second generation of Afghans in Isfahan, Iran, remain strong, mirroring patterns observed in the first generation.

Based on this, three primary research questions are proposed:

1. Are second-generation Afghans in Isfahan transnationally active, and do they maintain these ties? If so, what is the nature and frequency of these activities?
2. What factors influence the transnationalism of Afghans? In other words, what facilitates or discourages transnationalism among second-generation Afghans in Isfahan?
3. How do experiences of discrimination (social, cultural, situational, and economic) affect transnationalism?

Literature Review

The term "diaspora" in the Oxford Dictionary has two meanings: 1) the migration of Jews from their homeland to other countries or Jews residing abroad; 2) the displacement of any nation or group from their homeland or the individuals who have migrated. The word originates from the Greek diaspeirein (dispersion, from dia meaning across and speirein meaning to scatter). Initially used for the historical dispersion of Jews, Greeks, and Armenians, it now refers to any group living outside their original homeland (*Ang, 2003:3*). Diaspora, or "transnational communities," refers to people with a shared origin who reside, permanently or temporarily, outside the

ethnic or religious boundaries of their actual or symbolic homeland. Neres (2018) states that diaspora members, or others, consider themselves part of the national community of their homeland and often engage in its affairs. Schäfer (1986) emphasizes strong emotional and material ties with the homeland (*Jindal & et. al. 2022: 94*). Safran defines diaspora as a community outside the homeland with collective memory, attachment, and interaction with it (Safran, 1991). Cohen views diaspora as dispersion, migration, and settlement with a sense of collective memory and longing for the homeland (*Cohen, 2008*). Hall sees it as a multifaceted set of flows and circuits of culture, people, and ideas (*Hall, 1990*).

The concept of transnationalism first emerged in anthropology. Anthropologists describe it as processes through which migrants create social fields linking their country of origin and destination (*Glick Schiller & et. al, 1992:1*). This phenomenon encompasses familial, economic, social, religious, and political relations across borders (*Levitt, 2001*). Guarnizo defines it as a set of practical and discursive economic, socio-cultural, and political relations transcending nation-states (*Guarnizo, 1997:289*). Some view it as regular and sustained cross-border activities (*Portes & et. al, 1999*). Glick Schiller and Guarnizo (2001) categorize it into core (regular practices) and expanded (sporadic activities tied to specific events) types (*Guarnizo, 2000*). Transnationalism is limited to institutional activities, while expanded forms involve the free movement of individuals, ideas, and goods (*Itzigsohn & et. al, 1999; Dwani, 2011*). Portes and colleagues restrict it to sustained activities, excluding occasional purchases or gifts (*Portes & et. al, 1999*). Kivisto considers this approach restrictive (*Kivisto, 2001*). Levitt warns that emphasizing regularity overlooks significant activities like phone calls or remittances (*Levitt, 2002*). Transnationalism reflects "dense social fields" where ideas and goods cross borders (*Dwani, 2011*). Some argue it is a first-generation phenomenon that diminishes in subsequent generations (*Portes, 2001*). Transnational social fields refer to interconnected networks maintained by migrants across two countries (*Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999: 344; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004:1009*). Transnational social space combines

social and symbolic ties across two geographical spaces (*Faist, 1998: 216*).

In Iran, studies on the Afghan diaspora focus on social and identity aspects. Khayri and Rahimi (2018) demonstrated identity differences between the first and second generations of Hazaras in Qom, with the second generation retaining ethnic and religious identity but experiencing distinct integration (*Khayri & Rahimi, 2018: 45*). Mirzaei (2017) identified educational discrimination as a barrier to social mobility for the second generation (*Mirzaei, 2017: 12*). Poorahmad et al. (2014) examined the quality of life of Afghans in Robat Karim, highlighting the role of economic and social factors in transnational identity (*Poorahmad & et. al, 2014: 30*). Hatami (2020) attributed the second generation's sustained ties with their origin to discrimination and nostalgia (*Hatami, 2020: 15*). Hosseini (1398) considered informal economic activities part of the social dynamics of Afghans (*Hosseini, 2019: 22*). Globally, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) introduced transnational social fields, noting that the second generation builds complex networks through emotional and material ties (*Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004: 1010*). Portes (2001) linked the decline in second-generation activities to integration, though discrimination sustains it (*Portes, 2001:185*). Vathi (2015) found that return trips by second-generation Albanians strengthen ties (*Vathi, 2015:78*). Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002) identified discrimination as a factor increasing transnationalism among Latin Americans (*Itzigsohn & Giorguli Saucedo, 2002: 780*). King and Christou (2010) interpreted second-generation return as a search for identity and roots (*King & Christou, 2010: 105*). Domestic studies highlight integration and identity challenges, while international studies examine discrimination and familial ties, both contributing to understanding the present research

Theoretical Framework

Some scholars argue that transnationalism is a novel phenomenon. This study enriches its theoretical framework by integrating Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004), theory of transnational social fields, which emphasizes migrants' interconnected networks, with Portes' (1999), assimilation theory, which examines adaptation

and transnational activities. This integration enhances understanding of the impact of discrimination and religious participation on transnationalism. Other scholars contend that it is a previously overlooked migrant behavior that fits within existing migration theories (*Smith, 2003*). On one hand, Glick Schiller et al. (1992) view transnationalism as a new phenomenon experienced and enacted by late 20th- and early 21st-century migrants whose lives cross national borders to maintain social, economic, and political ties (*Glick Schiller & et. al, 1992; Glick Schiller, 1997*). These new behavioral patterns require a novel theoretical framework to conceptualize migrant behaviors (*Glick Schiller & et. al, 1992*). They argue that transnationalism necessitates a new analytical framework/paradigm for two reasons. First, pre-20th-century migrants severed ties with their country of origin, whereas contemporary migrants maintain cross-border connections. Second, the rise of a global capitalist system has increased economic instability (*Glick Schiller & et. al., 1992*). The emergence of globalization as "a process that creates flows and connections not merely across nation-states and national territorial borders but between global regions, continents, and civilizations" has facilitated and contributed to expanded transnationalism (*McGrew, 1998: 327*). In other words, a new global economic system has enabled the proliferation of transnationalism and the spatial accessibility of networks and social relations beyond national borders. On the other hand, scholars like Portes et al. (1999; 2003) and Waldinger (2003) argue that transnationalism is not a new phenomenon; rather, it explains previously overlooked connections linking "contemporary events with similar events in the past" (*Portes & et. al, 2002: 184*). Instead of treating transnationalism as a new paradigm, Portes et al. (1999; 2002) propose incorporating its study as a middle-range theory within existing assimilation theories. They argue that revising pre-existing assimilation theories to account for the new mode of migrant adaptation-transnationalism-is an appropriate approach (*Portes & et. al., 1999*). Similarly, Waldinger (2003) contends that the notion of migrants living in dual spaces is hardly new, but its prevalence is a product of historical changes. Thus, a concept used to explain a specific migrant experience during a historical period may change names and be reframed, yet it

continues to describe the same phenomenon. Waldinger (2010) emphasizes that transnationalism should not be considered in relation to migration but as a pattern linking the country of origin and the host country (*Waldinger, 2010; Waldinger, 2015*). He urges transnational scholars to connect the home and host social spaces when studying this phenomenon (*Waldinger & Green, 2016; Waldinger, 2015; 2013*). Both groups of scholars highlight paradigm-shifting factors explaining why transnationalism should be considered a new field of study. These factors include the role of technology, the shift toward multiculturalism, increased flexibility in national identity, and the host country's reduced ability to discriminate against nationals and foreigners (*Glick Schiller, 1999; Guarnizo, 2001; Levitt, 2001; Smith, 2003; Waldinger, 2003*). Clearly, a growing number of individuals lead dual lives, speak two languages, maintain homes and family ties in two countries, and sustain social, economic, political, and cultural presence across national borders (*Portes & et. al., 1999*). Portes and colleagues seek to provide a middle-range theory of transnationalism capable of explaining this transformative lifestyle. In this argument, transnationalism is indeed a theory. Portes & et. al. cite Merton (1987), to demonstrate why transnationalism is a new theory. According to Portes et al., transnationalism should be a middle-range theory because: 1) a significant percentage of migrants (and their descendants) are involved in this process; 2) the activities migrants undertake over time; 3) existing migration concepts and theories cannot explain these activities (*Portes & et. al., 1999*). Although the concept of transnationalism is relatively young, it provides a much-needed theoretical framework for studying migrant lives, migration movements, and their impacts on sending and receiving societies and nations. Unlike other migration theories, the emphasis is not on migration but on cross-border activities and actions undertaken by migrants and their descendants, which inevitably affect sending and receiving societies and states. A transnationalism theory acknowledges that historical and contemporary migrants have always been active in social, political, and economic spheres (*Kivisto, 2001*). Collectively, a transnational theory encompasses various systems or relations spanning two or more countries, including sustained and

meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love; moreover, power systems can be created, reinforced, or disrupted in this process (*Sanchez, 2007: 493*).

Based on the problem statement and the theoretical framework outlined, four hypotheses are derived for research on the second-generation Afghan diaspora in Isfahan and their transnational ties. These hypotheses generally focus on the social, cultural, and economic influences on the transnational dynamics of second-generation Afghans in Isfahan, aiming to examine the role of various factors in maintaining and strengthening transnational ties and migrant identities.

Hypothesis 1: Experiences of social, cultural, and economic discrimination in Isfahan strengthen the transnational ties of second-generation Afghans.

Hypothesis 2: Access to modern communication technologies is positively associated with increased transnational activities among second-generation Afghans in Isfahan.

Hypothesis 3: The economic and social status of Afghan migrants in Isfahan is positively and significantly correlated with their religious participation.

Hypothesis 4: Religious participation increases the transnational activities of second-generation Afghans in Iran.

In this theoretical framework section, an initial model is not presented, as the final model, including hypotheses and structural relationships, will be displayed more precisely and comprehensively in the data analysis and findings section.

Research Methodology

To gather data, a revised transnationalism scale comprising 19 items across four transnational domains (social/cultural, economic, and political) was employed, as presented in Table (1). Participants were asked to report their economic, social, cultural, and political connections using a 6-point Likert scale, where 0 signified "none" and 5 indicated high transnational involvement. The revised scale was adapted from the original transnationalism scale developed by Murphy and Mahalingam (2004), which was designed for 137 West Indian immigrants in the United States. In the modified version,

"homeland" was replaced with "parents' homeland" to better fit the second generation, and all mentions of "West Indies" were substituted with "Afghanistan".

Table 1: *Indicators of the Four Transnational Domains*

1. Social /Family Domain	*2. Economic Domain*	*3. Cultural Domain*	*4. Political Domain*	*5. Experience of Discrimination*	*6. Religious Participation of Afghans*
Sending gifts and goods between Iran and Afghanistan to support parents and/or relatives	*Owning business(es) in the parents' homeland*	*Participating in Afghan celebrations in the parents' homeland or Iran*	*Participating in elections in Afghanistan*	*Forced repatriation*	*Attending Afghan-specific religious classes*
Traveling to visit the parents' homeland to meet children, parents, and/or relatives	*Regularly purchasing or importing goods from the parents' homeland*	*Participating in games sponsored by an Afghan organization*	*Following political news*	*Restrictions on movement in various locations*	*Seeking religious counseling from local Afghan clerics*
Traveling to visit the parents' homeland to meet friends	*Regularly engaging with financial institutions in the parents' homeland*	*Joining Afghan clubs at school, workplace, or other venues*	*Engaging with embassies and representatives*	*Occupational discrimination*	*Using religious satellite networks*
Having children, parents, and/or relatives who travel to Iran for visits	*Investing in property in the parents' homeland*	*Preparing Afghan food for guests and keeping Afghan essentials at home*	*Collaborating with political activists in Afghanistan*	*Educational discrimination*	*Voluntarily attending special religious ceremonies*
	Efforts to promote the economic growth of the parents' homeland	*Supporting Afghan artists to perform in Iran*		*Personal and institutional violence and intimidation*	
		Insisting on speaking Afghan with children			

Population and Sampling Method

The statistical population of this study consists of second-generation Afghan migrants residing in the city of Isfahan. This group includes individuals who were either born in Iran (particularly in Isfahan) or migrated to Iran with their families during childhood and are currently living in Isfahan. Some of these individuals have migrated to Isfahan from other Iranian cities (such as Tehran, Mashhad, or Qom) and were living in Isfahan at the time of the study. Due to various reasons and the lack of official statistics on the exact number of second-generation Afghan migrants in Isfahan, it is not possible to accurately estimate the size of this population. Nevertheless, this group was selected as the target population because their transnational activities (such as maintaining ties with relatives in Afghanistan or participating in economic and cultural activities) are shaped within the context of social and ethnic networks, aligning with the objectives of this study.

Sampling Method

This study employed a snowball sampling design, which, although typically used in qualitative research, was deemed appropriate for this quantitative study due to the lack of a specific sampling frame, the need to access a specific and less accessible population (second-generation Afghan diaspora in Isfahan), and the nature of the research. This method facilitated the identification and recruitment of participants who were not easily accessible through random sampling and were introduced through existing social networks. The rationale for this choice is supported by similar studies (*Portes & et. al, 1999*); which demonstrate that snowball sampling can generate reliable quantitative data in migrant communities. In this method, an initial small number of individuals (starting points) were selected from among second-generation Afghan migrants residing in Isfahan. These starting points included individuals with diverse characteristics (in terms of age, gender, and occupation) to ensure sample diversity. Each individual was then asked to introduce other second-generation migrants engaged in transnational activities. This process continued until the desired sample size, specifically 259 participants, was reached. The final sample consisted of individuals

currently residing in Isfahan, though some had previously lived in other Iranian cities and had relocated to Isfahan for various reasons (e.g., work, education, or family). Data were collected using standardized questionnaires to enable quantitative analysis. Questionnaire data collection began in February 2024 and concluded in June 2024. The eligibility criteria for respondents were as follows: 1) At least one parent or close relative must be an Afghan migrant or born in Afghanistan. 2) Respondents must be at least 18 years old. Respondents were categorized into eight groups based on their parents' ethnicity, as shown in Table (2).

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaires were completed in person. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was first reviewed by 6 specialists in sociology, demography, and political science, and necessary modifications were applied, which indicates its face validity. In this study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (*CFA*) using *AMOS* software was employed to assess construct validity and model reliability. This method examined the relationships between observed variables and latent constructs, and using indicators such as standardized factor loadings, composite reliability (*CR*), and model fit indices (*CFI, TLI, RMSEA, χ^2/df*), measured the degree of model fit with empirical data. The aforementioned analysis confirmed the factor structure of latent variables and demonstrated appropriate model fit. Additionally, the construct reliability of the model was evaluated using the composite reliability coefficient (*CR*), the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Number of Respondents by Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	*Population Percentage (%)*	*Number of Respondents*	*Ethnicity*	*Population Percentage (%)*	*Number of Respondents*
Pashtun	*42 to 45*	*92*	*Turkmen*	*2 to 3*	*7*
Tajik	*27 to 29*	*57*	*Baloch*	*1 to 2*	*5*
Hazara	*9 to 10*	*65*	*Nuristani*	*1 to 2*	*2*
Uzbek	*9 to 10*	*29*	*Pashayi*	*1 to 2*	*2*

Data Collection

The questionnaires were completed in person, and information was collected from locations such as parks, restaurants, respondents' homes, or workplaces. Three of the respondents were tenants of the researcher, and through them, I became acquainted with other respondents. Special emphasis was placed on maintaining respondents' privacy, and they were assured that given the use of snowball sampling method, the publication time of the work is not specified. This measure was taken to ensure that no danger would threaten the respondents. Furthermore, they were informed that no identifying information about them would be published, and all data would be replaced with general information in such a way that respondents' identities would remain completely protected. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS statistical software.

Data Analysis and Findings

Descriptive Statistics

The age range of respondents was between 18 to 55 years. Among them, 73 percent were in the age range of 18 to 35 years. 55 percent of respondents were male and 45 percent were female. In the sample, 60 percent were Shia and 40 percent were Sunni. 71 percent of respondents were married and 29 percent were single, of which 2 were widowed and 4 were divorced. Among the married individuals, 62 percent had married one of the ethnic groups residing in Afghanistan, 17 percent had married a second-generation Afghan living in Iran, and 7 percent had married a non-Afghan, non-Iranian individual. The remainder had married Iranians. 45 percent of respondents were illiterate or had educational credentials lower than elementary level, 35 percent had below-diploma credentials, and the rest had above-diploma credentials or were studying at higher levels. Only two respondents had master's degrees.

Table 3: *Patterns of Using Transnational Communication Tools for Communication with Homeland*

1- Frequency of Using Tools for Cross-National Communication										
	Daily		*Weekly*		*Monthly*		*Occasionally*		*Unspecified*	
	Yes	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
Percentage	*35.*	*65.*	*42.*	*58.*	*72.*	*28.*	*80.*	*20.*	*18.*	*82.*
2- Technical Tools Used										
	WhatsApp		*Instagram*		*Telegram*		*Skype*		*Other Media*	
	Yes	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
Percentage	*45.*	*55.*	*75.*	*15*	*55.*	*45.*	*15.*	*85.*	*23*	*78*
3- Number of Tools Used										
	One Tool		*Two Tools*		*Three or More Tools*					
	Yes	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*				
Percentage	*95.*	*05.*	*65.*	*35.*	*27.*	*73.*				

Based on Table (3), the second-generation Afghan diaspora in Iran actively uses communication tools to maintain ties with their parents' homeland. The highest usage is observed during special occasions (80%) and monthly (72%), while the lowest is daily usage (35%). Instagram (75%) and Telegram (55%) are the most frequently used tools, with Skype (15%) being the least used. Additionally, 95% use at least one tool, and 65% use two tools, highlighting the pivotal role of technology in facilitating transnationalism, consistent with findings by Kiivisto (2001) and Levitt (2002).

Table 4: *Number, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation for Questions of the Dependent Variable in the Adjusted Transnational Scale across Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political Dimensions (N=259)*

Transnational Dimensions	*Sometimes*	*Most of the Time*	*Always*
Social	*15.3%*	*69.5%*	*15.3%*
Cultural	*10.2%*	*64.4%*	*25.4%*
Economic	*11.9%*	*44.1%*	*44.1%*
Political	*45.2%*	*43.3%*	*11.5%*
Overall	*20.65%*	*55.32%*	*24.06%*

Analysis of participants' responses revealed that second-generation Afghans in this study exhibit significant engagement in

social, cultural, and economic domains. All participants reported participating in at least one transnational activity.

Inferential Statistics

Analysis of participants' responses showed that in some dimensions, second-generation Afghans in this study have significant participation in social, cultural, economic, and political spheres.

Table 5: *Comparison of Transnational Scale Means According to Background Variables*

Dimensions		*Social*	*Cultural*	*Economic*	*Political*
Age	*F Value*	*0.983*	*2.856*	*15.483*	*14.544*
	Significance Level	*0.375*	*0.059*	*0.000*	*0.000*
	Result	*No Difference*	*No Difference*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*
Income	*F Value*	*1.439*	*0.484*	*4.924*	*9.351*
	Significance Level	*0.231*	*0.694*	*0.002*	*0.000*
	Result	*No Difference*	*No Difference*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*
Education	*F Value*	*29.469*	*26.325*	*53.787*	*79.874*
	Significance Level	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*
	Result	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*
Gender	*T Value*	*0.501*	*1.133*	*0.817*	*1.239*
	Significance Level	*0.617*	*0.258*	*0.414*	*0.216*
	Result	*No Difference*	*No Difference*	*No Difference*	*No Difference*
Religion	*T Value*	*5.747*	*3.876*	*6.806*	*7.319*
	Significance Level	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*
	Result	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*
Marital Status	*T Value*	*1.781*	*4.286*	*4.794*	*3.853*
	Significance Level	*0.076*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*
	Result	*No Difference*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*	*Difference Exists*

Based on the results of Table 5, it can be said that in the four dimensions of transnational activities, there is a statistically significant difference between different educational and religious

groups. Regarding transnational activities and considering income and age groups, no significant difference is observed in the two social and cultural dimensions, but in the two political and economic dimensions, there is a statistically significant difference between groups. Also, regarding transnational activities and considering gender, no difference is observed between men and women. Regarding marital status, there is no statistically significant difference between groups in the social dimension, but a statistically significant difference is observed in the economic, political, and cultural dimensions.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Model with Amos Software

Model number (1) "Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Multiple Dimensions (economic, social, cultural, and political) of Second-Generation Afghan Immigrant Diaspora in Isfahan", has been designed to test the compatibility of data with the hypothetical measurement model. The purpose of this model is to provide insights into how discrimination experiences, social status, and religious participation relate among second-generation Afghan immigrants in Isfahan.

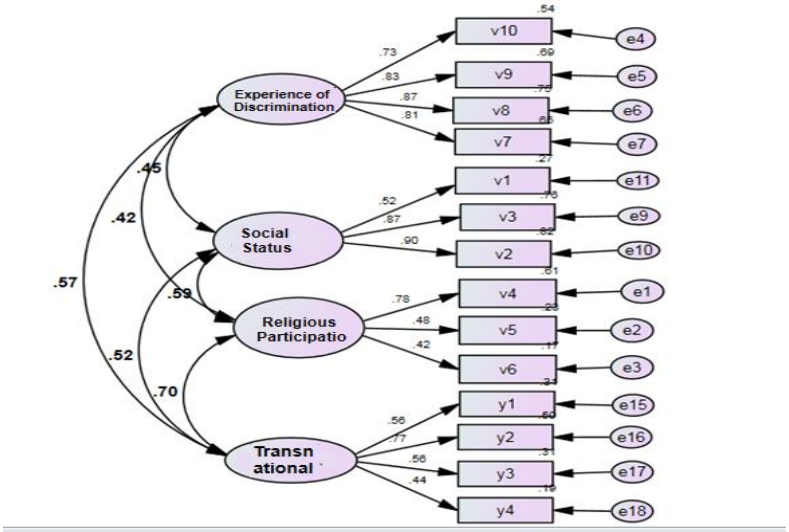


Table 6: *Structural Analysis Result of Model Fit Criteria*

Index Type	*Default Model Fit Criteria Result*	*Abbreviation*	*Direct Model Values*
Absolute Model Fit Indices	*Chi-Square*	*CMIN*	*353.350*
	Degrees of Freedom	*DF*	*73*
	Significance Level	*P*	*0.000*
	Goodness of Fit Index	*GFI*	*0.852*
	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	*AGFI*	*0.787*
Relative Indices	*Bentler-Bonett Fit Index*	*NFI*	*0.789*
	Relative Fit Index	*RFI*	*0.737*
	Incremental Fit Index	*IFI*	*0.825*
	Tucker-Lewis Index	*TLI*	*0.779*
	Comparative Fit Index	*CFI*	*0.823*
Parsimonious Comparative Fit Index	*Normed Parsimonious Fit Index*	*PNFI*	*0.633*
	Parsimonious Goodness of Fit Index	*PGFI*	*0.592*
	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	*RMSEA*	*0.012*
	Parsimony Ratio	*PRATIO*	*0.802*
	Normed Chi-Square	*CMIN/DF*	*4.840*
	AIC Statistics Values		

Model	AIC	BCC
Direct Model	445.350	451.029
Saturated Model	238.000	252.691
Independence Model	1730.702	1733.859

Output Interpretation

Fit indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (*CFI*) and Incremental Fit Index (*IFI*) are indices that compare the fit of a model with a baseline model that assumes no covariance among variables exists. According to Bentler (1990), the closer these indices are to 1, the better the model fit (*Bentler, 1990; Hu and Bentler, 1995; as cited in Hooman, 2005*). The Non-Normed Fit Index, known as the Tucker-Lewis Index (*TLI*), is used to measure the better fit of a pattern compared to the independent pattern (i.e., the null pattern assuming zero relationships between variables) (*Bentler,*

1990 as cited in Arshadi, 2007). Also, the Normed Fit Index (*NFI*), which is a normed incremental fit index, indicates that the closer the value of these two indices is to one, the better the model fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (*RMSEA*) is another fit index that represents the square root of the mean of squared residuals and is interpreted as a function of covariance value.

Factor loading values indicate that observed variables are good representatives of latent variables. The input variance-covariance matrix calculated from the 14 variables present in the model contains sample moments. For the measurement model, 10 regression weights, 6 covariances, 18 variances, and 14 observed variables have been estimated, totaling 48 estimated parameters. Therefore, the model has 71 degrees of freedom (119-48), and thus the chi-square goodness-of-fit statistic has been calculated based on this model.

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test shows that the hypothesized model does not fit the data well (since p-value = 0.000, degrees of freedom = 71, $\chi^2 = 347.796$). Although according to the chi-square test the model has not fitted well, according to the baseline comparisons table, the fit indices *TLI*, *IFI*, *RFI*, *NFI*, *CFI*, and *GFI* are above 0.743 (ranging between 0.743 to 0.825). According to this range of variations, we should improve the fit of the hypothesized model by 0.26 to 1.75, which is a small amount. The values indicate that both hypothesized direct and indirect models fit the observed variance-covariance matrix well compared to the null or independence model.

Although both models fit the data well, the direct model has significantly better fit compared to the indirect model. To ensure the conclusion regarding model fit, the *AIC* statistic values are presented in Table (6). Given that the direct model statistic value was lower (445.350) compared to the indirect model (531.768), this again confirmed that the direct model has better fit than the indirect model and provides us with a better understanding of transnationalism.

Standardized regression weights and squared multiple correlations are shown in Table (7) for the direct model. All unstandardized regression weights are significant according to the C.R. test (i.e., the C.R. value for all of them is greater than the range of 1.96, and therefore p-value < 0.05). The value of standardized

regression weights varies from 0.416 to 0.905. These values indicate that the 14 observed variables are significantly represented by their respective factors.

The path coefficients between latent variables, which indicate the strength and direction of relationships between them, are also provided. Based on these, it can be said that participation in religious activities and discrimination experience are related to the social status of immigrants. Also, religious participation has a positive effect on transnational activities, indicating that those who are more religiously active are more involved in transnational activities. Discrimination experience also has a positive effect on transnational activities, indicating that individuals who face more discrimination are more likely to participate in transnational-related activities.

In Table (7), the squared multiple correlations of explained variances for the 14 observed variables are shown. The explained variances range from 0.173 (related to religious counseling variable) to 0.818 (education), varying between 0.173 to 0.818. The relationships between latent variables show how these constructs influence each other. Regarding the extent of relationships between them, the highest relationship is between the transnationalism variable and religious participation (0.70), which indicates the strength of the relationship between these two latent variables, and the lowest value is related to discrimination experience and religious participation with a coefficient of 0.42.

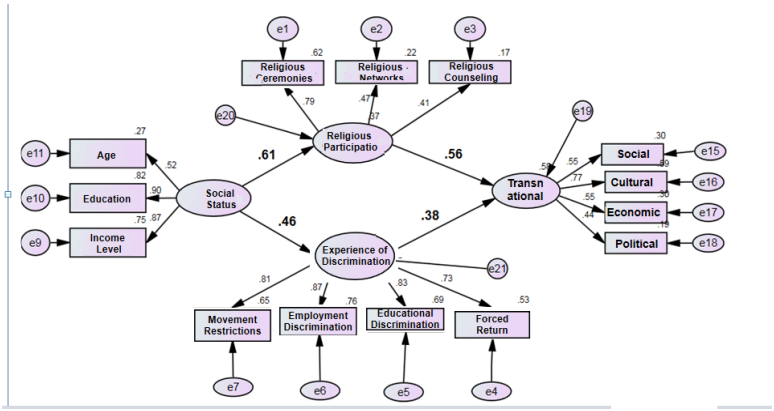


Table 7: *Research Test Results-Structural Factor Analysis*

Relationships Between Latent Variables in the Factor Analysis Model								
Variables	*S,E*		*R,E*		*R,S*	*F,S*	*F,R*	*E,F*
Values	*0.45*		*0.42*		*0.59*	*0.52*	*0.70*	*0.57*
Structural Equation Model Results								
Variables	*Direction*		*S.E.*	*C.R.*	*P*	*Standardized Regression*	*Squared Multiple Correlations*	*Result*
Social Status	--->	*Religious*	*0.517*	*0.065*	*7.901*	*0.61*		*Confirmed*
Social Status	--->	*Discrimination*	*0.398*	*0.061*	*6.526*	*0.46*		*Confirmed*
Discrimination Experience	--->	*Transnational*	*0.253*	*0.055*	*4.605*	*0.38*		*Confirmed*
Religious Participation	--->	*Transnational*	*0.376*	*0.073*	*5.11*	*0.56*		*Confirmed*
Religious Participation	--->	*Ceremonies*	*1*			*0.781*	*0.611*	*Confirmed*
Religious Participation	--->	*Network*	*0.583*	*0.098*	*5.968*	*0.482*	*0.232*	*Confirmed*
Religious Participation	--->	*Counseling*	*0.533*	*0.099*	*5.368*	*0.416*	*0.173*	*Confirmed*
Discrimination Experience	--->	*Limitations*	*1*			*0.733*	*0.537*	*Confirmed*
Discrimination Experience	--->	*Educational*	*1.07*	*0.083*	*12.86*	*0.833*	*0.693*	*Confirmed*
Discrimination Experience	--->	*Occupational*	*1.086*	*0.081*	*13.39*	*0.867*	*0.752*	*Confirmed*
Discrimination Experience	--->	*Return*	*1.08*	*0.086*	*12.53*	*0.809*	*0.654*	*Confirmed*
Social Status	--->	*Income*	*1*			*0.871*	*0.759*	*Confirmed*
Social Status	--->	*Education*	*1.071*	*0.07*	*15.21*	*0.905*	*0.818*	*Confirmed*
Social Status	--->	*Age*	*0.568*	*0.066*	*8.626*	*0.527*	*0.268*	*Confirmed*
Transnational	--->	*Social*	*1*			*0.556*	*0.310*	*Confirmed*
Transnational	--->	*Cultural*	*1.571*	*0.213*	*7.389*	*0.777*	*0.592*	*Confirmed*
Transnational	--->	*Economic*	*0.896*	*0.141*	*6.344*	*0.441*	*0.310*	*Confirmed*
Transnational	--->	*Political*	*0.729*	*0.135*	*5.39*	*0.557*	*0.195*	*Confirmed*

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, emphasis is placed on the second generation of Afghans living in Isfahan (Iran) in transnational projects. This study contributes to the growth of transnational literature in this field and domestically in several ways: First, it contributes to the literature on second-generation transnationalism. Second, it helps our understanding of transnational connections in a studied region. Third, it contributes to our understanding of intergenerational transnationalism, an area that has not yet been studied, and from this perspective clarifies the importance of parental families, spousal families, and the role of religious organizations in expanding intergenerational transnationalism. Fourth, this study contributes to

the limited literature on reactive transnationalism and highlights significant intra-group differences in discrimination experiences and reactive transnationalism among Afghans living in Isfahan, and based on the opinion of scholars in this field, "improves our understanding of how, why, and to what extent ideas, goods, political, social, and economic activities are exchanged across national borders" (*Glick Schiller & et. al., 1992; Kivisto, 2001; Baubock, 2010; Smith, 2006*).

The research hypotheses are explained based on the transnational social field theory (*Glick Schiller & Levitt, 2004*) and Portes' assimilation theory (*Portes & et. al, 1999*). These theories explain the impact of various social factors and discrimination on transnational activities and immigrant integration. Since this study focuses on the paths that second-generation Afghans living in Isfahan have ahead of them, how they develop and maintain connections and networks related to their parents, it therefore helps policymakers gain relative scientific knowledge of Afghan immigrants and consider them for future planning. Because despite the fact that Afghans have been living in Iran for decades, they have not been absorbed into the host society, and all second-generation Afghans in this research are transnationally active. However, the frequency and nature of their activities lie on a continuum, from those who focus on their parents' homeland in their daily lives to those who describe it like a lost friend with whom they are not engaged but still have passion for that place.

The results showed that transnational interactions of the generation are ongoing in cultural and social domains as well as economic and political domains among the second generation of Afghans. The second generation engages in various targeted actions and activities to maintain transnational connections with their parents' homeland and the people living there.

Their strategies include establishing communication with friends and family in the homeland, traveling to the parents' homeland, hosting family from the homeland in Iran, and participating in daily transnational activities. In terms of communication, the second generation uses technological advances in voice and video calls, messaging applications, and social media to maintain relationships

with their friends and family in the homeland. The frequency of communication varies from daily, weekly, monthly, or on special occasions. Respondents engage in scattered and regular communication at different times and with different people. They travel to their homeland. Visits and returns give the second generation opportunities to create and revive multiple transnational family bonds with distant and close relatives in the parents' homeland, thus expanding their transnational networks. The second generation continues to maintain these networks by hosting these family members and communicating with them after returning to Iran. These results are consistent with research conducted abroad. Some researchers argue that transnational activities and networks are transmitted from immigrant parents to their children and thus become part of the second generation's life (*Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004*). Even if the level of participation and maintenance of networks and activities of the second generation differs from their immigrant parents (*Levitt & Waters, 2002*). Research focusing on second-generation return migration as a form of transnationalism shows patterns of return to ancestral lands either temporarily or permanently (*King & Christou, 2010*). Other research has documented travel to visit friends and relatives, sending remittances, and continuing education in the parents' homeland as other forms of transnationalism among the second generation (*Duval, 2003; Lee, 2011*). In terms of hosting, the second generation hosts family and friends from their parents' homeland in long-term and short-term stays. Initially with their parents and later expanding their set of relationships with other compatriots of their parents, especially when they are involved in transnational marriages. Finally, in terms of daily transnational belonging practices, the second generation participates in a wide range of ordinary daily activities.

From the foods they consume, ethnic places where they shop, clothes they wear, decorations they display in their homes, and cultural events and conferences they attend. The research results show how parents' homes, marriage, and organizations and religious participation are effective in shaping transnational activities. Some respondents have strengthened Afghan transnationalism by marrying spouses from the homeland. Research by (*Bolonyani, 2007*) and

(*Open, 2013*) showed how immigrants and their children begin return journeys to the parents' homeland to discover themselves and fulfill lifelong dreams. (*Vathi, 2015*) says return visits "provide a rare opportunity for second-generation members to meet, for example, cousins. Therefore, they constitute an important environment for creating and reviving multiple transnational kinship bonds." She also writes that "during these visits, transnational bonds are mixed with memories and nostalgia from return experiences, and thus, feelings or bonds become thicker and stronger." King & Christou (2010) argue that second-generation returns are made to connect with family roots and expose foreign-born individuals to the "ethnic culture" of their parents' country of origin. Such visits usually strengthen emotional bonds with the parents' homeland, but can also make visitors realize they could never relocate there or feel at home. Transnational social fields focus on human interactions, personal relationships, and intertwined networks that immigrants and their second generation maintain. These personal relationships and exchanges between immigrants and their non-immigrant relations can be equal, unequal, and exploitative. Homes and religious organizations are "obvious" transnational social fields where resources, ideas, clients, and traditions are exchanged. The research results also showed that second-generation Afghans who experienced discrimination were more involved in religious activities and had transnational participation. This result was consistent with the findings of research by (*Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Michael & Requiten, 2012; Ali Yildiz, 2007*). They found that Muslims increased their religious attachment after experiencing discrimination, which is consistent with reactive religiosity. Several other researchers have documented reactive religiosity among Muslims in Western countries with increased Muslim participation in mosques (*Malipard & Falt, 2013; Vaas & Fleishman, 2012; Haddad, 2007*).

These researchers have shown that transnationalism and identification among immigrants and their children with the parents' homeland is a reaction after experiencing discrimination and exclusion among immigrants; also (*Itzigson & Giorgouli-Savoudo, 2002*), found that when Latinos experience discrimination, economic and socio-cultural transnationalism increases, especially among men.

The research results showed that Afghans who experienced discrimination, their response was consistent with reactive transnationalism. Afghan transnationalism caused their reactive religiosity and Afghans became more attached to mosques and religious groups. "Eliminating discrimination in education allows new generations of Afghans to accelerate and advance in the acculturation process and not bear the burden of discrimination" (*Mirzayi, 2001*). Of course, transnational activity varied according to religious identity. This finding is consistent with the results of research by (*Khayri & Rahimi, 2018*) which showed that Hazara and Shia culture changes in different aspects of national, religious-sectarian, and normative identity in Iran. Also, and finally, despite the fact that Iran faces many economic constraints, it is host to one of the largest immigrant and refugee populations in the world. Therefore, the social and economic integration of second-generation Afghans has been limited by structural barriers. Limited access drives many of them toward informal economies. Increasing economic problems and labor market instability have particularly affected this generation's ability to achieve upward mobility. Unlike their parents who often accepted any available work, second-generation Afghans typically have higher educational aspirations, but face systematic obstacles in converting these ambitions into professional opportunities. The social mobility patterns of this generation show several key characteristics: higher educational aspirations compared to their parents, more diverse social networks that often include both Afghan and Iranian peers; greater facilitation with more Afghan and less Iranian cultural codes while maintaining connection to Afghan identity, which causes the structural pattern of second-generation Afghan integration in Iran to face ongoing challenges and may impact Iran's future.

Research Limitations

1- The research points to the lack of official statistics about the number of second-generation Afghan immigrants in Iran, which has made accurate estimation of the statistical population and more comprehensive analysis difficult. This limitation may affect the accuracy and validity of some findings.

2. The study focuses more on observable activities (such as communications, travels, and economic participation) and less on hidden emotional or identity bonds (such as internal sense of belonging or dreams that are not practically implemented). This issue may not provide a complete picture of second-generation transnationalism.

Practical Recommendations

1. Given the high educational aspirations of the second generation and existing structural barriers (such as educational and occupational discrimination), the Iranian government can design targeted educational and professional programs for this group to utilize their potential as development agents and facilitate their socio-economic integration.

2. Reducing travel restrictions, access to education and job opportunities, and reducing discrimination experiences. This can help reduce reactive transnationalism and increase sense of belonging to the host society.

3. Given the second generation's extensive use of communication technologies (such as WhatsApp and Telegram), governmental and non-governmental institutions can create official platforms for cultural and economic communication between Iran and Afghanistan so that these interactions take place in a more constructive and organized framework.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

1. Researchers can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of regional differences in transnationalism and integration by examining second-generation Afghans in other Iranian cities (such as Tehran, Mashhad, or border areas) and comparing them with the findings of this study.

2. Future research can use qualitative methods (such as in-depth interviews or narratology) to analyze the emotional and identity bonds of the second generation that are not practically visible, to provide a more complete picture of transnational belonging.

3. Researchers can examine the impact of Iran's immigration policies (such as residency restrictions or access to services) on the intensity and type of second-generation transnational activities to clarify the role of structural factors in this phenomenon.

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