

**BRIDGING EDUCATIONAL GAPS FOR AFGHAN CHILDREN
ABROAD: A CASE STUDY OF MAKTAB24.ONLINE**

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Abstract

The conflict and instability in Afghanistan have resulted in the displacement of numerous families, significantly affecting the educational journeys of their children. Consequently, these children now encounter substantial obstacles in accessing learning opportunities. Afghan families often struggle to provide their children with comprehensive linguistic and cultural education. To address this pressing issue, digital platforms have emerged as invaluable resources, delivering accessible and high-quality language and cultural preservation education to Afghan children living abroad. This research presents a case study of Maktab24Online, an online educational platform designed specifically for Afghan children in diaspora communities. Through a comprehensive analysis of Maktab24Online's approach and in-depth interviews with families and enrolled students, the study sheds light on the platform's effectiveness in bridging educational gaps and fostering academic continuity for Afghan children. The study highlights Maktab24Online's extensive reach, particularly among Afghan children in the United States and Europe, underscoring its effectiveness in serving the diaspora community. Findings reveal children pressured to assimilate foreign culture, challenging cultural maintenance. There is a high demand for foundational education, especially among primary school-aged children, with a strong emphasis on religious and linguistic education. Most respondents regard Maktab24Online as beneficial, despite the pressure of assimilation and limited access to Afghan culture abroad and are eager to recommend it. The study concludes that digital platforms drive change by offering innovative solutions to

educational disparities faced by Afghan children abroad. Additionally, these platforms have provided job opportunities for women in Afghanistan, despite the regime's ban on women working in the country.

Keywords: *Digital platforms; Cultural preservation; Afghanistan; E-learning.*

Introduction

Excellent education provides a source of optimism for populations forced to leave their homes amidst strife and upheaval. Political instability and military violence have dispersed many Afghan families worldwide. According to the United Nations, the scale of displacement within Afghanistan is staggering, with over half a million Afghans internally displaced since the onset of 2021 alone (Figure 1). Additionally, there is a looming worst-case scenario, with projections suggesting that over 515,000 newly displaced individuals could seek refuge beyond the country's borders, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis (UNHCR, 2021). Afghan families can face significant challenges in ensuring a comprehensive education for their children, considering elevated prevalence rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) experienced within the host countries (Atrooz, F. et al., 2022; Kurt, G. et al., 2022), along with ongoing higher education restrictions for Afghans living abroad in some cases (Seddighi, H. et al., 2024). Nevertheless, in the face of these challenges, digital platforms have emerged as agents that accelerate change, providing creative ways to overcome the educational disparities, especially those experienced by Afghan children living outside their country. E-learning, which utilizes electronic technology to enhance knowledge, has gained worldwide interest as a solution for educational inequality. Despite encountering challenges, online education in developing countries confronts hurdles stemming from restricted technology access and inadequate rural infrastructure. Nonetheless, it offers promising prospects for students, educators, and educational institutions (Rani, G., et al., 2021). On the other hand, as the field of e-learning encounters dynamic challenges driven by technical breakthroughs and altering educational environments, it is crucial to employ innovative strategies. As the internet expands globally, so does e-learning (Van Dam, N., & Rogers, F. 2002). However, ensuring successful use of the digital ecosys-

tem necessitates tackling developing challenges and introducing novel approaches. Bower, B. L., & Hardy, K. P. (2004) emphasized the transformations and challenges in online education, emphasizing the necessity for innovative methods to overcome current challenges.

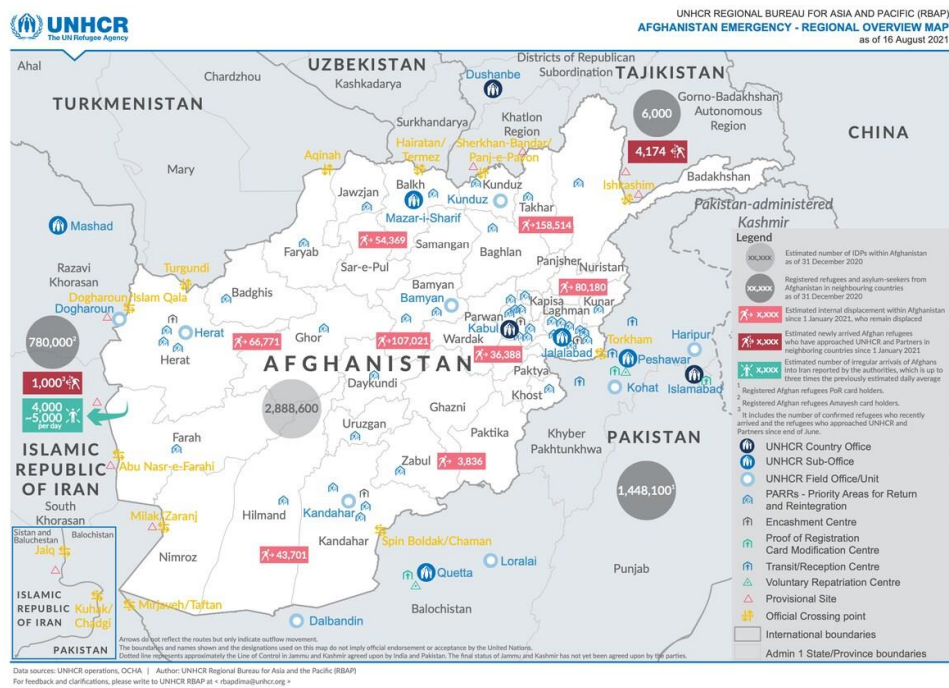


Figure 1. Afghanistan Emergency - Regional Overview Map (UNHCR, 2021)

Valverde-Berrocso, J., et al. (2020) conducted a study exploring the field of e-learning, a technology-based learning method with significant educational potential. Their study aimed to identify key research topics, relevant theories, modalities, and research methodologies. They found that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are the most researched e-learning modality, highlighting the importance of e-learning for individuals. Similarly, Rezai, A., et al. (2022) found that e-portfolios enhance vocabulary acquisition and motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, fostering favorable attitudes towards the technology. The study of Toki, E. I., and Pange, J. (2010) aimed to explore the feasibility of creating computerized application software for e-learning among Greek preschoolers, focusing on enhancing speech articulation and language learning. The researchers developed the pedagogical model of the application by drawing from social learning theories, particularly the nearest neighbor learning method. The results indicated that the integrated e-learning activities for language articula-

tion surpassed average learning outcomes compared to alternative methods. The study categorized learning processes based on individual children's needs, integrating technological advancements to address contemporary societal needs. Also, studies (Rajeh, M., et al., 2021; Al-Samarraie, H., et al., 2018; Al-Fraihat, D., et al., 2020; Deng, P., et al., 2023) show that many factors affect a learner's satisfaction and desire to keep using e-learning. These include perceived usefulness, system and service quality, attitudes, subjective norms, value, usability, innovativeness, critical incidents, learner and instructor qualities, and others. Despite the current Taliban's ban on women working in Afghanistan (Qazizada, M., 2024), platforms like Maktab24Online have strategically responded by exclusively recruiting female teachers from Afghanistan to provide cultural and language education to children living abroad. This initiative not only addresses the educational challenges faced by Afghan children residing outside their country but also empowers women by offering them independent work opportunities within Afghanistan. These digital platforms serve as transformative agents, bridging educational gaps and providing innovative solutions to overcome the unique challenges encountered by Afghan children in accessing quality education. These platforms, by facilitating direct connections between students and teachers from Afghanistan, play a crucial role in fostering inclusive and equitable access to education while preserving the language and culture of Afghan communities. In summary, e-learning in developing nations offers a mix of hurdles and prospects for both students and teachers, serving as a driver for profound transformation capable of enhancing access to high-quality education that is fair and inclusive. Through narrowing educational disparities, implementing creative teaching approaches, and cultivating a nurturing learning atmosphere, e-learning holds the promise of empowering Afghan children in their cultural and linguistic learning journey while also contributing to their socioeconomic progress. This research represents a novel exploration of the cultural and native language educational experiences and challenges encountered by Afghan children living abroad, particularly within diaspora communities. Notably, this specific context remains uninvestigated in existing literature. By focusing on the potential of online platforms to address these challenges, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to this underrepresented area of research. However, some recent studies reveal the diverse effects of e-learning on learners, indicating that e-learning improves language acquisition and proficiency in various areas such as listen-

ing comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. It also helps reduce learning anxiety and promotes engagement, motivation, and the use of effective learning strategies (Yumnam, R. 2021; Coryell, J., & Chlup, D. 2007; Işık, C., & Yilmaz, S. 2010; Hansson, H., & Bunt-Kokhuis, S. 2004; Mohammadi, N., et al., 2011). Nonetheless, factors such as the quality of the e-learning platform, learner computer anxiety, and instructor attitude can influence satisfaction with e-learning.

Literature Review

E-learning, which involves the use of electronic technologies to support learning, has emerged as a promising solution to address the challenges faced by Afghan students and understand how online platforms like Maktab24Online can help close educational gaps within the diaspora community. Numerous studies indicate that e-learning improves teaching and learning through the provision of easily available resources, captivating material, and adaptable, individualized approaches that boost academic performance and assist language acquisition (Valverde-Berrococo, J., et al., 2020; Dinev, I., & Dineva, N. 2020; Thoo, A., et al., 2021; Patil, P., & A.Chandankhede, P. 2022; Stubbé, H., et al., 2016). Stubbé, H., et al. (2016) evaluated the effectiveness of E-Learning Sudan (ELS), a custom-built computer/tablet game designed to offer alternative learning opportunities to Sudanese children who lack access to formal education. Two pilot programs, using a pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental methodology, conducted this assessment. Analysis of pretest-posttest data showed that ELS significantly improved mathematics knowledge, particularly in numeracy and addition, while also maintaining student motivation. Furthermore, the study demonstrated a consistent level of student motivation. Analysis of the control group data and the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) revealed that children who utilized the Early Learning System (ELS) had greater academic progress compared to those who did not get any sort of instruction, whether it was official or informal. These findings indicate that the use of ELS might improve educational achievements for children who are not attending school in situations like Sudan. On the other hand, Lawrence, A. A., et al. (2021) investigated parental attitudes towards their children's e-learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study developed a questionnaire distributed through Google Form, with 277 parents participating. Data analysis involved various statistical methods, including

mean, standard deviation, t-test, f-test, and Duncan's multiple range test. The study explores the effectiveness of different online classroom systems, data exchange mechanisms, quizzes, and examinations. Results indicate that only a minority of schoolchildren have truly benefited from these e-learning platforms. Numerous studies indicate that e-learning improves access to higher education for children by revolutionizing instructional approaches, enhancing student contentment, proficiency, and achievements, facilitating adaptable learning, diminishing expenses, and providing chances for professional growth. Hashem, F. (2022) conducted a study on the use of e-learning in the context of early childhood education. The study underscores the significance of incorporating e-learning into kindergarten education, emphasizing the need for teachers to receive adequate training and remain vigilant about potential risks. Furthermore, the study recommends regular assessments of courses to effectively blend e-learning with traditional teaching methods. Manian, C. (2020), conducted research on designing e-learning environments in higher education to align with technological trends. The research suggests that current trends may pose long-term challenges to academia. The study concludes by recommending strategies for establishing e-learning environments that foster improvements in student abilities within higher education. These strategies include incorporating a student-centric approach within higher institutions, encouraging a cultural shift among lecturers to cultivate a more e-learning-friendly environment, implementing a student goal-setting approach in e-learning design, adopting online student portfolios for feedback, and employing a learning strategy that utilizes digital media to reinforce a culture of learning. Ayu, M. (2020), suggests that e-learning in higher education has the potential to enhance the quality of learning and engagement. However, we should not view it as a substitute for professors or lecturers. Rather, view it as an additional tool that enhances the overall learning process. Khalaf, H., & Athali, R. (2020), investigated the challenges encountered by learners in educational institutions regarding e-learning. They discovered that the primary challenges in e-learning revolve around learners' academic skills and motivation, with the instructor's utilization of e-learning technology following closely behind. Drange, T., & Roarson, F. (2015) explored the nuances of reflecting on e-learning, presenting it as a distinct challenge. The study suggests that effective e-learning necessitates the implementation of best practices in utilizing text, images, and videos to address students' inquiries and overcome hurdles in a digital set-

ting. Additionally, it advocates for the integration of live-streaming and real-time chats to facilitate hybrid teaching approaches. Alsubhi, M., Ashaari, N., & Wook, T. (2019), examined the challenge of enhancing student engagement in e-learning platforms. The study suggests that increasing student engagement on such platforms can be accomplished by tackling familiar challenges and issues, including mundane tasks, task assessment, mobile learning, and reliance on single-mode instruction. Additionally, Hasas A. et al. (2024) delve into the viability of incorporating Internet of Things-connected devices in Afghan classrooms, stressing the significance of institutional backing to surmount technological challenges. Concurrently, Fazil, A. et al. (2023) promote cybersecurity education to guarantee digital literacy and online safety among students, especially in areas such as Badakhshan Province.

Table 1. Summary of Some Key Points from Literature Review

Reference	Key points
Valverde-Berrocoso, J., et al. (2020)	E-learning enhances teaching and learning through easily available resources and adaptable approaches.
Dinev, I., & Dineva, N. (2020)	E-learning improves academic performance and assists in language acquisition.
Thoo, A., et al. (2021)	The delivery mechanism and content of e-learning have a strong and positive correlation with user satisfaction. Nevertheless, system operations do not affect students' pleasure in e-learning.
Patil, P., & A.Chandankhede, P. (2022)	E-learning facilitates access to higher education and professional growth.
Stubbé, H., et al. (2016)	E-learning Sudan (ELS) significantly improves mathematics knowledge and student motivation, particularly in numeracy and addition.
Lawrence, A. A., et al. (2021)	Only a minority of school children have truly benefited from e-learning platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Hashem, F. (2022)	Integrating e-learning into kindergarten education requires teacher training and risk awareness.
Manian, C. (2020)	Designing e-learning environments in higher education requires adaptation to technological trends.
Ayu, M. (2020)	E-learning in higher education enhances learning quality and engagement but should supplement, not replace, professors.
Khalaf, H., & Athali, R. (2020)	Primary challenges in e-learning include learners' academic skills and motivation.

Drange, T., & Roarson, F. (2015)	Effective e-learning requires best practices in utilizing various media and hybrid teaching approaches.
Alsubhi, M., Ashaari, N., & Wook, T. (2019)	Enhancing student engagement in e-learning platforms requires addressing common challenges.
Hasas A., et al. (2024)	Incorporating Internet of Things (IoT) devices in Afghan classrooms requires institutional support to overcome challenges.
Fazil, A. et al. (2023)	Promoting cybersecurity education is crucial for ensuring digital literacy and online safety among students.

Table 1 indicates that overcoming challenges in e-learning for children requires a multifaceted approach. This includes developing skills, adopting new tools, enhancing communication, maintaining a cheerful outlook, focusing on academic skills and motivation, addressing human factors, technological infrastructure, policy, and culture, utilizing multimedia resources, implementing hybrid teaching methods, and providing technical and pedagogical training for instructors. E-learning poses both challenges and opportunities for improving educational outcomes and meeting the changing needs of learners across diverse contexts, particularly in the education of Afghan children residing abroad. However, by surmounting these obstacles, online educational platforms and Afghan children in diaspora communities can advance their learning and educational approaches, promoting increased accessibility and inclusivity in education.

The aims of this study were:

- i)* To explore the educational experiences and challenges encountered by Afghan children residing abroad in learning their native language and cultural education.
- ii)* To assess the effectiveness of online platforms like Maktab24Online in addressing the educational needs of Afghan children in diaspora communities.
- iii)* To identify key areas for improvement and enhancement of online platforms based on user feedback, with the goal of optimizing their utility as resources for Afghan children living abroad and fostering their academic success and cultural preservation.

Methodology

This study utilizes a research methodology to offer a thorough comprehension of the educational experiences and challenges faced by Afghan children abroad. It evaluates

the efficacy of platforms like Maktab24Online in meeting their needs and identifies opportunities for enhancing these platforms to foster academic success and cultural preservation. Employing a case study approach, the study selected Maktab24Online due to its extensive experience in the field and its recognition as one of the pioneering Afghan online education platforms in this context. The study used case studies and phenomenology approaches. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that centers on investigating an individual's subjective experiences within the world (Neubauer, B. E., et al., 2019). The case study analysis utilized Yin's (1994) methodology, as suggested by K. Yin (2018). Applying fundamental concepts and methodologies while organizing and conducting qualitative research in educational communications and technology can result in positive outcomes (Neuman, D. 2014). This study employed a qualitative approach, which entailed conducting thorough interviews with important individuals, including students and the parents of the children. Employing purposive sampling can increase the credibility of research findings among stakeholders and strengthen the rigor of the study (Denieffe, S. 2020). This study used purposive sampling to select a wide range of demographics, including students currently enrolled in Maktab24Online. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, providing participants with a platform to express their viewpoints, experiences, and challenges regarding e-learning. Additionally, secondary data was collected from the platform's website as well as various scientific databases. Qualitative data undergo thematic analysis, where patterns, themes, and categories are discerned from interview transcripts and focus group discussions. This method entails coding, categorizing, and interpreting qualitative data to extract meaningful insights and themes concerning challenges and opportunities in e-learning, particularly for children's education. The study adhered rigorously to ethical rules and principles. Obtaining informed consent from all participants thoroughly ensures their voluntary participation and data confidentiality. The study places paramount importance on upholding, promoting, and guaranteeing fairness in all interactions with participants and stakeholders.

Description of case study - Maktab24Online Platform

Afghan communities have faced the consequences of migration, such as cultural estrangement and identity disintegration, due to sustained conflict and relocation lasting

more than four decades. Platforms like Maktab24Online acknowledge the need to address these challenges by offering easily available online education specifically designed for diaspora children and adults. This approach aims to cultivate a sense of connection to their heritage and cultural identity. Maktab24Online is a pioneering and innovative online platform in Afghanistan, developed in 2021, aiming to connect Afghan diaspora communities and overcome cultural and language barriers, with a specific focus on young learners. It also has branches in Türkiye and the United States of America. Qualified educators directly from Afghanistan lead the platform, providing individualized instruction that prioritizes the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage, language competency, and cultural teachings. The platform aims to establish an optimal learning environment that promotes the preservation of language, culture, and spiritual teachings. The platform provides comprehensive online educational services to the dispersed Afghan diaspora population worldwide, with a particular focus on Europe and the United States. Additionally, it endeavors to empower learners through personalized training and culturally relevant content. Simultaneously, the platform strives to generate online employment opportunities for women who faced restrictions on working under the Taliban regime. By facilitating access to cultural and linguistic education, Maktab24Online enables individuals to maintain a strong connection to their heritage while navigating the complexities of life in diverse cultural contexts overseas. Despite the Taliban's current ban on women working in Afghanistan (Qazizada, M., 2024), platforms like Maktab24Online have strategically responded by exclusively recruiting female teachers from Afghanistan. This initiative not only addresses the educational challenges faced by Afghan children residing abroad but also empowers women by offering them independent work opportunities within Afghanistan.

Description of sample beneficiaries

Maktab24Online has authorized the survey and provided additional reports and documents required for the study. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all subjects and stakeholders before the study. While some qualitative research scholars avoid specifying the exact number of interviews needed, it is evident that there is variability in the recommended minimum. Many studies suggest that a range of 5 to 50 participants is adequate for conducting qualitative survey research (Dworkin, S. L. 2012). In this re-

search, the sample beneficiaries were intentionally chosen to ensure a diverse representation of individuals actively engaged in Maktab24Online, comprising 14 participants, including 9 females and 5 males. These beneficiaries represent a varied group from different global locations, reflecting the platform's extensive reach and impact, with either themselves or their children actively participating in Maktab24Online courses. Collectively, these narratives illustrate the outcomes achieved through various interventions aimed at enhancing the educational experiences of Afghan children abroad in learning their native languages and preserving their culture.

Results And Discussions

Maktab24Online's outreach appears to be substantial, with survey respondents indicating access the platform mostly from the United States (71.4%) and Europe (28.6%), highlighting its reach among the target audience of Afghan children abroad.

The participants were asked about the duration of their stay abroad. Data in this regard show that children resettled from Afghanistan fall into four distinct groups based on their duration of stay in their new environment. The "Newly Resettled" (14.3%) require immediate cultural and educational support. "Adjusting" children (21.4%) are adapting to a new system, while those "Settling In" (35.7%) need programs to deepen their learning. The "Established" (28.6%) benefit from services like Maktab24Online to maintain cultural identity and receive advanced educational support. Considering this result, it's clear that while all groups may benefit from educational support services like Maktab24Online, the focus of the support might differ. For example, newer arrivals might require basic language education and acculturation assistance, while those who have been abroad for many years might benefit more from advanced academic support and cultural education programs. This underscores the importance of Maktab24Online's flexibility and adaptability in providing resources that cater to a wide range of needs within the Afghan diaspora, effectively bridging educational gaps. Interview results show that most respondents have children of primary school age (6 to 10 years). This suggests a significant demand for educational support targeted towards foundational learning, which is critical at this stage. Maktab24Online should primarily focus on educational materials and programs suitable for primary school-aged children, as they rep-

resent the bulk of the need. This aligns with bridging educational gaps, as the foundational years are crucial for setting up educational success later. Secondary education also remains important, but with fewer children in this category, the resources could be more targeted. The absence of very young and adult children in the responses could indicate that the current demand for Maktab24Online services is concentrated around the compulsory schooling years, which are vital for integrating into a new educational system and maintaining cultural ties for Afghan children living abroad. Half of the respondents' children (50%) are enrolled in Holy Quran Courses, reflecting an interest in religious education, potentially crucial for maintaining cultural and religious identity abroad. Persian Language Courses are popular, with 64.3% participation, highlighting the community's commitment to preserving its linguistic heritage and staying connected to its culture and 7.1% of children are enrolled in Pashto Language Courses. The preference for Persian and Pashto language courses may reflect the linguistic background of the Afghan diaspora this survey sampled or a broader trend in language retention needs among Afghan children abroad. The significant uptake of the Holy Quran course highlights the importance of religious education in Afghan community. These insights could inform how Maktab24Online tailors its curriculum. Enhancing the availability and quality of diverse language courses. Most of the surveyed children are regularly engaging with Maktab24Online, mostly three times a week (85.7%). This high level of engagement is indicative of the trust and value placed on the platform by Afghan families living abroad. It shows that Maktab24Online is likely fulfilling its mission to bridge educational gaps by providing a stable and consistent educational environment for Afghan children. The frequency of attendance suggests that the platform might be providing a structured educational framework that could be particularly valuable for families who may not have access to adequate in-person educational facilities or are seeking specific cultural or linguistic instruction that aligns with their heritage. This also reflects a significant reliance on Maktab24Online for educational content. This could indicate that the platform's offerings are well-integrated into the children's weekly routines and might be a key component of their education. A notable 35.7% of respondents find Maktab24Online platform "very effective", indicating it meets a critical need and provides a high-quality educational experience. The majority, comprising 64.3%, view the platform as somewhat effective, signaling positive impact but also room for improve-

ment. This feedback presents an opportunity to identify strengths and areas for enhancement. The combined positive feedback (very effective and somewhat effective) points to a generally successful perception of Maktab24Online in providing educational services to Afghan children abroad. The fact that no respondents rated it as ineffective is promising and suggests that the initiative is on the right track. The significant number of respondents who rated the platform as "somewhat effective" could signal a need for a closer examination of how the platform could evolve to become "very effective" for a larger segment of its user base. Insights from this group could guide strategic improvements, whether that means diversifying the curriculum, increasing interactivity, providing more personalized learning experiences, or enhancing support services. Addressing these areas could further strengthen the platform's capacity to bridge educational gaps. The most recognized advantage of Maktab24Online, acknowledged by 78.6% of respondents, was Access to Courses on Native Culture and Language, Which May Not Be Available Locally. This indicates that most respondents find significant value in the Maktab24Online's offerings related to their native culture or language, supporting the study's goal of educational bridging. This feedback reinforces the need for educational opportunities that honor the cultural and linguistic heritage of Afghan children abroad, with a strong emphasis on the accessibility of native culture or language courses. The appreciation for cultural content and direct learning support from Afghanistan aligns with the goal of Maktab24Online. It also highlights the value of personalized learning and schedule flexibility, which can be crucial for families adapting to new environments and schedules. The lack of emphasis on cost and course diversity suggests these are not primary concerns for the user base or areas where this platform might need to evaluate its market perception and offerings. These insights can guide Maktab24Online in refining its services to enhance its effectiveness and cater to the most valued aspects of its education model. Participants were asked to share their opinions on whether they have observed improvements in their children's learning since they began taking courses from Maktab24Online. Most respondents (71.4%) report significant enhancements in their children's learning, indicating that Maktab24Online's educational services are highly effective for most users. This feedback reflects positively on the platform's ability to achieve its goal of improving educational outcomes for Afghan children abroad. While most respondents have noticed improvements, a portion (28.6%) have only ob-

served slight enhancements. This variation may suggest that although the overall trend is positive, the extent of impact varies among users. Factors such as children's engagement with the program, the alignment of content with their educational needs, or external influences could influence the rate of improvement. The overall positive feedback, with all respondents noting some level of improvement, suggests that Maktab24Online is effectively facilitating educational progress for Afghan children abroad. Distinguishing between 'significant' and 'slight' improvements can offer valuable insights for Maktab24Online to further tailor or enhance its offerings. Understanding why some users experience only slight improvements could assist the platform in identifying and addressing specific challenges to maximize its effectiveness, ensuring that it not only expands access to education but also enriches the quality of learning experiences for all students. Participants were asked about the opportunities they believe platforms like Maktab24Online can offer Afghan children to learn their native language and culture. Half of the respondents (50%) value the direct connection to Afghan teachers, seeing it to maintain continuity and authenticity in education, underscoring the importance of preserving ties to Afghanistan's educational and cultural heritage. On the other hand, 14.3% of respondents appreciate the exposure to a variety of learning resources, recognizing the diversity of educational materials available. Over a third (35.7%) acknowledge the significance of both flexible learning pacing and the preservation of cultural identity, highlighting the platform's role in sustaining Afghan culture overseas. A similar percentage (14.3%) recognizes the development of digital skills as a crucial opportunity provided by the online platform. The distribution of responses indicates that while there are multiple valued aspects of Maktab24Online, direct engagement with Afghan instructors and the cultural component of the education stands out as particularly appreciated. This aligns with the platform's mission to bridge educational gaps by not only addressing academic needs but also reinforcing cultural ties. The emphasis on flexible pacing and cultural heritage preservation demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the educational requirements within the diaspora. Strengthening the recognition of digital skills and familiarity with resources could further solidify the platform's position as a comprehensive educational solution for Afghan children living abroad. Participants were asked to provide feedback on how Maktab24Online can enhance opportunities for their children's learning. The development of a variety of courses (50%) was identified

by participants as the most frequently noted area for improvement, indicating a desire for a broader range of subjects. This expansion could personalize and enrich the educational experience for students with diverse interests and needs. A significant portion of respondents (42.9%) expressed interest in partnerships with higher education institutions, suggesting a demand for pathways to advanced education and recognition of the importance of aligning Maktab24Online curricula with higher education standards and opportunities. Expanding the curriculum directly addresses the need for comprehensive education across various subjects and skills. Improving the user experience and enhancing social aspects of learning could increase engagement and retention, further facilitating educational progress. The desire for collaboration with higher education institutions indicates an ambition not only to provide foundational learning but also to prepare students for academic advancement and professional success. Moreover, the interest in offline access underscores the importance of ensuring education is accessible under varying circumstances, contributing to creating equal opportunities for all students. By addressing these areas, Maktab24Online can strengthen its role in offering robust, inclusive, and forward-thinking educational opportunities. Participants also provided insights into the perceived challenges Afghan children living abroad face in learning and maintaining their cultural heritage. A significant challenge identified (57.1%) is the pressure children face to assimilate into the foreign culture they are living in, making it difficult to maintain their own cultural practices and values. This assimilation pressure is compounded by the difficulty in finding accessible teachers who can impart Afghan culture and language (35.7%), posing a substantial barrier to cultural education. Additionally, being physically distant from Afghanistan (57.1%) limits children's direct exposure to Afghan culture, crucial for a rich, immersive learning experience. While security concerns were not identified as a barrier (0%), language differences (35.7%) hinder the ability of children to learn about their own culture, especially when resources are not available in a language they understand well. Respondents also point to resource limitations (21.4%), impacting the effectiveness of teaching and learning Afghan culture. However, the lack of concern over financial barriers (0%) suggests that costs associated with accessing cultural education may not be prohibitive for this respondent group. Moreover, the lack of understanding from others (21.4%) highlights the social dimension of learning culture, where empathy and understanding from the surrounding com-

munity are crucial for fostering a supportive environment for cultural education. The pressures of assimilation and distance from Afghanistan suggest a need for initiatives that allow children to connect with their heritage despite being embedded in a foreign culture. The identified challenges emphasize the importance of providing accessible cultural and linguistic resources, possibly through online platforms like Maktab24Online, which can offer instruction and materials regardless of geographical constraints. Addressing language barriers and finding qualified teachers are also critical steps toward ensuring that Afghan culture can be taught and preserved effectively. While security and financial limitations were not highlighted, this does not diminish the relevance of addressing the other identified barriers to enhance the educational experiences of Afghan children in the diaspora. The results on the usefulness of Maktab24Online reveal that over half of the respondents (57.1%) firmly believe that Maktab24Online is highly beneficial for their children, indicating a strong alignment between the platform's offerings and their educational needs and aspirations. Moreover, a smaller portion of respondents (42.9%) find Maktab24Online somewhat useful, suggesting an acknowledgment of its advantages while also identifying areas for improvement or potential features that could enhance its efficacy. The overall positive perception of Maktab24Online's utility is promising, signaling its effectiveness in providing educational opportunities to Afghan children abroad. The fact that all respondents perceive it to be at least somewhat useful indicates that the platform is moving in the right direction with its educational approach. However, the variance in the perceived level of usefulness highlights areas for potential growth. By delving into why some respondents only view it as somewhat useful, the platform can adapt and expand its services to enhance its perceived value. Eventually, participants expressed their willingness to recommend Maktab24online to others. A staggering 92.9% of respondents express a strong endorsement for Maktab24Online, indicating a high level of satisfaction and a readiness to advocate for it, thereby highlighting its perceived effectiveness in meeting its objectives. Conversely, a mere 7.1% of users refrain from recommending the school. Unraveling the motives behind this reluctance is pivotal for Maktab24Online to identify and rectify any potential shortcomings, thereby enhancing its offerings and overall user satisfaction. The fact that most surveyed users would recommend the platform indicates its perceived value as a resource for teaching and learning, for kids. A high recommenda-

tion rate (92.9%) shows a robust vote of confidence in the platform's ability to address educational gaps.

Conclusion

The thematic analysis of survey data from users of Maktab24Online reveals a multifaceted impact on the Afghan diaspora, particularly on children's education abroad. With significant usage reported in the United States and Europe, the platform's reach is substantial, reflecting its relevance and necessity among Afghan communities outside their homeland. Survey respondents have identified a varied demand for educational support based on their children's time since resettlement, with newly resettled families requiring immediate support and established ones seeking to maintain their cultural identity. This variance emphasizes the platform's critical role in offering adaptable and flexible educational resources to meet these differing needs. Primary education emerges as a focal point, with a major concentration on children aged 6 to 10 years, indicating the need for foundational educational support. Courses in religious education and the Persian language are notably popular, signifying a strong desire to preserve cultural and linguistic heritage. This is further bolstered by the respondents' frequent engagement with the platform, mostly three times a week, showcasing Maktab24Online as a cornerstone in their children's educational routines. While the platform is considered 'very effective' or 'somewhat effective' by a majority, this feedback loop offers a chance to identify areas ripe for enhancement to maximize its educational impact. Moreover, the platform is lauded for providing access to native culture or language courses and is recommended by an overwhelming majority of users, a testament to its value within the community. However, challenges in learning and maintaining Afghan culture are noted, with assimilation pressures and distance from Afghanistan being predominant concerns. Addressing these through accessible and quality education that incorporates cultural elements is crucial. Nevertheless, Maktab24Online stands out as a vital educational bridge for Afghan children abroad, with opportunities for growth identified in broadening course variety, enhancing user experience, and fostering partnerships with higher education institutions. The platform's effectiveness, reflected in the strong willingness to recommend and the recognition of its utility, underscores its success while also guiding potential strategies for continued improvement and expanded impact (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Main Findings

Finding	Key Insights
Geographic reach of Maktab24Online	Majority of users from the United States (71.4%) and Europe (28.6%).
Duration of stay abroad for Afghan children	Four groups identified: Newly Resettled (14.3%), Adjusting (21.4%), Settling In (35.7%), Established (28.6%).
Age distribution of children enrolled	Majority are primary school-aged (6 to 10 years), indicating a significant demand for foundational learning.
Enrollment in holy Quran and language courses	50% enrolled in Holy Quran, 64.3% in Persian, and 7.1% in Pashto courses, reflecting cultural and religious interests.
Frequency of engagement with Maktab24Online	Most children engage three times a week (85.7%), indicating high trust and value placed on the platform.
Effectiveness of Maktab24Online	35.7% find it "very effective", 64.3% "somewhat effective", showing overall positive perception.
Most recognized advantage of Maktab24Online	78.6% value access to native culture/language courses, underscoring the importance of cultural preservation.
Improvement in children's learning since enrolling in Maktab24Online	71.4% report significant enhancements, while 28.6% note slight improvements, indicating positive impact.
Opportunities offered by Maktab24Online for Afghan children abroad	Direct connection to Afghan instructors (50%), exposure to diverse learning resources (14.3%), and more.
Feedback on enhancing opportunities for learning	Desire for variety in courses (50%) and partnerships with higher education institutions (42.9%).
Challenges in learning and maintaining cultural heritage	Assimilation pressure (57.1%), challenges in finding accessible/qualified teachers (35.7%), and more.
Perceived usefulness of Maktab24Online	57.1% find it highly beneficial, while 42.9% find it somewhat useful, indicating positive perception overall.
Willingness to recommend Maktab24Online	92.9% express strong endorsement, highlighting perceived effectiveness, with only 7.1% refraining from recommending.

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Appendix

Table 3. Survey Questionnaire on Maktab24Online Usage and Experience

Category	Question	Options
Location	Where do you live?	Asia, America, Europe, Africa, Other
Duration of living outside Afghanistan	How long have you been living outside Afghanistan?	Less than 1 year, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 7 years, more than 7 years

Children's Ages	How old are your children?	Under 5 years old, 6 to 10 years old, 11 to 18 years old, over 19 years old
Educational Content	What type of educational content do your children have access to on Maktab24 Online School?	Quran course, religious sciences course, Dari-Persian language, Pashto language, English language, Computer education, Mathematics, Specialized courses, Other
Attendance Frequency	How many times a week do your children attend Maktab24 Online School?	Daily, Once a week, twice a week, Three times a week, more than 4 times a week
Effectiveness of Maktab24	How do you evaluate the role of Maktab24 Online School in facilitating and creating educational opportunities?	Very effective, somewhat effective, not effective at all
Benefits of Using Maktab24	What benefits do you see from using Maktab24 Online School?	Access to educational content related to Afghan culture, Direct educational support from Afghanistan, Flexibility in scheduling, Lower cost compared to traditional options, Access to courses related to culture or mother tongue not available outside Afghanistan, Variety of educational courses, Personalized education - tailored to students' individual needs, Other
Improvements in Learning	Have you observed significant improvements in your children's learning since starting with Maktab24 Online School?	Yes, significant improvements, yes, minor improvements, no, no significant improvements observed
Opportunities Created by Maktab24	What opportunities do platforms like Maktab24 Online School create for your children?	Direct connection with teachers from Afghanistan, Exposure to diverse learning resources, Flexibility in learning methods, Preparation for preserving

		cultural heritage, Enhancement of digital skills, Other
Enhancements for Maktab24	How do you think Maktab24 Online School can further enhance educational opportunities for your children?	Development of course diversity, offering non-attendance access options (offline), Improving user experience, enhancing communication and interaction features among students, Creating virtual educational opportunities in collaboration with higher education institutions, Other
Challenges for Afghan Children	What challenges do Afghan children living outside the country face in terms of learning and understanding Afghan culture?	Pressures of assimilating foreign cultures, Difficulty in finding instructors, Distance from Afghanistan, Security concerns, Language barriers, Resource limitations, financial constraints, Lack of understanding from others, Other.
Perceived Benefit of Maktab24	To what extent do you think Maktab24 Online School is beneficial for your children?	Very beneficial, somewhat beneficial, No, not beneficial at all
Recommendation of Maktab24	Would you recommend Maktab24 Online School to others?	Yes, highly recommend, no, do not recommend
Other Opinions	Do you have any other opinions?	