



Intelligence, Sapiemotionality, and Educational Impact: Perspectives from Afghan University Instructors

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Abstract This qualitative study aimed to investigate Afghan EFL instructors' perspectives towards the elites' personal and professional lives under the unstable socio-political situation of Afghanistan, and their impact on university students' academic achievements. The data were collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 11 EFL instructors of Herat University, Afghanistan. The data were analyzed thematically considering themes such as individual, society, and politicians' as well as authorities' sapiemotionality. The findings indicated that individual sapiemotionality is high; Afghans appreciate and encourage elites. However, the society's and politicians' sapiemotionality is low. The unstable socio-political situation of Afghanistan has always had a negative impact on the professional and personal lives of elites, as a result of this chaotic situation a vast majority of elites and academics fled Afghanistan and migrated to Western and European countries. The findings also showed that the elites play a positive role in encouraging students' academic performance. The study's implications and further research directions were also discussed.

Keywords: *Sapiemotionality, Intelligence, Society, Emotions, Academic achievement*

1. Introduction

Afghanistan, located at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, has been going through socio-political as well as economic transformations during the last five decades. Several years of war and internal conflicts associated with foreign countries' interferences have had a devastating impact on different arenas in general and Afghanistan's education system in particular (Kakar et al., 2020; Sarwari, 2018). As a result, different regimes coming into power tried to influence the curriculum for their interests. Afghan scholars, scientists, and elites have always been struggling with an unknown and complicated personal and professional life. With the recent political transformation in Afghanistan, and with the Taliban seizing power, a huge number of elites, scholars, and university professors left Afghanistan and took refuge in European and Western countries. This chaotic

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situation, elites fleeing their country, has had a destructive impact on Afghanistan's academia. In other words, the academics and elites are no longer interested in settling in a traditionally dominated society where they cannot freely continue their academic activities. Therefore, elites decide not to wait and see what others do for them but instead prefer to build their lives in a context where their ideologies and academic activities are respected (Pishghadam, 2024).

According to Pishghadam et al. (2021), sapioemotionality refers to the type of feelings and emotions, which could be positive, negative, and/or neutral, people express when they encounter the intelligent. People in academia are particularly expected to admire and appreciate the intellectual ability of elites and intelligent ones. People's reactions towards intelligence and elites are embedded in their culture and linguistic expression. Further, the authors discussed several reasons why the intelligent and elites are not admired as much as they deserve. The elites' low income and poor economic condition, lack of support for elites from the society, the emphasis of social media on the athletes and artists, and overeducation and credentialism are the indicators that the elites are not well appreciated.

As stated earlier, internal war and conflicts as well as negative and controversial perspectives toward knowledge acquisition have had destructive impacts on Afghanistan's education system and academic elites. As a result of the recent political changes in Afghanistan, with the collapse of the previous regime and the Taliban seizing power for the second time in Afghanistan, the majority of the academic elites have fled the country, girls' education is banned, and boys' education is dominated by religious and political doctrines. Therefore, it is important to investigate the concept of sapioemotionality in connection to the recent socio-political situation in Afghanistan and its impacts on elites and academic personal, and professional lives. Further, since sapioemotionality has not been studied in an Afghan context which has its unique features, it is important to study how the Afghan culture perceives elites. The researcher attempted to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How does the Afghan culture perceive academic elites?
2. How does the unstable socio-political situation of Afghanistan influence academic elites' personal and professional lives?
3. In what ways do elites influence university students' academic achievements?

2. Theoretical Framework

The following section reviews the available literature on sapioemotionality from four perspectives; namely, psychometric, social, political, and individual. Further, the idea of who an intelligent person is will be discussed from various perspectives.

2.1. Perspectives on Sapioemotionality

Sapioemotionally refers to people's reactions towards intelligent people. Different cultures may react to wise and intelligent people differently. According to Pishghadam et al. (2021), sapioemotionality which takes its origin in the relationship between language, psyche, and behavior, refers to the type of feelings and emotions people express when they encounter the intelligent ones. In a similar vein, RashidTorabi (2022) stated that sapioemotionality refers to the people's feelings and experiences when they think and meet an intelligent person; further, sapioemotionality includes two sub-constructs of individual and society. Intelligence encompassed a wide range of skills and was dependent on several "higher" psychological capacities, including attention, memory, imagination, common sense, judgment, and abstraction (Roid & Pomplun, 2012). Furthermore, according to Pishghadam et al. (2021), sapioemotionality is defined from four different perspectives: psychometric (intelligence), social (Intelligence), political (intelligence), and individual (*intelligence*).

From a psychometric perspective, intelligence is thought to be created in the brain, playing an essential role in contributing to the development of individuals and society. If individuals operate based on this feature of intelligence, society may experience promotion and excellence (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012; Pishghadam et al., 2021).

According to the social perspective of intelligence, different categories of people, such as ordinary people, academics, or society, may have their own definitions of intelligence (Pishghadam et al., 2021).

For example, "a housemaker might have a different opinion from an engineer about the meaning and definition of intelligence. While some might consider a person with a strong memory as intelligent, others regard language ability as the manifestation of intelligence" (Pishghadam et al., 2021, p. 18). The epistemological metaphor owes Piaget just as much as the sociological metaphor does to Vygotsky (1978). Piaget (2005) believed that intelligence developed from the inside out, whereas Vygotsky believed that intelligence emerged from the outside in. According to Esterabadi (2023), while intelligence humility refers to a condition in which an individual may not feel intelligent but is nevertheless deemed intelligent based on their behaviors, real intelligence denotes a situation in which the individual is seen and recognized as intelligent.

Intelligence is also described by politicians, administrations, and people in power. Different government and administrative organizations and institutes label people as intelligent and non-intelligent based on their specific measurement criteria, such as the university entrance exam (Kankour), which is common in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan (Pishghadam et al., 2021).

Individuals may have a feeling and/or an idea about his/her intelligence which can be reflected in his/her behavior/reactions to others, and this feeling can increase his/her self-esteem. This perspective towards intelligence is called individual intelligence. Further, individual intelligence is affected by how politicians, psychometricians, and society define intelligence (Pishghadam et al., 2021).

2.2. Theories to Examine Intelligence

Computers are used as a metaphor in computational theories of intelligence to describe what intelligence is. They describe what occurs in the mind when people participate in intellectual activity using phrases like information processing. Why explain what intelligence is or how it functions, one could wonder. Consider an automobile as you try to find the answer to this. We are aware that engines are necessary for cars to function just as we are aware that abilities are necessary for acting sensibly. This explanation may be sufficient for many of us, but if we want to move beyond simply describing our car—for example, if we want to be able to identify and address issues—we must also understand how engines operate (Cianciolo et al., 2004).

The relationship between the cognitive mechanisms described in computational theories and actual neurological activities, however, is unclear because human thinking is not like that of a computer. Understanding the biological underpinnings of intelligence can help us comprehend what exactly transpires during information processing in the brain and how variations in this activity result in variations in intelligent behavior (Thagard, 2013). It is typical for computational theorists to be indifferent to individual differences. Due to this, these theorists have not always been quick to understand that there is frequently no one information-processing model that is consistently true for all people, whether it be about performance on a specific task or performance on classes of tasks. Instead, there may be individual variances in the methods and techniques that various people employ to tackle a certain problem or class of problems (Sternberg, 2020).

Biologically based theories typically examine intelligence in terms of how the brain and, more specifically, the central nervous system, function. Due to how poorly understood the brain is currently, biological theories are still mostly in the development stage. But, some of them have gone a long way (Haier, 2016).

In the same vein, tests were designed to measure intelligence. The major tests that continue to use the IQ today, use the more recent measurement, sometimes known as the deviation IQ. The deviation IQ is no longer a quotient, despite the name. Instead, IQs are currently calculated by comparing a person's performance or raw score on an intelligence test to standards defined by the performance of a representative group of people in the person's age range, known as a normative or standardization sample (Oommen, 2014; Urbina, 2014).

Do intelligence tests measure intelligence? No, is the quick and easy response to this query. An examination of the definitions of the terms used in the question may help to clarify the answer given that semantics play a significant role in it. To measure something is to assign numbers or labels to

objects, events, or people by some defined system or criteria. This definition of measure is clear-cut. We can conclude that intelligence tests do indeed measure something based on this criterion. Since they generate numbers, which are then given to test-takers' replies on the behavior samples that make up each exam, they must do it by predetermined standards or regulations (Urbina, 2014).

Employing the terms "intelligence" or "universal ability" today would effectively prejudice the issue that there might not be such a thing as intelligence. Because the idea of intelligence implies a kind of "general cognitive aptitude," it is assumed that those who succeed in one area (like memory) will also likely thrive in other areas (e.g., spatial skills, and the use of language). Notwithstanding the possibility that this is the case, it appears preferable to speak more broadly in terms of "abilities," among which "general ability," "general intelligence," or "g" may or may not be one, depending on the results of the evidence (Cooper, 2015).

2.3. Intelligence and Language Learning

According to Pishghadam and Khajavy (2013), there are two opposing theories regarding the relationship between intelligence and language learning. The first holds that learning a language is distinct from learning other subjects and that intelligence has no bearing on language learning, while the second contends that learning a language is similar to learning other skills and that intelligence is a predictor of learning. The second hypothesis is supported by Pishghadam and Khajavy's (2013) findings showing that intellect played a distinctive role in predicting proficiency in foreign languages. The study's findings revealed that intellect and metacognition alone explained 12.2% and 17.6% of the variance in proficiency in foreign languages, respectively. Together, intellect and metacognition accounted for 23% of the variation in proficiency in foreign languages, and each of them had a different effect. The results implied that, even though metacognition predicts foreign language proficiency more strongly than IQ, we cannot discount the special significance of intelligence as a predictor of foreign language proficiency. Hence, the study proved that intelligence plays a similar role in language learning, and its distinctive contribution in this area cannot be disregarded.

There are two main perspectives on the relationship between intelligence and language learning, particularly in the field of language education. The ability to learn a new language requires a specific set of skills that is different from other cognitive processes. Research has shown that while some children are good language learners despite having low IQs, others who have high IQs are terrible at language acquisition. In general, the modularity theory seems to be more in accord with how minds work (Pishghadam, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of the current study are Afghan university instructors recruited through purposeful sampling criteria. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), purposeful sampling helps the researcher select their participants among those who have a better and deeper understanding of the topic under study. The instructor participants were all Afghan university instructors with a minimum of five years of teaching experience.

Table 1

Participants Demographic Information

No.	Pseudonyms	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Degree
1	Ahmad	Male	20	MA
2	Sara	Female	12	PhD Candidate
3	Mohammad	Male	13	PhD
4	Omar	Male	10	MA
5	Kabir	Male	13	PhD Candidate
6	Baran	Female	5	PhD Candidate
7	Fatemah	Female	12	MA
8	Basir	Male	5	BA

9	Fareshteh	Female	3	BA
10	Shakib	Male	5	MA
11	Rahmat	Male	10	MA

3.2. Instrument

Semi-structured interview protocol for the qualitative data collection was developed. According to Galleta (2013), semi-structured interviews address certain parts of the research questions, give the researcher a free hand to add follow-up questions and provide the participants and the interviewees to add their lived experiences and perspectives to the topic of the research. The participants were invited for face-to-face interviews and each interview lasted about an hour where the participants were given enough time to share their experiences and the researcher had follow-up questions.

3.3. Procedures

A qualitative research data analysis includes data organization and preparation, emerging themes, and reducing the data into themes using techniques such as tables, figures, and discussions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, all the audio-recorded sessions were transcribed. Gay et al. (2012) noted that the recorded interviews as well as their transcriptions play a significant role in the qualitative data analysis. All the recorded sessions were listened to several times to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. The audio-recorded files were saved in a password-protected file on the researcher's laptop.

Based on Khalid (2020), a thematic analysis was done. First, the researcher went through the interview transcriptions and made notes of significant ideas. Second, the emerging themes were organized into major and sub-themes. Further, the themes were organized chronologically to ensure the connection between them.

4. Results

This section discusses the data collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 Afghan university instructors. The data were analyzed thematically. Table 2 summarizes the major and minor themes.

Table 2

Themes Emerged from Semi-Structured Interviews

Major Themes	Sub- Themes
Participants' Attitudes toward Academic Elites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive attitudes toward elites 2. Positive effects of elites on participants' social and professional lives
Society and Authorities' Attitudes Towards Academic Elites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of social support for elites 2. Authorities' negative attitudes toward elites 3. Elites lack of motivation and interest in continuing academic activities
Academic Elite's Effects on Students' Academic Achievements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive effects of elites on students' performance 2. Elites as role models

4.1. Interviewed Participants' Attitudes toward Academic Elites

To start with a brief introduction to the participants' perspectives if they consider themselves academic elites, half of the participants positively answered this question and claimed themselves to be academic elites. The main reason why they believed they were academic elites was their experiences in academia. Each interviewed participant has stated to have several years of teaching experience at the university, and have been engaged in academic activities. According to the participants, working in an academic context is an indication of being considered an academic elite. Ahmad stated:

According to my experiences in two departments for more than 11 years as the departments' head, and instructor and working in different committees such as quality assurance and

examinations, I can say that I have become an elite and it has been difficult because it requires an academic degree, but considering my experiences I can say, yes, I am an elite.

In contrast, some of the interviewed participants believed that they do not consider themselves academic elites because becoming an elite requires a lot of hard work, publications, and experiences. Kabir Mentioned, *"I wouldn't necessarily consider myself an academic elite, but I do have a lot of experience and knowledge in my field."*

The participants were asked about their attitudes towards the academic elites and how they [academic elites] influenced their lives in general and their academic lives in particular. All the interviewed instructors' participants revealed a positive attitude towards the academic elites and expressed their emotions and feelings by using words such as proud, happy, and delighted. The participants stated they become so happy when they meet/see the academic elites. Rahmat emphasized the important role the elites played in his life; he mentioned, *"They served as a role model for me. I tried to follow in their footsteps and construct a successful professional identity. I could learn from their teaching methods and research skills."*

Basir Stated, *"I am so proud and delighted when I see an academic elite, it gives me energy and it inspires me a lot."* Similarly, Mohammad mentioned. *"I feel proud to face them and sit with them and learn. One day, I hope I become an academic elite who would try to inspire others."* Kabir pointed out, *"I don't feel intimidated by academic elites, but rather, I see them as role models who I can learn from and aspire to be like."*

Further, the participants described the academic elites' role in shaping their character and who they are today positively and emphasized the important role the academic elites played in their both personal and academic lives. Mohamad believed that his colleagues and his professors played a significantly important role in shaping his academic life and who he is today. He mentioned that he likes to learn from those who he believes know more than him and those who are highly engaged in research-related activities. In a similar vein, Kabir mentioned that the academic elites he knows inspired him and encouraged him to become the person he is today. Their hard work, enthusiasm, and commitment positively influenced his life and inspired him to follow them.

To conclude, almost all of the current study's participants have shown a positive attitude towards academic elites and emphasized their important role in shaping their personality and academic lives. Furthermore, the participants stated that they are proud of the elites and are delighted to see them in their surroundings, especially in their workplace, and to follow them as their role models.

4.2. Society and Authorities' Attitudes towards Academic Elites

The findings revealed different perspectives about the Afghan society and authorities' attitudes toward the elites. The results indicated that almost all of the interviewed participants believed that the society they live do not support, encourage, and appreciate academic elites. The participants discussed the recent political transformation as the main cause of the lack of respect and appreciation for the academic elites. Mohammad Mentioned:

This question would have a seriously sad response. Unfortunately, what you see in our country, the chaos, is due to the lack of respect for the academic elites. No one, even the students who had studied under those "elites" are not respectful to them let alone the people who may or may not have heard their names.

Ahmad's answer to this question is different compared to the rest of the participants. He believed that there were two main groups of people living in the society he lived. Some people are educated themselves and they know the value of knowledge; therefore, they respect, acknowledge, and admire the academic elites. Yet, some people are not educated but they are wealthy as well as in power, who do not care about the academic elites and do not appreciate academic work and activities.

Rahmat mentioned that the government does not provide enough resources and facilities for the elites to get promotions. He stated:

Workplace authorities behave satisfactorily on the surface level, yet they do not provide the necessary resources for academic Elites to develop their knowledge and skills and also get promotions. It is partly because tough institutional budget and partly because of not acknowledging the significance of elites on the society's growth and expansion.

Regarding the attitudes of the government and the authorities toward the academic elites and whether they encourage the academic elites to grow and make promotions in society, all of the participants agreed on the same idea that the Afghan authorities and the government do not encourage the academic elites. Some of the participants, specifically, stated political issues as the main reason why the academic elites in Afghan society do not receive any support and appreciation from the government and the authorities. Rahmat stated, *"They do not receive well recognition and respect as it was expected. The academic elites live in a bad economic condition and they have been limited by social and political realities of Afghanistan context."*

Mohamamd believed that the academic elites are not motivated and encouraged any longer to continue their academic and research activities. According to Mohammad, *"Unfortunately, the real academic elites are demotivated, discouraged, threatened, and nullified from every good opportunity. They were never promoted or even respected in the workplace."*

4.3. Academic Elite's Effects on Students' Academic Achievements

A majority of the participants discussed the current situation of the Afghan academic elites to be fragile and challenging, which has negatively influenced the university students' lives. The findings indicated that the government does not pay attention to the elites, therefore, students are discouraged from seeing the current situation of the elites. Mohammad said:

The situation is so fragile. If the students were inspired, we wouldn't be facing this chaos right now. If they ever respected and followed the teachings of the elites, we wouldn't have this situation.

The findings also revealed that the interviewed participants encouraged their students to become academic elites. As a result, Kabir mentioned that he always tries to inspire his students by sharing his knowledge with them. He mentioned, *"I try to inspire my future students to become academic elites by sharing my own experiences and knowledge with them, and encouraging them to pursue their interests and passions."*

The interviewed participants believed that those students who have a positive attitude towards the academic elites have higher academic achievements compared to those who do not respect and follow the academic elites. Kabir mentioned that students who have a positive attitude toward the academic elites are more successful. He said:

I think that students who have positive attitudes towards elites may be more likely to achieve academic success, as they are motivated by the example set by these individuals and are more likely to seek out opportunities for growth and learning.

Fereshteh, a female participant, also believed that respecting and following academic elites positively influences students' grades and their learning outcomes. She stated, *"Those students who respect and admire academic elites, for sure they work towards becoming successful in academia. They enjoy higher grades and they are more successful academically."*

Baran stated that students who have positive attitudes towards elites, are more successful and have higher grades. She added, *"Students who have a positive attitude towards elites have higher academic achievements because they think of elites as their role models so they imitate and copy the elites and consequently they have higher academic achievements."*

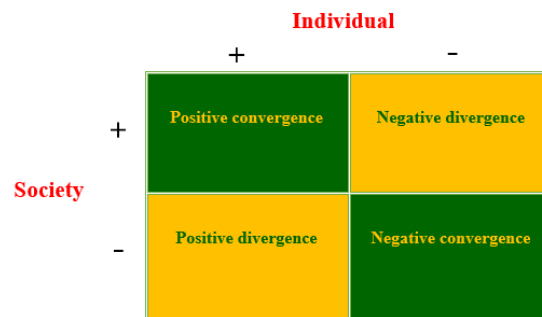
5. Discussion

This study intended to explore sapioemotionality, and how people react when they see elites, in an Afghan context. In other words, it investigated Herat University instructors' perspectives toward elites,

the society's attitudes toward the elites, and how the current socio-political situation of Afghanistan affected the Afghan elites' personal and professional lives.

The findings indicated that an individual's sapioemotionality is high in an Afghan context while the society's sapioemotionality is low. The interviewed participants stated that they get excited when they see elites, and they are willing to communicate and interact with both Afghan and foreign elites and to get familiar with their personal and professional lives. Further, since all the interviewed participants were university instructors, the majority of them considered themselves academic elites while stating that to become an academic elite, requires a lot of hard work and academic activities as well as publications. According to Pishghadam et al. (2021), based on the individual and society subconstructs of the sapioemotionality scale, it is true to state that there are four possibilities: positive/negative convergence and positive/negative divergence (Figure 1). When an individual's and society's sapioemotionality is high, it is described as positive convergence, but negative convergence is when both individual's and society's sapioemotionality are low, "positive divergence when an individual's sapioemotionality is high but that of society is low, and negative divergence when an individual's sapioemotionality is low but that of society is high" (p. 9).

Figure 1
Sapioemotionality Dimensions (Pishghadam et al., 2021)



The findings also revealed that Afghan society's sapioemotionality is low. Academic elites do not receive enough appreciation and support from the government. The majority of the Afghan elites such as writers, poets, researchers, and university instructors live in poverty, suffer from unemployment, and struggle to find their position in society amidst the chaos and confusion, according to the interviewed participants. This is particularly aligned with Pishghadam et al.'s (2021) study findings which revealed that although individuals in Iranian society are willing to meet intelligent and elite people, society, as a whole, does not admire and support intelligent ones and as a result, the elites struggle with economic issues, low income, and unemployment.

Furthermore, the interviewed participants discussed the unstable socio-political situation of Afghanistan as a key factor that negatively influences the elites' personal and professional lives. In other words, different regimes when they come into power try to impose their ideologies that are aligned with their interests and aims on the country's education system which in turn negatively affects elites and intelligent people. The findings of the current study showed that a large number of Afghan elites such as university instructors, poets, writers, researchers, and journalists fled Afghanistan and migrated to European and Western countries seeking social and political freedom during the last two years since the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. This chaotic situation has had a destructive impact on Afghanistan's education system, and as a result, people's and society's sapioemotionality toward the elites, education, and knowledge as a whole has dramatically declined. According to Yazdani (2015), elite migration has a destructive impact on a nation's development as the elites play a key role in building a country's infrastructure. When a country's elites leave their country of origin and migrate to other countries, they not only negatively impact their countries, but weaken the IQ of the upcoming generations. With that in mind, the role of elites is significantly important in a country's development, because a country without elites, educated people, and scientists does not experience promotions and

prosperities, it is important to study sapioemotionality in an Afghan context which has its unique socio-political as well as cultural characteristics. The current study contributes to the body of literature on sapioemotionality and reminds politicians, administrators in higher education, and university authorities to support and appreciate elites and to put efforts into preventing the elites from migrating to other countries. Further research studies can be conducted through different research designs such as quantitative and mixed-methods exploring the perspectives of politicians, administrators in higher education, authorities in education sectors, and the society as well as ordinary people on sapioemotionality, and elites' position in society. Furthermore, it is important to explore ways to encourage elites to continue their academic activities inside the country and to encourage those who have left the country to return to their country of origin and contribute to their country's prosperity.

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