
GENDER DISCRIMINATION: EXTRAORDINARY PLIGHT AT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Gender discrimination is precisely defined as the unjust and prejudiced treatment of the opposite gender. Women are the most cliché victims of social stratification in society. Gender discrimination is the most exacerbated phenomenon worldwide. Gender disparity is also prevalent in every institution in Pakistan. This wider discrepancy has plagued the functionality of different sectors in Pakistani society. The more intensified gender gaps can be found in educational institutions in Pakistan. Mainly scarcity of rationality, feminine intolerance and misogynistic mindset lead to this unwavering dilemma in these institutions. The entrenched patriarchal nature of society has further consolidated this gap. There are also numerous socio-political indicators which further aggravate this disparity. For instance, archaic practices, traditions, norms, and tribal beliefs, as well as poverty, contribute greater to gender disparities in education and career opportunities in the education sector. This research paper will analyze this marginalization along with examining the effects of socio-political indicators that have ingrained the deeper gender discrepancies. This research paper will explore different possibilities for mitigating gender discrimination in educational institutions in Pakistan. This research paper will also recommend the rehabilitation of educational institutions to empower and encourage more girls and women and eradicate misogynistic mindsets. Furthermore, along with a theoretical approach, this research paper also intends to recommend a comprehensive model for hindering these intricacies in prospects.

KEYWORDS

Pakistan, Feminism, misogyny, Gender Discrimination, Marginalization

INTRODUCTION

"When you educate a man, you are educating an individual. But educating a woman educates a nation." (Brigham Young)

Since the evolution of mankind, women have gained their identity, rights, opportunities, and responsibilities gradually. However, still in some countries and their institutions, they are treated as inferior. Pakistan faced the highest level of global gender inequality in 2017. According to the World Economic Forum's newest results, Pakistan's performance on the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 has improved significantly. Pakistan has achieved its highest score since 2006, placing 142nd out of 146 economies, with 57.5% gender parity (Dawn, 2023). Nevertheless, still, a huge chunk of Pakistani women confront employment issues due to poor literacy rates and gender-biased authorities. Gender bias is still pervasive in Pakistan. Patriarchal bigotry against women is widely prevalent in Pakistani society in different forms (Shaukat et al., 2014).

In the context of the higher education system, which is responsible for building up a worthy and consolidated opinion system, discrimination against female students, female faculty and staff was heavily observed. Female student's perceived traditional stereotype hinders their access to higher education. They also lack positive inspiring role model to convince and expedite their qualification process. From assessment to administrative procedure, female students struggle to stand out. Different educational institutions are unable to provide secure and flexible entry and exit points for female students (Salik & Zhiyong, 2014).

Women in academies and university faculty suffered comparable, but more diversified, prejudice. This not only harmed those women's careers and goals, but it also had a grave impact on future generations of female research students. Gender prejudice can be expressed explicitly or implicitly. Explicit bias is a deliberate and conscious appraisal of a certain thing with some extent of liking or detest (National Library of Medicine, 2022). Despite rising awareness of the absence of gender equity in educational institutions and an increasing number of attempts to address diversity concerns, progress is gradual, and disparities persist.

Disparities are also deep-rooted and widely tangled in rural areas of Pakistan. Approximately, more than 60 percent of the population lives in rural areas of Pakistan. Which includes 50% of women population. This population lives in a very humble situation, even deprived of basic substantial needs. As per Pakistan Education's

statistical data, out of the country's population of 200 million, 22.84 million kids, of which 60% are female ratio, are not in school. This Statistic placed Pakistan after Nigeria. (Sajjad, 2018)

Several barriers in Pakistan instigate more obstacles female education in rural areas. For instances, racism, cultural, religious & traditions, poor infrastructure, primitive mindset, conservative mentality, ghost schools, lack of qualified teachers, less resources, child marriage, child labor, financial constraints, and low budget allocation of rural development etc. Some parents have dream to let their girls getting education, but these chronic disparities and barriers do not let them to do so. The wrecked policy system does not deliver the services and needs efficiently. Ironically, there are more boys' schools than girls' schools in Pakistan which is the biggest socio-economic predicament. (Tarar & Sultan, 2022)

When gender imbalance in schooling, colleges and or in any higher education increases, the socioeconomic status of a family suffers. On a larger scale, gender discrepancies in educational institutions result in exploitation of human capital, which has the potential to hinder economic progress. In short, rising gender parity and women's economic engagement have been significantly associated with social and economic success. Education, health, and autonomy for women are critical for human growth and long-term stability. However, Pakistan lags in all crucial criteria. (Kamal, 2022)

In 2000, United Nation Organization came up with a fascinating eight Millennial Development Goals (MDGs). Among them one of the most imperative goal was, Goal-03: Promoting gender quality and empowering women. Their motive was focused on following thought; Women gave birth to us, and it is immoral and troublesome to treat men and women differently in developing countries. Promoting gender equality and granting women equal rights would benefit society by promoting economic growth and reducing poverty. (Paynter, 2018)

Later, in 2015, 193 nations came together and suggested seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its goal five is also related to gender disparity. Which demonstrate that gender parity and women empowerment guarantee the equitable involvement of women in social, political, and economic decision-making processes. (United Nations, 2015) Goal four of SDGs is also interconnected with this discrimination. It demonstrates that education is vigorously imperative and mandatory for all genders. Another goal, goal eight demonstrates the promotion and encouragement of the safe and secure institutions for women for upgradation of the society. This goal further grants equal access to education by eradicating different unrealistic dogmas out there. Despite of these fascination and comprehensive goals,

Pakistan still need to put more efforts for attaining more progress and to stand out among other infamous nations for gender disparity. As per 2022 progress report, achieving quality education for female is still dismal. However, goal five showed some progress but not up to the mark. Between 2015 (2.7%) and 2019 (4.53%), the proportion of women in management roles nearly quadrupled (SDG indicator 5.5.2). Physical violence decreased by 5.3% overall, from 18% in 2012-2013 to 13.6% in 2017-2018. (Cheema, 2022)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

Theory of feminism accurately displays this discrepancy contradiction. Feminism argues for women's equal access to all institutions, particularly political and educational ones. Women's egalitarian access is a requirement for gender equality and true democracy. This egalitarian approach tends to convey a well-rounded depiction of healthy society. The foremost goal of feminist theory is to comprehend the mechanics and foundations of gender disparity in education, as well as the societal consequences. Educational systems, like many other institutions in society, are marked by uneven treatment and golden opportunities for women. When women have less educational possibilities, their ability and competency to obtain egalitarian rights, including economic independence, is constrained. Feminist theory aims to promote women's rights to equal education (and the advantages that come with it) around the world. This progress will tend to show intensified reluctance to power and patriarchy and the submissive role of women in institutions will be abolished. Male monopolization and reductionism of females in higher hierarchy in educational institutions can be improved rationally through following feminism agendas comprehensively. Feminism considers participation of both genders at the educational institutions in decision-making process as sine qua non for democratic and societal progress. Institutions need to encounter the structural patriarchal domination over women's educational sagacity. It also needs to mitigate the exclusionary tactics by the male chauvinist (Acker, 1987).

According to Sadia Shaukat, women are vulnerable at educational institution due to certain psycho-social and socio-cultural components. After closed research on that matter extensively, there are tangled narratives among women regarding discrimination. These narratives depict the comparison between optimist and pessimist view of progression and regression in these institutions. Some women are contented for their respectable position and fighting against male chauvinism at these institutions. On other hand some women have got their position at the top-notch positions and doesn't even consider this marginalization. These women intentionally ignore the deprivation of rights of the women who stood below their positions (Shaukat, 2016).

Another stratification occurs when there is a comparison between public and private institutions. Which demonstrates a wider gap of quality education and procedural differences. This public-private institution makes polarized view of feminism and parity concerns. This gape further exacerbates the discrimination issues (Arif & Khalid, 2022).

Women in educational institutions, most probably in universities struggles to get enrolled and get to the managerial position. There are numerous barriers which hinders the promotion of these women. The Higher Education Commission have established some sort of regulations for promotion criteria. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has made efforts to guarantee that the regulations governing recruiting, selection, and promotion are fair. Academic advancement and selection criteria at public universities are identical. This promotion system is largely based on Publication criteria. In that way, some women lagged in this standardization due to domestic interruptions. These domestic responsibilities slow down the process of women research activities (Batool, Sajid & Shaheen, 2013).

Female educationist and female students in higher education faces troublesome work life conflict and career doldrum. Male dominated and cultural society made it difficult for women to play both roles efficiently. This wonder women role has stigmatized our society. Normalization and alteration of this role is nearly possible in fundamentalist and conservative society. Female academics in educational institutions, treatment is also based on first looking into their availability due to domestic problems. So, this “male plagued institutions” doesn’t even consider their genuine problems. All institutions have been brutally failed to revive any individual women career after any traumatic incident, any genuine domestic matter and after any maternal leave. Some institutions are even unable to provide day care, so that any working women who is ambitious and mother also, can take both responsibilities in a balanced way and avoiding any distractions due to some concerns. These facilities can encourage these ambitious women without any doubt or guilt of sacrificing their family life. This can also improve their productivity and functionality (Fakhr, 2018). Intellectual integrity, professional enviousness and personal affiliations also play a pivotal role in restricting women educational superiority. Academic freedom and professional autonomy of female educationist has been persuaded by the male chauvinist several times. To prove them submissive and of incapable (Fakhar & Messenger, 2020).

Poverty is another major factor in restricting career progression of female students and academician. Families couldn’t afford the fees of institutions due to lower middle income. Sons are sent to school in poor households, while daughters stay at home. A failing welfare system motivates parents to invest in their sons' education, anticipating that they would be reliant on them. Child marriage is the only solution for those girls

living in poverty. Which halted their education and forced them for cheap labor. Because education is considered as luxury for daughter in laws and in laws doesn't feel them to be deserving for that in poor families (Tusinska, 2020).

Breaking all those vulnerable stereotypes has been considered as the most miserable sin for women. In fact, these dogmatic people shamefully alter name of "Feminist" as "Fakeminist". Pakistan has been blessed with abundant naïve women. These women always lived in their well obedience illusions. Low self esteem could be considered as the most divine perception for them. All these illusions start with their family, and they carry this perception in their career as well. This low esteem convinced them to realize that they are not being worthy and that much competent as compared to their male colleagues and male class fellows. This poor self-confidence and self-proclaimed incapability led to mental illness, which is "Neurotic Imposter Syndrome". All these disparities causing severe impacts on our country's more than half population (Lashari, 2023).

Women are also not behind in letting each other down. They anxiously want to discourage each other. The same happens in educational institutions. This enviousness has never been documented. However, there is a plethora of experiences. Even after understanding each other's family dynamics and of some compelled women, jealous and extra competitive females refused to support and encourage each other. (Shabbir, n.d.)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. The foremost intent of this research paper is to inspect the acute disparity in educational institutions in Pakistan.
2. This research paper tends to offer a thorough and analytical look at this quandary. It preserves a balanced analysis and limits overly optimistic and very negative viewpoints.
3. It identifies the distinguished variables that are by direct intent or indirect intent responsible for this saga.
4. This research paper also intends to convey an in-depth overview of different challenges, root causes and adamant elements in this predicament.
5. This research paper intends to provide a thorough, rational, and analytical treatment for disparity pyrexia in educational institutions in Pakistan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper's inquiry relies on secondary sources and publicly available data. Secondary data is information gathered from primary sources and made available to academics for use in their own research. This research paper is precisely based on qualitative data through different research papers, blogs, and book analysis.

Feminism has been used as the theoretical approach in this research paper which has examined the intricacies and obstacles more accurately. In attaining comprehensive inquiry, this research paper includes literature review which analyzes the whole dilemma through closed lens. Along with the examination of significant findings and discussions, it evaluates different factors responsible for evolving paradigm shift. This research paper has also provided the rehabilitation process of educational institutions of Pakistan without any discrepancies.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Co-educational intricacies

Pakistan is a very well cultured society known to have the most modest civilization. Where men and women, both are considered as separate entities. In past ages, there was a broad boundary line, which persisted even after certain ages. The unusual dogmas still haunt the modernization passage. This act has put a sense of hesitation among women and exaggerated the masculinity of a women as a divine element. Furthermore, it also aggravates the disparity with critical repercussions. In contemporary Pakistan, the private sector has developed a considerable and growing number of higher education institutions, the majority of which are co-educational. This progression brutally restricts the access of women and girls from traditional communities. There are numerous prestigious co-educational institutions in some locations which guarantees a bright future with opportunities, where females and males can acquire higher education, but severe familial, tribal, and religious conventions forbid females from studying with boys. This is the most significant barrier in female higher education. Another factor is harassment, female students and teachers have experienced more unethical behavior in co-educational institutions (Iqbal, Anjum & Ahmed, 2023).

Harassment as a barrier to education

As mentioned earlier, harassment is another shameful barrier in obstructing access to education. Harassment is defined as any undesirable physical and verbal behavior that makes any person extremely uncomfortable and mentally disturbed. Men shows their masculinity aggression on women through harassment. In many universities of Pakistan, some astonishing and brutal cases of harassment has been reported. Namrita Chandani- a dental student in Chandka Medical College, Larkan, was found dead in her hostel room. Her autopsy revealed that before being strangled to death, she was sexually molested. (Eurasian Times Desk, 2019) Another girl Dr. Nausheen Kazmi also committed mysterious suicide at that place. These two mysterious deaths at Chandka Medical College have raised questions regarding the safety and security of girls. Pakistani educational institutions have dozens of records of these kind of tragedies. However, culprits have never been found. They closed the case by tagging it as suicide attempts. Pakistan's most prestigious institution, Central Superior

Servicers, have also experience one of the shocking tragedies. At the Audit and Accounts Training Institute, an accounts group probationer, Nabiha Chaudry, was discovered burnt to death in her hostel room. Police discovered this matter to be suicidal commitment. But never found the reason behind suicide. Ironically, in Pakistan, when law and order authorities investigate any sudden mysterious death at any place, they wait for autopsy. When an autopsy reveals that it was a suicide, then the matter is closed by our divine institutions. If the murder incident or murderer needs to be investigated, why not suicide. Murder could be an individual crime, but suicide is an organized crime. Pakistanis are taking these suicides in educational institutions for granted. Parents are unable to send their daughter for higher education after these inhuman tragedies. Educational institutions need to uncover and diagnose these kinds of predicaments which are due to harassments (Shakil, 2019).

Intersection of Gender and Financial based discrimination

In various countries, the interdependence between poverty, livelihood, and household investment decisions operates in purely different ways. Some parents do not invest in their daughters' education, and girls are pulled out from school in particularly impoverished homes. Girls from low-income homes are 22 percentage points less likely than boys to get enrolled in school. (Baron 7 Bend, 2023) approximately, more than 2 million girls are out of school. Mainly conservative and tribal families do not allow and invest in girls' higher education but prefer to spend in boys because, according to them, investing in males produces a better output than investing in girls since girls are not allowed work, thus it is a waste of money to invest in them. Those girls by the sake god gets the basic education, later they are not allowed for pursuing higher studies and for going abroad.

Domestic Responsibilities or Home Chores as an Obstructing factor

Male has always been considered as the sole "Bread Winner" of a household since ages. Due to this every household has a patriarchal setup. Only one person is responsible for all the crucial decision-making processes of the household. Economic reliance on males, and hence women's poor socioeconomic standing, has also hampered their admittance into the workforce and out of higher education institutions. As per world bank reports, female participation is quite necessary for national development. This report tends to prioritize girl empowerment, equality, and gender concerns. In the contrary, if women become a bread winner, she will not get that kind of powerful facilitations. She must manage a domestic and work life in a balanced way and by showing faithful obedience to the adamant behavior of the patriarchal society. This tangled situation limited women's entry into higher education. In short, domestic obligations are the parasite for any female's career progression.

Early Marriages of Girls

Early marriages are another kind of domestic brutalization. Early female marriage is predicated on the belief that a good marriage is the most significant and beneficial approach to ensure a girl's future. In different regions of Pakistan, early marriages are mandatory obligation on parents for fulfilling their divine responsibility. Marriage frequently appears to be the greatest method for poor families to protect girls' prospects and alleviate their financial burden. The huge expense of further education, along with the impression of females' earning prospects as comparably poor, drives girls out of their families and schools and into marriage; marriage of school-aged girls was considered as the norm in rural and slum areas of Pakistan. This impediment is an unwavering dilemma for Pakistan's human capital (Salik & Zhiyong, 2014).

Security Quandary

Pakistan has been badly affected by border infiltration and militant organizations residing in the sensitive areas of Pakistan. Bomb blasts and assaults have traumatized millions of people in Pakistan. So as girl's education. These dogmatic militant organizations have threatened the girl students and teachers by shutting down the schools and colleges. As we all know about Malala's saga and her struggle after assassination attempt by Taliban. When the Taliban took over significant areas of the Swat Valley in KP in 2007, they launched a brutal campaign against girls' education. Over 900 girls' schools were forced to shut, and over 120,000 girls dropped out. Approximately 8,000 female instructors were laid off. Location also matters in obstructing access to education. Such as hilly and remote areas affect girls more than boys. Long-distance public transportation travel poses a substantial security risk, especially in civilizations where ladies are not authorized to travel alone or must be followed (Human Right Watch, 2017).

The findings are based on the most crucial and deep-rooted factors of obstruction in Pakistani society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are some self-evaluated and comprehensive recommendation for mitigating the thwarted dilemma of gender disparity in educational institutions of Pakistan; Financial infrastructure of Pakistan and its educational institution needs to be upgrade for the welfare of female students and academicians. Pakistani government must provide suitable stipends and scholarship to female students in order for covering the expenses of higher education and encouraging them for further scholarly education. There is a dire need to engage more women in politics. Women in politics and state's executive and legislation can bring more limelight to this dilemma and can propagate more awareness. Women in politics can create study circles for ensuring the civic rights of every woman in the country.

Pakistan needs to build more women centric universities, colleges, and schools for avoiding any unnecessary obligation of norms and traditions. Educational institutions need to promote more and more research work on women and gender parity for propagating awareness and bringing attention of the authorities.

National policies and laws must be regulated for concerning gender parity and inspecting women role in higher education. Anti-harassment and Anti-disparity measures should be taken for securing women rights and access at the higher educational institutions.

Contemporary policies related to this matter should be reviewed at least once a year for altering some standpoints in accordance with trends and circumstances.

Higher authorities must ensure the implementation of these policies comprehensively by collecting different statistical data of progress and segregation.

Educational institution must organize different seminars and workshops for both male and female academicians. Teaching them the repercussions of gender disparity and convincing the male academicians for eradicating patriarchal, misogynist, and feminine intolerant mindset.

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