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ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ACCOMPLISH WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at investigating and explore the role of higher education institute regarding gender equality and women empowerment in lower Punjab. The constitution of our country laid down the rights of both genders in terms of their social, economic, educational, and moral development. This is also ensured to safeguard the constitutional guarantees for each citizen at any cost. These constitutional rights include reserved seats for admission in universities, and also a separate quota of jobs in various departments to balance gender. "But despite all these guarantees practically girl's students continue to lag behind in educational achievement and access, especially at the colleges and University levels, where girls' enrollment, completion of the degree, and achievement of the jobs are lower than boys. Girls are less in number in government jobs and enrollment in schools, colleges, and universities, but higher education institutions can play a vital role in gender equality and women empowerment. Improving girls' access to education, with the goal of attaining gender equality, is a critical component of promoting development and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Pakistan, Particularly, in the rural and suburban areas, the girls attend higher education institutions in small numbers. But the education of this segment will increase the ability of women to secure employment in the government or the private sector. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of higher education institutions in attaining gender equality and women's empowerment in south Punjab. The target population was the three universities of south Punjab. Data were gathered through a questionnaire by female students of these three higher education institutions to achieve Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Southern Punjab 2) To know the gender equality practices used by

university teachers of higher education institutes of southern Punjab.3) To investigate the challenges confronted by the girl's students at universities during learning. Participants were more or less agreed that women have to face socio cultural hurdles to acquire education and pursue careers. The results reveal that higher education institutions in play a positive role in gender equality and women empowerment. It can be said that higher education institutions succeeded in closing the gap between males and females in access to higher education". However, gender parity in the distribution of student enrollments in different Disciplines, equality in jobs, and economic empowerment of women is not achieved yet.

INTRODUCTION

In the rising globe where each sector is obtaining new forms, this complete growth is due to education, but amongst education categories the major foundation is higher education, that is offering skilled input to our public and private sector organizations in constructing an inventive world. The universities are the nurseries to alter society in a civilized and diplomatic way, but at the same time it is vitally important to offer equal share of significance in education for both genders; males and females (Sumera, 2015).

In contrast, all of the nations of the world came together in the year 2000 for a summit with the goals of ending poverty and food insecurity, achieving universal primary education (UPE), achieving gender equality and empowering women, and lowering the rate of infant mortality in the first five years of life. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the (MDGs). The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is consisting of seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), each of which has related progress targets for all member states. According to Levene, the fifth goal of these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women (2013). This purpose is to eradicate all types of injustices in public places, in society, and in private circles, and to strive toward establishing equal economic and property rights to women. Additionally, this target is to work toward achieving gender equality in the workplace. The advancement of women's rights is essential to the growth and well-being of any community. Equal treatment of the sexes is a basic human right (Trivedi, 2018). In addition, Sengupta (2020) provides evidence that a number of United Nations (UN) conferences have promoted the idea that women's empowerment is related with sustainable development. Sengupta cites several conferences as evidence. It was acknowledged in the Copenhagen Declaration, which was produced at the World Summit for Social Development, that one of the primary objectives of development is to enable people, and particularly women, to improve their own capabilities. This is particularly important for the advancement of women. Education is another significant achievement of women's empowerment since it allows women to react to difficulties, question their conventional status, and fundamentally improve their level of life. This is why education is such an important accomplishment. (a) "direct involvement of women in programming and administration a) actively alliance with community organizations b) sorting and building of women's self-improvement groups c) direct engagement of women in programming and administration (e) respecting women's interests and wants while providing employment (g) eliminating the physical, mental, or social mistreatment of women. Pakistan is often ranked as one of the most

populous countries in the Muslim world. If one were to believe Pakistan's Economic Survey (2018-19). There are a total of 1,539,559 students enrolled in higher education, with 820,409 male students and 719,150 female students making up the student body. It is clear that there is still a gender gap since the number of female students is much lower than the number of male pupils. Women in Pakistan's traditionally male-dominated culture are making significant strides in attaining better levels of education in comparison to years past. (The Economic Survey of Pakistan for the Fiscal Year 2018–2019) On the other hand, women get low earnings in both the legal and the informal labor markets; as a result, they are at a financial disadvantage and are deprived ". When compared to the percentages of women who work in other industries, the percentage of women who work in the education sector is very encouraging, and it is constantly increasing; however, when compared to their population, both the percentage of women who work in the education sector and women's empowerment in the education sector are deemed insufficient and pitiful. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey (2018-19), the literacy rate of Pakistani women is relatively low at 49 percent, whereas the literacy rate of Pakistani males is much higher at 71 percent. Only 38 percent of Indian women have some kind of higher education, in contrast to our neighboring countries such as Sri Lanka, where 78 percent of women have some form of higher education. In a similar vein, there are just 2.5 percent of women studying in Pakistan's higher education institutions. Education that is specialized, professional, and vocational for women is the kind of education that the Pakistani government lays the highest importance on.

In addition, Mamoon, D. (2006) describes how gender equality to parity is a vital component in each and every facet of life. In order to make sure that men's and women's positive actions lead to equivalent results, gender equality is used in any manner that is required. Additionally, gender equality is described as the accomplishment of parity between females and males in regards to the academic, life, and career outcomes that are valued by the general public. At one more ceremony to celebrate International Women's Day in 2005, Mr. Kofi Annan, a former Secretary-General of the United Nations, pointed out that it has been sixty years since the architects of the United Nations enshrined the equal rights of men and women as the core premise of our Charter. In the meanwhile, education is the one and only other tool available outside of this that can empower women. Women are expected to enjoy gender equality and autonomy, despite the reality that women are often prevented from determining the course of their own lives and the choices that affect them. Equal opportunity for women and men in higher education may also help alleviate monetary worries and eliminate barriers that stand in the way of women's development. A worldwide conversation on the subject of equal educational possibilities for all people, free from discrimination, has been sparked by the increasing number of women who are participating in higher education. Higher education for women is not constrained in any way, regardless of the approach used; this is the broadest and most bold undertaking for economic growth and development that any country in the world could undertake. In addition to S. W. Smith Nelson (2001). In addition, Zafar and Ali, S. (2018) noticed and came to the conclusion that the function of the higher education framework was gender related segregation on the road to

women understudies and staff members, and that this segregation was prominent in the public domain. The process of learning, evaluation, and the absence of flexible departure, and admission to higher education that domestic promises might facilitate gender equality. There are no finer instances of the achievement of female students' educational careers, since they were challenged with standard admissions issues and preconceptions. In a similar vein, the faculty and staff members at women's schools and institutions did not approve of comparable when compared to other types of segregation. Not only did this have a detrimental influence on the careers and goals of these women, but it also had a bad impact on the future of female tests, scholarly and competent employees, and the educational profession in general. However, Noureen (2017) reveals that having access to education is an effective indication of the status and standing of women in a specific society. [Citation needed] In the context of a conversation on women's empowerment in higher education, it is common knowledge that the proportion of female undergraduate students at universities is on the rise at an accelerated rate. However, discrimination against women in traditionally feminine spheres has persisted since 1965, and women continue to be underrepresented in the labor sector. Women continue to be silenced at the top levels of numerous disciplines, despite the considerable progress that has been made toward gender equality over the last few decades in a number of different nations. In addition, the number of educational opportunities that are accessible to young women and girls continues to be restricted at all levels of our educational system, from primary and secondary schools all the way up to universities and PhD programs. Before any trace of these injustices can be removed, preventative measures need to be taken to level the playing field in terms of educational opportunities for a country that cannot allow half of its population to be prevented from reaching their full potential. At a similar vein, the percentage of enrolled students who are women in higher education institutions (HEI) is not even close to being sufficient. The situation is even worse in rural areas, where there are fewer universities and colleges; as a result, access for women to higher education is still a problem on a global scale. The extent of their engagement in organization-related opportunities is really limited. Women are prevented from attaining positions of power within their communities due to social and cultural norms. It is essential for women in Pakistan to have access to higher levels of education. (Batool, Sajid, and Shaheen. 2013). The current research focuses on the role of higher education institutions in enhancing gender equality in the previously unstudied context of south Punjab. Numerous researchers from all over the world have conducted extensive research on the topic of the Role of Higher Education Institutions in Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. This topic has been the subject of a great deal of attention in recent years. According to the suggestions made by this researcher, it is necessary to develop a road map in order to include higher education institutions in a specialized role in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. This would allow for the achievement of these goals. Higher education institutions should ensure that their faculty members and students get appropriate training on gender roles and the ways in which these institutions have the potential to set an example for the rest of society. In addition, this research will be of assistance to policymakers, stakeholders,

such as women's rights activists, civic society, and gender specialists in the process of creating new pathways for gender equality and women's empowerment. The researcher conceived of the present study with the intention of investigating the role that institutions of higher education play in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. The research used a descriptive design, and its primary objectives were to investigate the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, the gender equality practices of university faculty, and the challenges that women in the southern region of Punjab face. The research also looked at the gender equality practices of university faculty.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research is to investigate the higher education institutions efforts to achieve gender equality and women's rights. Specifically, this study aims to determine the following:

- Determine the role of HEI (Higher Education Institutions) in Southern Punjab in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.
- To understand the gender equality policies used by university professors in the higher education institutions in southern Punjab.
- To explore the obstacles faced by female university students while learning.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims at investigating the following questions:

- What role of Higher Education Institutions to achieve gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Southern Punjab?
- Which gender equality practices used by university teachers of higher education institutes of southern Punjab?
- What challenges confronted by the girl's students at universities during learning?

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a survey. The selection and use of certain approaches and the connection between the selection and application of strategies for optimal outcomes. This study use statistical research designs in order to reveal the research aims of the present investigation. Quantitative research focuses on uncovering facts and causes for human behavior using objective, observable, and measurable data. Consequently, this procedure is used to ensure authenticity. Consequently, surveys or questionnaires were used in the study procedure.

Population

Weathington et al. (2012) pointed out that population entails taking into account all factors or objects that the scholar must portray. In this research, the analyst is identifying the subject Role of "Higher Education Institutions to Conquer Women 57 Empowerment and Gender Equality" by interacting directly with professors and students.

Targeted population

All persons above whom the researchers extend the outcomes of study to population overall. (Yilun Zhang, 2014). Thus, the target population in this study study method comprised all female pupils of three prominent institutions of Punjab, Pakistan.

Accessible population

The population some time named as the population understudy is that population on which the research scholar can apply his/her results. Alam, S. (2017).

Accordingly, the population under study for this examination constrained to the students and faculty members in higher education institutions in three major Universities of Southern Punjab in Pakistan. These three universities named, Bahuddin Zakriya University, University of Education and The Women University. Approximately, assessable 36500 students are studying there in these universities and around 970 faculty members.

Following was the total students in these universities:

University Students

BZU	30,000
The Women University (WU)	3,500
University of Education Multan (EU)	3,000
Total	36500
Faculty members in the above-mentioned universities:	
University	Faculty Members
BZU	630
The Women University	200
University of Education	140
Total	970

Sample

Samples are the smallest part in the cosmos. The analyst believes that the selected sample is a good representation of the universe as a whole. This issue relates to women; consequently, only female students were selected for the sample, but female and male faculty members were chosen for the current

examination on the subject of the role of HEIs in achieving gender equality and empowering women.

Development of Tool

The research employed a self-administered questionnaire to measure by female respondents. Questionnaire consists of 30 Close-ended questions divided into 3 parts and a Likert Scale to record students' comments about gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as their suggestions for how higher education institutions might assist in achieving these goals.

DATA ANALYSIS

1.8.1 Test results of Research Questions

Question 1 What role of Higher Education Institutions to achieve gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Southern Punjab? (Region wise analysis using t-test)

Region	N	Mean	T	Df	p-value
Urban	116	1.53600	48.60	249	0.000
Rural	134				

In the table above, the significance test was done on urban and rural areas using a sample t-test analysis. There were a total of 250 responders from three institutions, including BZU, the university of education, and The Women's University, according to the results. There were 116 pupils from urban regions and 134 from rural regions. Regional significance was indicated by a mean difference of 1.5360, a t-value of 48.6, a degree of freedom of 249, and a p-value of 0.000. Table 4.36 illustrates the significance of the role of higher education institutions in attaining gender equality and women's empowerment.

Question 2: Which gender equality practices used by university teachers of higher education institutes of southern Punjab? (Analysis of variance Qualification wise)

Qualification	N	Mean	Df	P-value
BS	192	68.3177	249	0.02
MA/M.SC	31	72.0161		
MS/ M.phil	27	69.2963		
Total	250	68.8820		

As can be seen from the mean scores of 68.3, 72.0, and 69.2 for BS, MA/M.Sc, and MS/M.Phil, respectively, for female students pursuing higher education degrees, they were aware of the value of higher education institutions in attaining gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, the p-value is lower than 0.05, which indicates that there is a

statistically significant difference in the responses of the pupils. According to the results of the table, there is a wide range of perspectives held by students on the role that higher education institutions should play in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Question 3 what challenges confronted by the girl's students at universities during learning?

University	N	Mean	Df	P value
BZU	151	68.8199	249	0.930
EU	42	69.3263		
WUM	57	68.5024		
TOTAL	250	68.8820		

The ANOVA findings for female students are provided in the table displayed above. The findings are separated by university, with the frequency of BZU, EU, and WU shown in the N column. "BZU has a mean of 68.8, EU has a mean of 69.3, and WU has a mean of 68.5. These findings suggest that female students are aware of the role that higher education institutions play in attaining gender equality and empowering women. In addition, the p-value is greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant relationship between the students and their responses. The results of the table reveal that student attitudes on the importance of higher education institutions in attaining gender equality and women's empowerment were equivalent".

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Department wise

Analysis of variance Department wise:

Department	N	Mean	Df	P-value
Education	61	72.3475	249	0.003
Sociology	61	68.1410		
Psychology	67	65.3567		
Pol. science	61	70.0295		
Total	250	68.8820		

The results of the ANOVA are shown in the table that was just presented to you. These findings pertain to female students and their credentials. The column labeled "N" indicates the frequency of departments such as Education, Political Science, Sociology, and Psychology. The fact that the mean score for Education was 72.30 while the mean score for Political Science was 68.10, the mean score for Sociology was 65.30, and the mean score for Psychology was 70.02 indicates that female students attending higher education institutions are aware of the significance of HEIs in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, the p-value was 0.003, which is significantly lower

than 0.05 and implies that there is predictive significance between the responses of students. The results of the table demonstrate that student opinions of the role of higher education institutions in attaining gender equality and women's empowerment differ greatly throughout departments. This is indicated by the fact that the table contains both positive and negative findings.

CONCLUSION

- According to the demographic analysis, all of the study participants were female. This is because only female individuals were included in the research. Moreover, 192 students, or 76.8 percent, are enrolled in the BS program; 31 students, or 12.4 percent, are enrolled in the MA/MS program; and 27 students, or 10.8 percent, are enrolled in the MS/M program. Therefore, 150 students, or 60%, are from BZU; the frequency of 58 students from Education university, or 23.2% of females; and 42 students from Women university, or 16.8% of females.

- The statistics indicate that the frequency of respondents is 60 students, with 24 percent from the department of education, while the frequency of respondents from the department of political science is 61, with 24.4% females. In addition, 68 students, representing 27.2% of the total, come from the Sociology department, and 61 students, representing 24.2% of the total, come from the Psychology department in order to connect the analysis.

- This study is significant because it relates to the path of development in Pakistan, and more especially the growth of gender development. Education is one of the most effective means of empowering women because it enables them to solve issues, challenge the conventional role they are supposed to play, and completely improve the quality of their life. Pakistan has a large population, making it one of the most populous countries in the Muslim world. Lastly, student from where they originate, the frequency of the students indicates that 115 with a percentage of 46% related from urban region and 135 with a percentage of 54% connected from rural area. Both student groups are from urban and rural regions, respectively.

- In this research, the Role of Higher Education Institutions in Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment has been studied using a Frequency Analysis of Mean Scores on Questionnaires. This was performed so that the data might be evaluated and used in future studies. At a similar line, there are two more factors: the gender equality practice followed in universities and HEIs and the obstacles encountered.

- In order to assess the study of the Role of Higher Education Institutions to Achieve Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in southern Punjab, Pakistan, a frequency analysis was performed on two additional factors: the Gender equality practice used by university teachers of HEIs with its 10 items and the challenges faced by the girl's students at universities during learning with its 10 questions. This was done to assess the role of southern higher education institutions in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The mean square was found to be anywhere between

1.82 and 3.42, indicating that the average of the statement for these two factor analyses had a broad range of solutions.

- The results of the ANOVA done on female students with the qualifying criteria N reveal the preponderance of education, political science, sociology, and psychology departments. In addition, the p-value was 0.003, which is significantly less than 0.05 and suggests statistical significance between the students and their responses. Students' perceptions on the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in attaining gender equality and women's empowerment differ, and the results suggest that there is a substantial relationship between the departments.

DISCUSSION

This study was carried out at universities that are part of the public sector in order to investigate the role that higher education institutions play in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. According to the findings of this study, almost all of the predictor factors have a significant connection with decision-making, and the majority of these variables have a connection with ownership. The statistics also imply that exposure to demographic and social information is an accurate predictor of women's empowerment. Research has indicated that women who have a higher degree of education, who live in urban areas, and who have access to information are more likely to experience feelings of empowerment. According to the data, there is a significant association between a woman's sense of empowerment and her age, which suggests that a woman's sense of empowerment grows as she gets older. In addition, a strong correlation was found between women's place of residence and their level of empowerment. The results, which were consistent with those of other studies, indicated that women living in urban areas had more agency than their counterparts living in rural areas. Rural women living in poverty often have limited access to economic opportunities and autonomy, which further removes them from decision-making processes. Because of the many ways in which education increases one's sense of It was discovered that highly educated women are more empowered than those with minimal or no education because it increases their skills, self-confidence, and knowledge and improves career chances. Additionally, it brings monetary mobility and mobility when seeking healthcare. Many adolescent girls in Pakistan, particularly those living in rural areas, have less opportunities to further their education since housewifery is considered to be an expected gender role for women in Pakistan. The empowerment of women increased concurrently with the growth of the family wealth index. In Pakistan, women come in last place on the wealth index because their rights to inheritance, property ownership, and administration are not completely realized. This contributes to Pakistan's patriarchal society.

It is possible that the implementation of this affirmative action will contribute to the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender and the enhancement of a wide range of socioeconomic results for women. The outcomes of the study indicated that a favorable and statistically significant association exists between women's paid work and empowerment. Women who held paid work were more likely to enjoy autonomy in their homes

compared to women who did not have paid employment. According to the results of the poll, women who held managerial positions or skilled labor jobs were the ones who reported feeling the most empowered. In this particular research project, the questionnaire and the interviews are presented together. There were six primary themes discovered in all. According to the findings of the study, having access to higher education provides a considerable increase to the awareness that women have about their legal rights. However, research has shown that women's comprehension of their rights does not line up with their ability to express those rights for a number of different reasons. There are a lot of different reasons for this. Achieving a level of economic autonomy has emerged as a major motivation for enrolling in higher education. It was found that an improvement in a woman's educational and economic position was connected with increased self-assurance as well as the experience of gaining a voice within the context of both the family and the greater community. Women are able to engage more completely in topics pertaining to their families and society as a whole as a direct result of receiving consultation and hearing in a variety of settings. There was a general consensus that parents are more willing to contribute financially to their son's higher education. In conclusion, a variety of explanations were provided for why the gender gap in Pakistan's educational system is maintained and even worsened by the educational practices that are currently in place, as well as recommendations for how to address some of the factors that contribute to gender discrimination in educational settings.

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