

Teachers' Perceived Gender Equality in Educational Opportunities at Secondary School Level

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to highlight teacher's perceived gender equality in educational opportunities at secondary level. Female education in Pakistan is critical for achieving quality learning because there is a significant gender gap in education, particularly in the rural sector. The design chosen for this study was descriptive. The population for this study included all secondary school teachers and Subject Specialists in the Multan district who worked in the school education department. The sample was chosen using a stratified sampling procedure and a sample of 508 teachers representing all four tehsils of Multan district was selected. This study examined factors affecting female and male secondary education, including girls' limited course choices, gender differences in course selection, social violence against women and girls' education, period poverty, and stigma. It was recommended that regular in-service training for the management of need and utilization of computer in special school and special advocacy/awareness campaigns should be launched to increase the awareness about gender equality in educational opportunities at secondary level.

KEYWORDS

Teacher, Gender Equality, Educational Opportunities, Secondary Level.

JOURNAL INFO

HISTORY: Received: February 02, 2023

Accepted: March 25, 2023

Published: March 31, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Education is more important than a century ago, particularly in the twenty-first century. Educational institutions' primary goal is to instill in students the advanced level of expertise required to compete successfully in the graduate job market. Because universities and colleges are the primary sources of skilled workers, their absence would stifle economic growth (GoP, 1998). Under the umbrella concept of "education," which is sufficiently all-encompassing to include these activities in addition to traditional classroom instruction, it is possible to train teachers, participate in continuing education, and attend schools for technical or vocational training. Students who successfully complete a course of study are eligible to receive either a certificate or a degree.

Esteves (2018) claims that educators' perspectives on how their female and male students are adjusting to school are frequently skewed. This is true whether the educators are female or male. Educators have a favorable impression of female students because they believe they are friendlier or more motivated to work than their male counterparts. Women, on the other hand, are less likely to be considered intellectually promising and to receive adequate time and attention while learning. However, secondary school educators have observed a gender gap, with male students being more likely to misbehave and have a lower level of academic engagement than their female counterparts.

When we discuss "gender equality," we mean that men and women should have equal access to resources, protection, and educational opportunities. Gender equality is critical to ensuring the planet's happiness, prosperity, and sustainability. Equal opportunities for women and men to succeed will benefit both the current generation and future generations. Education is one of the most effective ways to close the gender gap and work toward a more equitable and prosperous society. If there are no gender disparities, inequities, or violence in the classroom, the country will be able to make progress (Mogonea & Mogonea, 2021).

Gender equality in the classroom is achieved through four considerations: The term "equality of access to education" refers to the situation in which people in rural and urban areas have equal access to primary, secondary, and tertiary education (also known as "educational equity"). (B) Gender equality in education refers to providing equal opportunities for men and women to advance their knowledge, skills, and interests in formal and informal settings. (C) Educational outcome equality: this dimension implies that both sexes should have equal opportunities to achieve educational outcomes based on their own efforts



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and talents. (D) External effort equality: this dimension implies that both sexes should have equal opportunities to achieve educational outcomes based on the efforts and talents of others (Devi, 2022).

In Pakistan, the "gender gap" is most visible in the country's secondary and tertiary education systems, where female students are underrepresented (Kasente, 2003). In a number of cities across Pakistan, the number of female students enrolled in primary schools remains significantly lower than the number of male students enrolled in primary schools. According to the general statistics on women's education in Pakistan presented by Abraha et al. (2022), while secondary school enrollment for girls is increasing in many developing countries, the situation for women's enrollment in higher education is less encouraging. This is because a variety of factors, such as admissions policies, physical access to institutions, financial support, completion of secondary education, the strength of institutional culture, and so on and so forth, determine whether or not women can successfully pursue postsecondary education (Dwyer & Wyn, 2004).

It is critical to emphasize that everything discussed thus far applies not only to south Punjab but also to Pakistan as a whole. Many of the world's poorest countries exhibit these characteristics. Schools today face a number of challenges, including insufficient transportation, a hostile environment, and a lack of safety measures to protect students from sexual assault. Men constitute a disproportionate share of the teaching staff at secondary and tertiary educational institutions worldwide. Women are denied access to decision-making positions, and men almost always run businesses. Even though things have improved in recent years, women still require character strength to overcome pervasive socio-cultural norms if they are to achieve professional success. Even though things have improved, this remains the case.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify teacher's perceived gender equality in educational opportunities at secondary level.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

They have no obligations other than to stay at home and take care of their own and their families' needs. Despite their daughters' natural disinclination, many parents continue to expect their daughters to follow rules. People who hold more traditional values and beliefs frequently arrange for their children to marry at a younger age. This is something that is more common in rural areas. They expect it to become increasingly difficult to find suitable brides as the median age of brides rises and the number of people who have graduated from college rises. They begin teaching their daughters at a young age how to properly carry out their domestic responsibilities (Esteves, 2018).

In the following sections, we will show why gender equality is critical to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on the United Nations' agenda for 2016. It is impossible to establish a peaceful, successful, and ecologically responsible society capable of safeguarding the world's future without offering men and women equal legal safeguards. It benefits communities, economies, and society as a whole when women and girls have equal access to education, healthcare, excellent employment, and representation in political and economic decision-making. This is especially true in the case of sustainable economies. Countries in development are keenly aware of this truth.

Many additional Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are considered to be affected by gender equality, including economic development, improved health and nutrition, enhanced agricultural productivity, and reduced inequality (Banham & Ahern, 2016). The Global Partnership for Education has supported the Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020 in order to deepen and widen the organization's commitment to the achievement of gender equality. One of the Global Partnership for Education's primary goals is to guarantee that children have access to high-quality education that prepares them to participate in the modern economy. With the help of this policy and strategy, which is implemented via the formulation of yearly action plans, GPE is better capable of reaching its aim. The policy aims to achieve the following four specific goals:

1. Raise women's and men's educational opportunities, engagement, and success.
2. Promote greater gender equality in educational systems.
3. Enhance gender equity in educational legal frameworks, policies, and planning processes.
4. Ensure that the Global Partnership for Education's commitment to gender equality is fully implemented.

According to Moges (2019), gender inequalities have a negative impact on female students' involvement in all aspects of development. The challenges that the economy faces in terms of gender equality in accessing education include child labor, a lack of efforts to educate children, domestic work, a preference for having a son, social beliefs, and so on. These factors have a significant impact on preventing girls from having equal access to education as boys. Our educational system continues to disregard the principle of equality in education. The system considers equality to be a satisfactory measure of parity without taking into account the limitations that come with it.

Esteves (2018) discovered that gender balance in education is linked to the formation of an educational system that provides equal access to human rights and benefits from social, economic, cultural, and political development for male and female students. Some countries have already begun to take the required steps to remove barriers in the education system in order to achieve societal benefits and provide equal rights and benefits to both genders, particularly in the sphere of education.

When people are treated differently because of their gender, we call this a social problem called gender inequality. Women are generally subjected to more discrimination than men. The disparity in economic and social standing that exists between men and women is a significant issue that plagues Pakistan and the rest of the world. The fact that women continue to struggle to achieve economic and educational equality with men, despite widespread efforts, has emerged as a major global concern in recent years. Even in Pakistan, there is a significant gender gap between the opportunities available to men and those available to women.

This issue focuses on the challenges that girls face when trying to further their education. The cultural norms of paternalism, as well as the gender gap in educational attainment, are also being investigated. The focus of this investigation will be on the state of women's education in Pakistani society and the primary factors that contribute to gender inequality in Pakistan's educational system, including the influence of patriarchy and poverty on the degree to which this gap exists, the role of the Pakistani government in addressing this problem, and the actions taken by the rest of the international community in this area. It has been proposed that gender disparities in educational attainment are more pronounced in rural areas (Evans & Yuan, 2022).

Outdated practices, cultural values, and norms, as well as poverty, all contribute to the gender gap in education and economic mobility. The concept of patriarchy, which refers to the belief that men should be treated as superior to women, has had a significant impact on Pakistani culture and values. In Pakistan, there is a significant education disparity between the sexes, which is especially pronounced in rural areas where it is illegal for girls to attend school. There is a significant gender gap in secondary education, with men outnumbering women in administrative and teaching positions. There is no evidence of this gap at the elementary and secondary school levels.

Unfortunately, educational disparities between the sexes persist, which is especially troubling for young women who come from low-income families. Men and women face disparities in many aspects of society, including, but not limited to, job opportunities, financial rewards, medical care, and classroom instruction. Over the last several decades, there has been progress toward the goal of universal school attendance. The educational attainment gap between the sexes has narrowed as a result of the implementation of a variety of different strategies. However, there are still significant barriers to receiving a high-quality education in today's world. Access to educational materials and resources, time spent on formal learning activities, and cultural ideas and perspectives held by individuals and groups about female educational opportunities are all major contributors to the role that socioeconomic factors play in perpetuating educational inequality (White et al., 2016).

It is common in rural areas to believe that rather than attending school, young women should stay at home to care for the household and other responsibilities. They will eventually marry, and once they do, they will be too preoccupied with raising a family to combine their education with work outside the home. However, attitudes toward this subject are gradually changing, with an increasing number of people encouraging young women to pursue higher education. People in both urban and rural areas have changed their minds, and they are now encouraging young women to attend educational institutions. Women and girls have a lot to offer those around them in terms of making their lives better. If parents are willing to invest money in their children's education, those children will have a better chance of academic success (Kapur, 2019).

The education disparity between men and women has a significant impact on GDP growth. Chaudhry conducted research on the impact of the gender gap in education on Pakistan's GDP growth (2007). We used secondary time series data from a variety of different research areas. He ran a series of regressions, each with a bare minimum of unobtrusive predictors. Increases in overall literacy, enrollment rates, and the ratio of females to males who can read and write are all positive economic growth factors. Early childhood education has a significant gender gap, which has been linked to slower economic growth. This study's findings are consistent with those obtained by Klasen (2002).

Chaudhry (2009) investigated the factors that contribute to poverty in Pakistan's rural areas. According to his findings, poverty can be reduced by reducing household size and dependency ratios, increasing female labor-force participation, and expanding educational opportunities. He used Logit regression models and data gathered specifically for the Asian Development Bank's project region for estimation purposes. The likelihood of living in poverty, according to the findings, increases not only with dependency but also with household size. The ability to improve one's employment prospects through educational pursuits has a significant and negative impact on one's financial situation.

South Asia and Pakistan are two locations with a significant gender education gap (UNESCO, 2002). According to the World Economic Forum's Women's Empowerment Index, Pakistan ranks 56th overall because it has made fewer gains toward gender equality than any of the other 55 nations questioned (Lopez-Claros & Zahidi, 2005). Despite the fact that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women in the workplace, gender discrimination persists (NAP, 2004). As a result, the region's cultural and economic aspects are fully displayed. In order to counter traditional gender norms in Pakistan, Khalid (2011) distinguishes between conservatives who fight for women's marginalization and liberals who argue for women's full democratic participation and female autonomy. Conservatives push for women's marginalization, whilst liberals urge for women's full democratic participation and autonomy. Liberals in Pakistan support for women's full democratic involvement and autonomy, whilst conservatives push for women's marginalization, which is the polar opposite of what liberals feel should occur.

According to research conducted all over the world to investigate the factors that influence decision-making in secondary education, very few women hold positions of authority in secondary schools. Women, it is widely assumed, are less capable in the workplace and are better suited to roles that require them to be at home. Women make up the majority of the teaching staff in secondary schools, but they have little to no say in the formation of educational policy (Shaukat et al., 2014).

This is because "tribal, religious, and social institutions have major influence on women's life," as well as because "women's status varies significantly among classes, regions, and rural-urban divisions." Women, in contrast to men, are more likely to have a submissive position in society as a whole due to pervasive patriarchal tendencies that exist across all social strata and geographical areas, as well as in urban and rural settings. There is a significant gender disparity in the number of men and women in positions of teaching and administrative leadership in schools. Despite the fact that female teachers make up a disproportionate number of elementary, middle, and high school teachers, the share of female teachers in secondary and university classes has declined dramatically in recent years (vertical segregation). Women are also significantly underrepresented in a wide range of other disciplines of study, notably vocational training programs and academic fields historically dominated by males, such as the sciences and trades (horizontal segregation). The same may be stated regarding roles in educational administration, policy formation, and decision making.

In 2018, women made up 94% of pre-primary education instructors worldwide. Women outnumbered males in elementary schools (66%), secondary schools (54%), and higher education (43%), with 66% of elementary school instructors female and 54% of secondary school teachers female. Since 1995, the proportion of female teachers in primary schools has remained roughly constant, but it has increased in almost all regions except Sub-Saharan Africa, where it has decreased from 32% to 30% in secondary schools and from 26% to 24% in tertiary schools, despite already being the lowest globally at both levels. While the proportion of female instructors in elementary schools has stayed essentially constant, it has grown in practically all areas except Sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 15). Even in basic education, Benin, Comoros, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone had fewer than thirty percent female instructors in 2018, while Togo had fewer than twenty percent female teachers. According to research undertaken in African nations, the presence of female lecturers increases the number of female students enrolling in classes as well as the number of female students who remain in such schools (Haugen et al., 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** The research design is concerned with an action plan, and in the case of this study, the action plan included the quantitative research design.
- **Population:** The population for this study included all secondary school teachers and Subject Specialists in the Multan district who worked in the school education department.
- **Sample of the Study:** According to the research requirements, a sample of 508 teachers representing all four tehsils of Multan district was selected.
- **Research Instrument:** The self-made questionnaire was used as a research tool.
- **Data Collection:** The researcher constructed a Google form for online data collection and disseminated the link in several What's app groups where teachers were added, as well as via email with teachers.

Analysis of Data

The collected data was tabulated and analyzed using the SPSS software. The results were obtained through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were computed to illustrate the demographic items and questions, and the independent sample t-test and One-way ANOVA were used to depict the variations in teachers' opinions based on different demographic data. To determine the link between dependent and independent variables, correlation and regression analyses were used. Based on the data, conclusions and recommendations were developed.

Table 1 Frequency Distribution at the Basis of Demographics

Title	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	184	36.2%
	Female	324	63.8%
Designation	SST	301	59.3%
	Subject specialist	207	40.7%
Qualification	Master	318	62.6%
	M.Phil.	170	33.5%
	PHD	20	3.9%

Table 1. *Frequency Distribution for Identify the institutional elements influencing female and male schooling at secondary level*

Sr#	Statements of Questions	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	M	SD
1	Girls having limited courses of study to choose.	267	203	28	10	0	4.43	0.69
		53%	40%	6%	2%	0%		
2	Same education programs are not available to all students, male and female.	250	242	16	0	0	4.46	0.56
		49%	48%	3%	0%	0%		
3	In high school, the courses they select reveal distinct gender differences	219	271	13	0	5	4.38	0.64
		43%	53%	3%	0%	1%		
4	Limited Career Advancement Opportunities are given to female.	248	220	12	22	6	4.34	0.82
		49%	43%	2%	4%	1%		
5	Social Violence against women and girls' education at secondary school level.	161	266	54	27	0	4.10	0.79
		32%	52%	11%	5%	0%		
6	Period poverty and stigma influenced the women and girls' education at secondary school level.	198	221	65	24	0	4.17	0.82
		39%	44%	13%	5%	0%		
7	Uneducated parents give little value on their children's education	189	251	56	6	6	4.20	0.77
		37%	49%	11%	1%	1%		
8	Female opportunities for education are seriously limited	196	263	38	5	6	4.26	0.74
		39%	52%	7%	1%	1%		
9	Female education is also affected by unintended pregnancy	173	275	42	0	18	4.15	0.85
		34%	54%	8%	0%	4%		
10	Females who assist their mothers with household tasks are refused education	211	229	32	24	12	4.19	0.92
		42%	45%	6%	5%	2%		
11	Female education is also affected by early marriages.	191	252	48	6	11	4.19	0.82
		38%	50%	9%	1%	2%		
12	Female education is limited by socio-cultural traditions.	173	240	65	25	5	4.08	0.87
		34%	47%	13%	5%	1%		
13	Females are not permitted to leave their homes, even for education.	164	272	49	18	5	4.13	0.80
		32%	54%	10%	4%	1%		
14	Female are considered to be weak and sensitive by society	200	257	34	17	0	4.26	0.73
		39%	51%	7%	3%	0%		

Inferential Statistics**Table 3.** *Comparison of Opinion of Respondents at the Base of Gender (Independent Sample t-test)*

Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Male	184	68.08	6.29	506	0.77	0.45
Female	324	67.45	6.07			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

Table indicates that the information for female (N=324, M= 67.45, SD=6.07) and for male (N=184, M=68.08, SD=.29) with t-statistics (t(506)= .77, P>.05) which shows that there is no significance difference in the opinion of male and female respondents on the basis of gender of participants.

Table 4. *Comparison of Opinion of Respondents at the Base of Designation (Independent Sample t-test)*

Designation	N	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
SST	301	68.28	6.04	506	1.68	0.095
Subject specialist	207	66.93	6.23			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

Table specifies that the empirical information for SST (N=301, M=68.28, SD=6.04) and for subject specialist (N=207, M=66.93, SD=6.23) with t-statistics ($t(506) = 1.68$, $P > .05$) which shows that there is no significant difference in the opinions of SST and subject specialist respondents on basis of designation of participants.

Table 5. *Comparison of Opinion of Respondents at the Base of Qualification (One-Way ANOVA)*

Qualification	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1036.878	4	259.219	7.638	.000
Within Groups	7805.820	503	33.938		
Total	8842.698	507			

**P < .05 Level of Significance*

Table shows that empirical information for Between Groups (sum of square=1036.878, df=4, mean square=259.219) and for Within Groups (Sum of Squares=7805.820, df=503, Mean Square=33.938) with One Way ANOVA ($F(507) = 7.638$, $P < .05$) which leads to the decision there is a significance difference in the opinion on the basis of academic title of participant.

FINDINGS

Majority of respondents agreed that Girls having limited courses of study to choose, Same education programs are not available to all students, male and female, in high school, the courses they select reveal distinct gender differences and Limited Career Advancement Opportunities are given to female. Majority of respondents agreed that Social Violence against women and girls' education at secondary school level, Period poverty and stigma influenced the women and girls' education at secondary school level, Uneducated parents give little value on their children's education, Female opportunities for education are seriously limited and Female education is also affected by unintended pregnancy. Majority of respondents agreed that Females who assist their mothers with household tasks are refused education, Female education is also affected by early marriages, Female education is limited by socio-cultural traditions, Females are not permitted to leave their homes, even for education and Female are considered to be weak and sensitive by society.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to look into secondary school teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward gender equality in the classroom. The expectancy-value theory is a powerful tool for understanding the factors that motivate people and contribute to their level of success in life. According to the theory, a person's expectations about how well they will perform on a specific activity, as well as the degree to which they value the activity, can explain both the person's level of achievement and the choices they make in relation to their level of achievement (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Violence in schools is a significant issue in some international regions. Bullying, physical punishment, verbal and emotional abuse, intimidation, sexual harassment and assault, gang activity, and the presence of weapons among students are all examples of on-campus violence. These types of violence can occur on school grounds, in public transportation, or online. Power imbalances and gender stereotypes both contribute significantly to this problem. In 2014, nearly 246 million children worldwide, both boys and girls, were victims of school violence (UNGEL, 2017).

One of the primary goals of education programs is to help educators identify and overcome their own biases so that they can better serve their students. Formal initiatives in teacher education with a gender focus have been implemented in a number of countries, including Italy, the Republic of Moldova, and Sudan, to name just a few (OHCHR, 2015). Prospective teachers in Spain's Oviedo region must take a class at the University of Oviedo that focuses on gender issues in the classroom (Bourn et al., 2017). Prospective teachers in Ankara, Turkey, demonstrated a discernible shift in their gender sensitive attitudes toward the profession after taking a course on gender equity in the classroom for an entire semester (Erden, 2009).

Teachers' gender stereotypical beliefs and pedagogical practices were discovered to have a significant impact on the gender differences that exist among students, making them an important first step in the process of promoting gender equity in the classroom (Heyder et al., 2020). According to Tiedemann's findings, elementary school teachers were more likely to rate girls as having less talent than boys of comparable ability (2000). Educators were also more likely to blame a girl's lack of effort for her unexpected failure than a boy's lack of ability for his unexpected failure (Fennema et al., 1990).

CONCLUSION

Firstly, this study aimed to elements influencing female and male schooling at secondary level which are girls having limited courses of study to choose, same education programs are not available to all students, male and female, in high school, the courses they select reveal distinct gender differences, limited career advancement opportunities are given to female, social violence against women and girls' education at secondary school level, period poverty and stigma influenced the women and girls' education at secondary school level, uneducated parents give little value on their children's education, female opportunities for education are seriously limited, female education is also affected by unintended pregnancy, females who assist their mothers with household tasks are refused education, female education is also affected by early marriages, female education is limited by socio-cultural traditions, females are not permitted to leave their homes, even for education, female are considered to be weak and sensitive by society.

Recommendations

Following recommendations were made on the results and conclusions:

1. Regular in-service training for the management of need and utilization of computer in special school.
2. Secondary school gender equality in educational opportunities should be the focus of a targeted advocacy and awareness campaign.
3. Government should take steps to support the female education.
- 4.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Dr. Muhammad Javed Aftab: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation. **Shahbaz Ali:** Visualization, Investigation. **Navid Ur Rehman:** Writing- Reviewing and Editing

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS:

It is declared that all authors don't have any conflict of interest. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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