

## DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FOR THEIR TEACHERS' TO EXHIBIT GENDER BIASES

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### ABSTRACT

*The research attempts to investigate students' perceptions regarding gender bias practiced by teachers in higher education. There are many forms of gender bias such as imbalance, stereotyping, invisibility, selectivity, linguistics, and isolation as in the case of co-education institutions. It is commonly assumed that students face biases from teachers due to gender. The main objective was to explore students' perceptions of gender bias. For this study survey method was adopted to collect the data through questionnaires. The population was the students of universities situated in the Lahore district. Six universities and from each university three disciplines were selected conveniently. Sampling consists of 300 students from the selected universities. T-test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze data and find out differences in perceptions on the basis of certain demographic variables. No significant difference was found in the perceptions on the basis of different demographic variables. In conclusion, it can be said that gender bias remains an issue when it comes to student-student connections within classrooms. But students credited sociological perception of gender differences.*

**Key Words:** Bias, Higher, Education, Gender, Students

### Introduction

The number of female entrants to higher education in Pakistan is constantly increasing irrespective of age and background. It is evident from the statistics available in almost all educational fields that despite gender segregation in the choice of disciplines, fields are dominated by a large number of female students. The field of science is predominantly male but it is also getting feminized slowly and gradually in addition to information technology and mathematics.

The cause of gender discrimination in higher education is a multi-factorial phenomenon including demographic, economic, sociological, and educational factors. The possibility of fixing these factors seems remote even in the near future. On the contrary, some of the factors are acting as a catalyst for robust growth in female education as compared with men (which is on rising anyway) (Bailey 2006,).

According to Brown (2016), the gender-wise difference in learning is evident even in being in the same class, teacher, and reading common content.

Braga, Paccagnella, and Pellizzari, (2014) describe that classrooms are the place where individuals of a particular society portray their strengths and tribulations at the same time. The overall social fabric of the society affects the perceptions regarding gender roles in social life hence it influences teachers' behavior in the classroom.

Sometimes teachers show unconscious biases towards gender and their expectations become stereotypes due to social mindset. Typical male dominating behavior of boys manipulates the classroom environment and teachers usually accept it as a matter of fact. These biases are the result of social attitudes toward male and female roles and expectations attached to both genders. The student group which dominates the classroom environment and most of the teacher time is called the target group and it was identified by the researchers (Knol, Vorst, van, & Mellenbergh, 2013).

Teachers' perceptions regarding students' abilities can be understood through their words, praise, and the expectations they expressed while they are providing feedback in the classroom. It is said that boys get more meaningful and critical feedback than girls (MacNeill, Driscoll, & Hunt, 2015). Girls get praised for their look and appearance whereas boys are praised for their hard work, intelligence, and uniqueness but the same attributes of girls are ignored. These feelings related to teachers' behavior are expressed by girls in a study that do not receive appreciation for their hard work and intelligence so that they can develop their abilities and skills (McLaughlin et al, 2013).

When a class is headed by female teachers, boys are more probable to be seen as troublemaking. When a male teacher is taking class, girls are liable to account that they did not glance ahead to a subject. With respect to gender, studies suggest that men are more stereotyped as being mannish, while women are viewed as being more vulnerable. Manly traits are

often associated with those found in headship positions and include more striving firm and central tendencies (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

Differences in students' perceptions depending on teachers' behavior had a great impact on teacher-student interaction. If we analyze the education system from a Pakistani perspective, it is a shocking reality that most of the features and facilities of the education system favor boys more than girls. So it can be said that the primary education system addresses the needs of boys. Morrison and Johnson (2013) Said that "boys are referred for testing to gifted programs twice as often as girls". Mengel, Sauermann, and Zölitz (2017) said "The concept of giftedness is seen as departing from the right, and girls strive to be conventional."

Such types of teachers' behavior can be changed if we provide them with awareness and help them to change their behavior. As per the perception of Rosen & Andrew (2017) for reducing the phenomenon of gender bias, the gender resource model assists the teacher. Ross (2017) added that in class and during activities and assessments, girls' role is often passive. While girls are reading instructions and recording, boys by using equipment complete the task.

### Objectives:

The objectives of the study are:

- To investigate students perceptions regarding gender bias in higher education.
- To identify difference in the perceptions of students regarding gender bias with reference to demographic variables such as gender, university and department, age, and level of education.

### Research Questions:

1. What are the perceptions of students regarding gender bias in higher education?
2. Is there any difference in the perceptions of students regarding gender bias with reference to gender, university and department, age, and level of education?

### Literature Review

Basically, this study provides awareness to teachers about their biased behavior among male and female students. Gender is represented as the economic, social, and cultural characteristics and prospects in association with being male or female at a particular position in a moment (Hornstein, 2017). 'Gender Bias' has been defined in by theorists in different ways. (Zumbach, & Funke, 2014)). Gender bias in education is defined as the treatment of boys and girls differently in the classroom (McLaughlin, & Hesli, 2013 ).

Martin, (2016) points out that females and males perceive their role in society in different manners. In most societies, male and female members of the society have different roles and responsibilities (Stark & Freishtat, 2014).

It was found that women commonly saw their roles in indoor activities and expect support from their male classmates in difficult tasks. National Center for Education Statistics, (2015) presents that men, in comparison are likely to perceive their dominating role as extensions of their power in their surroundings. Most of the studies focused on girls' equality in education. In co-education institutions boys play dominating role and get most of the teachers' attention, they express their opinion more confidently (Kimball et al, 2016)). However, another opinion is that in co-education girls win sympathy, and attention due to the vulnerability attached to their gender (Hosmer, Lemeshow, & Sturdivant (2013).

In some countries, gender inequality is being practiced in the name of equity and equality in education because the focus is shifting from boys to girls. The decline in boys' educational performance is an international phenomenon because the female part of society is now working hard to become more qualified and professional (Hollinsworth, 2016). World Economic Forum (2017) points out that when we talk about inequality, in most cases, it is considered racial inequality but gender inequality is the most common feature in education and this issue should be addressed more effectively by researchers and educationists. In schools, gender-wise differences exist in the treatment of students as Stark and Freishtat, (2014) asserted that it is a false assumption that girls and boys are being treated on an equal basis in educational institutions. The fact is that both genders are facing inequality in one or another way. It is pertinent to note here that the current increase in female education will continue that might act as a disadvantage to men. Generation replacement signifies that female education will outpower men's education both in quality and quantity (Buchmann, & DiPrete, 2006. In the hindsight, this continued educational bias acting as a disadvantage to the male population might lead to social or demographic crises. Equity means providing a proper environment to fully grow one's true potential, but how to label gender bias? Do we have some evidence supporting that the low academic achievement of male students is caused by gender inequality? Furthermore, diversity (or the presence of both genders) is vital to creating an environment full of social enrichment.

Students identified with gender in order to make sense of social, political, and economic structures (DiPrete, & Buchmann, 2006). It is difficult to comprehend for a student to separate public and private life and gender roles in explaining historical and geographical analyses. Ridgeway, and Correll, (2004) in their research study discussed in detail that students can spot the gender bias hidden in theories. They identify that how normative theories have molded the minds and validated gender dominations. Students are able to find social and cultural differences in theories with reference to the roles and capacities of males and females.

In a study, 50% of the respondent were of opinion that gender discrimination has been successfully abolished from their institutions due to legislation by the institution or any other intellect of the faculty. Basically, universities remain unable

to provide a neutral environment to female students because they cannot isolate from cultural, domestic duties, and social networking effects (Shaukat, et al.,2014).

A study found that the bias is not a result of the gender-based behavior of the instructors; rather it is the psychological bias on the part of the students. Students dramatically rated the perceived female instructor with more harsh feedback as compared to the perceived male instructor. This also adds that to get a rating comparable to males a female teacher has to work harder. This is a serious point of consideration for the education sector since a large number of females are inclined toward the teaching profession and professional development (Singh, 2008).

Another study suggests that students' evaluation of their teacher is a disadvantage for female faculty in academia because when comes to teacher's performance rating here again students' biases exit (Hampton &Reiser, 2004; Morrison & Johnson,2013). A study shows that male students showed low performance and lack of interest while taking courses with female teachers because of the low care variables. (Raymo & Iwasawa, 2005).

A negative relationship was found in a study between gender bias and the selection of female instructors/professors. This proves that the gender of students affects the choice of instructor and thus the rating of a female teacher (EIGE, 2016).

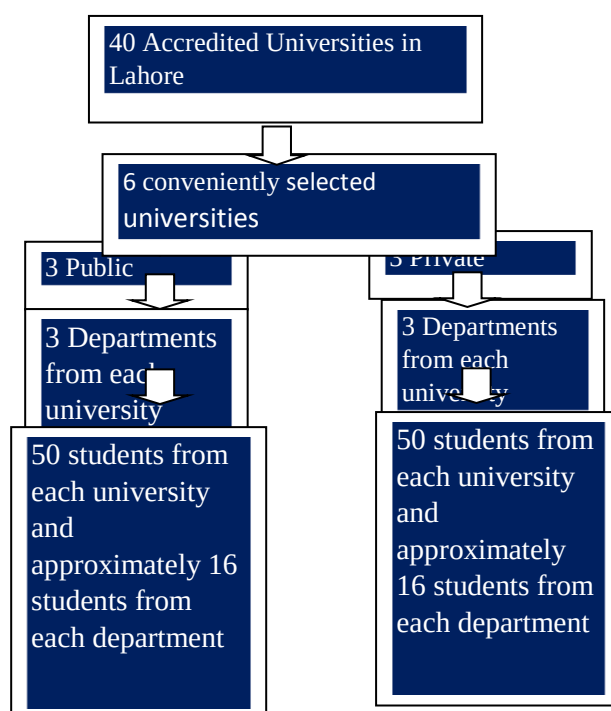
### Methodology

The present study was designed to investigate students' perceptions regarding gender bias practiced by teachers at university level. It was an attempt to understand the social fabric of the country like Pakistan, where male dominating mind set prevails at a larger scale. The main purpose was to identify the types of bias found in teachers and how it is perceived by students. Descriptive study design and survey type of research was conducted to understand the phenomenon.

### Population and Sampling:

The population of this research was the students studying in higher education. The sample was selected from the universities situated in the Lahore district. Six universities were selected conveniently. There were 40 accredited universities in Lahore. The selection criteria for six conveniently universities, is described below:

- At the first stage, those universities were selected where co-education is being practiced.
- At the second stage, 6 universities were selected from which three universities were public and three were from the private sector because students and teachers in both types of universities come from different socio-economic backgrounds and different mindsets.
- At the third stage, three disciplines were selected from each university. It was made sure by the researchers that the nominated departments are working in all the selected universities.
- Sample size consists of 300 students from different universities. 50 students from each university were selected.



### Instrument

The instrument of this study, through which the data collected, was questionnaires. The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers themselves. The students responded to questions on a five point Likert type scale:

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

### Data Analysis and Results

Data analysis was tabulated with the help of statistical SPSS software. T test and ANOVA was applied to find out the difference in perceptions on the basis of different demographic variables such as gender, university type and departments.

Table 1

T- test to find out the difference in perceptions regarding gender bias in higher education on the basis of gender

|        | Mean    | Std. Deviation | t      | Sig. | Df      | Sig.<br>two<br>tailed |
|--------|---------|----------------|--------|------|---------|-----------------------|
| Male   | 86.5870 | 18.94303       | 1.117  | .405 | 297     | .265                  |
| Female | 84.2802 | 15.25889       | 1.1029 |      | 145.700 | .305                  |

The above table demonstrates that the mean of male population is 86.5870 and female population is 84.2802 The T- test of male is 1.117 and female is 1.1029. Significance is 0.405. so it can be said that no significance difference is found between the perceptions of male and female regarding bias.

Table 2

One way ANOVA to find out the difference in perceptions regarding gender bias in higher education on the basis of universities

|                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 4748.722       | 5   | 949.744     | 3.653 | .003 |
| Within Groups  | 76432.198      | 294 | 259.973     |       |      |
| Total          | 81180.920      | 299 |             |       |      |

This table displays that sum of square between groups is 4748.722 and within groups 76432.198 and total is 81180.920, frequency is 3.653 and significance is .003. so it can be deduced that significant difference exists in the perceptions regarding gender bias between groups from different universities.

Table 3

One way ANOVA to find out the difference in perceptions regarding gender bias in higher education on the basis of departments

|                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 1390.148       | 2   | 695.074     | 2.587 | .077 |
| Within Groups  | 79790.772      | 297 | 268.656     |       |      |
| Total          | 81180.920      | 299 |             |       |      |

The above table concludes that the sum of square between groups 1390.148 and within groups is 79790.772 and total is 81180.920. frequency of ANOVA test is 2.587 and significance is .077. It is apparent that no significant difference is found in perceptions between groups from different departments because the significant value is greater than .05.

Table 4

One way ANOVA to find out the difference in perceptions regarding gender bias in higher education on the basis of age

|                | Sum of Squares | Df  | Mean Square | F    | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | 385.905        | 2   | 192.952     | .709 | .493 |
| Within Groups  | 80795.015      | 297 | 272.037     |      |      |
| Total          | 81180.920      | 299 |             |      |      |

The above table determines that the sum of square between groups 385.905 and within groups is 80795.015 and total is 81180.920 frequency of ANOVA test is 0.709 and significance is .493 which is greater than .05 so it can be claimed that no significant difference exists in perceptions between groups regarding gender bias.

Table 5

One way ANOVA to find out the difference in perceptions regarding gender bias in higher education on the basis of level of education

|                | Sum of Squares | Df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 1567.022       | 2   | 783.511     | 2.923 | .055 |
| Within Groups  | 79613.898      | 297 | 268.060     |       |      |
| Total          | 81180.920      | 299 |             |       |      |

The above table exhibits that the sum of square between groups 1567.022 and within groups is 79613.898 and total is 81180.920 the frequency of ANOVA test is 2.923 and significance is .055 which is greater than .05 so it is clear that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on the basis of academic qualification regarding gender bias.

### Findings

- There is no significant difference found between the opinion of males and females regarding gender bias in higher education.
- Significant difference was found between the groups on the basis of different universities.
- No significant difference was found in the perceptions on the basis of different departments and disciplines.
- There was no significant difference between the groups on the basis of age regarding the perceptions of gender bias in higher education.
- No significant difference was found in the perceptions on the basis of different levels of education.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The students' perception of gender bias practiced by teachers in higher education was the focus of this study. The findings of previous research conducted by Braga (2014)) are aligned with this study and exhibit that difference exists in the perceptions of male and female respondents regarding gender bias. The findings of this study show that no significant difference exists in students' perceptions on the basis of discipline, age group, and academic qualification and the findings are contradictory to the previous study led by McLaughlin and Hesli (2013 ) which says that significant difference exists on such variables. Gender inequality or gender bias is a widely studied topic in educational settings and it always comes to the conclusion that overall social perceptions influence academic inequalities in educational institutions. (Martin, 2016)

We received similar responses from all the universities. Most of the participants said that both genders face inequality for various reasons. Sometimes female students get more attention due to their appearance, attractive manners, sophistication, and vulnerability. On the other hand, boys win attention due to their dominating role, confidence, creativity, and boldness. And these results are similar to Hornstein, (2017) who found that for one reason or the other both genders are facing inequality in different situations. Possible social consequences of a gender-biased nation are the result of inequalities in educational institutions. It is common for social stereotypes to modify social standards and to strike a perfect gender balance in the educational arena, which seems a far fetch cry and remedies cannot be identified before evaluating the social consequences of this inequality. In the end, it is recommended that training sessions should be held in higher education institutions to develop awareness on this topic among teachers teaching at the university level and the changing roles of males and females should be the part of the curriculum.

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