

Role of University Education in Promoting Gender Equality in Community for Human Development: A Quantitative Insight

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Abstract

In the following study, an effort is made to indicate the impact of higher education in combating gender discrimination and promoting gender equality in the community. This study was carried out in three districts namely Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Bahawalpur of South Punjab region. A sample of 600 alumni of universities of the Southern Punjab from various fields was selected through cluster sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to collect information from respondents. It was concluded that university education sensitizes women regarding gender equality and highly qualified women know their rights, and raise voices against any inhuman activity against them. The role of University education is visible in increased girl enrollment and women labor participation. Higher education has a moderate role in women mobility and a minimal role in empowerment.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Equality, Higher Education, Women Mobility, empowerment, Economic Development, Human Development

Introduction

This research paper is an endeavor to highlight the work of the universities of Southern Punjab as knowledge organizations, their research, and norms impact of solutions for gender discrimination. Gender as a term is attributed to the roles, responsibilities, and relationships for men and women, in a specific society. Moreover Gender Equality refers the equal access by men and women to all the opportunities, goods, services and rewards.

Women are almost half of the population in Pakistan and additionally the poorest and neglected wedge of the society. The new concept of Economic Development adduces not only the increase in income but also considers wider social living standards, such as; provision of basic necessities of life, better health facilities, equal access to all type of education and employment. Gender inequality has been

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considered as a major cause of socioeconomic problems in developing countries. Gender inequality, in access to education, has a direct link to Poverty (Appleton, 1996). Recent studies indicate that women's education is directly linked with child survival, health and education (Schultz, 2002). The Human Development Index (HDI) acknowledges the literacy rate and life expectancy as a barometer of development. According to Klasen (2002) and Knowles et al (2002), low female literacy had a negative economic impact and a cause of an increased fertility and infant mortality. So, it is hard for a country to achieve development goals without promoting gender equality. Therefore, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) considers not only gender equality as one of its goals but also vital for other objectives, as indicated by the World Bank (2003).

Gender equality has not been an area focused in Pakistan since independence. Education is imperative for promoting women's economic empowerment, health, and social well-being. Education is the key to fighting the spread of HIV / AIDS and promoting women's sexual and reproductive health. In addition, education is important for women's political and civic participation and for the prevention of violence and insecurity (World Bank, 2001).

Reducing discrimination on the basis of sex is a soaring goal with many obstacles. While government regulation certainly helps the situation, the real way to reduce gender discrimination is through education and change the way people think about gender roles.

Literature Review

Gender discrimination is related to the fact that rights of an individual, is based on sexuality or rejection of sexuality. In some societies, this process is of old history and is acceptable to both sexes. Some religious groups get sexual discrimination as part of their dogma. However, in most industrialized nations, it is considered to be an illegal or generally non-productive action which leads to gender discrimination, which can cause the root of certain parts of society.

Most institutional discrimination and structural discrimination refer to the policies and control of these institutions as well as to the individual behaviors of these implementations.

The gender roles of Pakistan today reflect the weight of culture and tradition, but Islam is an important and influential position. In general, Islamization reinforces conservative ideas about the role women should play in society. At the very least, they show policies and programs designed to bring women into public space, and hence exact economic costs. Despite numerous commitments on gender equality in

recent decades, Pakistan has not made sufficient progress in a number of key gender policies. According to UNDP, (1998) Pakistan has ranked on 120 in 146 countries in Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and ranked at 92 in total 94 countries in terms of Gender Empowerment Measurement Ranking (GEMR). Following Table 1 portrays a picture of that disparity that women are facing.

Table 1: Female representation in the key posts in government and judiciary

Grade 18	Grade 19	Grade 20	Grade21	Grade 22	Judiciary (F judges)
13.55 %	5.5 %	10 %	Only 1	None	14 %

Inequalities are also faced by the women in healthcare facilities, educational enrollments, employment and legal protection. According to the Punjab commission on the status of women, (2016) a considerable gender disparity exists in literacy rate. Table 2 exhibits the data of that disparity in Pakistan, Punjab, and South Punjab respectively.

Table 2: Literacy Rate % (2013-14)

Pakistan			Punjab			DG Khan			Multan			Bahawalpur		
M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
71	48	56	70	51	58	50	26	37	66	47	53	56	34	44

M=Male, F= Female, T= total

The gender parity index (GPI) is a general socio-economic index designed to measure the ratio of women to men in access to different areas. According to the Pakistan development goals report (2013), a considerable gender disparity also exists in enrollment at various levels of education as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Gender Parity Index at various levels of Education and employment

Level	Region	2005-06	2008-09	2011-12
GPI Primary Education	Pakistan	.85	.88	.90
	Punjab	.88	.94	.95
GPI Secondary Education	Pakistan	.78	.80	.81
	Punjab	.84	.91	.85
GPI Literacy	Pakistan	.79	.78	.81
	Punjab	.86	.85	.88
Share of women in wage employment (%)	Pakistan	10.93	10.64	N/A
	Punjab	7.67	13.25	N/A

Pakistan also has a very low female participation rate in the labor market. The economic gains of any country demand gender equality in

employment. The increase in female labor is related to the increase in domestic production and contributes significantly to household income. Furthermore, recent studies indicate that relative control of resources by women and men has significant and diverse impacts on household consumption patterns. At present, the official participation rate of women in the labor market is about 19% (Government of Pakistan, 2012), tripled in the last 20 years. The participation of women in the labor market remains low in absolute terms and compared to other countries with similar GDP per capita.

The economic impact of higher education is relatively easy to quantify, its targets can be set and its value is easier to communicate to the society. Measurement of the social value of higher education is found difficult and rarely addressed in the literature. But that is not the sufficient reason to neglect the issue.

The universities have historically been playing a key role in developing the socioeconomic status of women in Pakistan. The role is visible in the generation of knowledge on gender equality through research to develop a shared vision to combat the issue of gender discrimination. Higher Education Commission has taken an initiative by developing and implementing the first policy guidelines against sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning (HEC, 2011). The policy has enabled the female graduates to fully understand their rights and raise voice against any sort of violence or assault against them.

Universities in South Punjab are working with community partners to increase their intentions by setting up expert groups and community engagement efforts that identify clear results with measurable goals. Understanding the current landscape of university-community partnerships is important to work, as are efforts to better align existing and new academic activities with gender equality.

In addition, universities are implementing curriculum reforms to achieve the goal of gender equality. Courses such as gender studies, women's rights, and women's empowerment are being incorporated into various programs to accelerate the movement for gender equality. Universities provide a safe and non-discriminatory academic environment that promotes learning. Universities, as knowledge organizations, conduct research on a variety of gender issues and present solutions that are valid for the community. Women are studying in a less stressful and impartial environment in the universities nowadays.

Statement of the Problem

The current research was carried out to determine the impact of university education on gender discrimination as a social problem. So the

topic of the research was "A study of the role of university education in promoting gender equality in the community".

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the role of the universities in promoting gender equality in Southern Punjab.
- ii. To analyze the efforts of universities in preventing sexual harassment.
- iii. To determine the contribution of university education in women mobility and empowerment in the community.

Research Questions

Following were the research questions developed to direct the research methodology.

- i. How and to what extent universities of Southern Punjab are contributing in bringing gender parity?
- ii. What is the role of university education in resolving issues related to sexual harassment?
- iii. How effective is higher education in increasing women mobility and empowerment in Southern Punjab?

Research Methodology

The nature of the research was exploratory and descriptive, so the descriptive method was adopted since it provides detailed and quantitative answers to research questions. In this sense, research tool acquired central importance and particular attention has been dedicated to the development of the tool. A questionnaire and data from official documents, relevant publications of the Government of Pakistan were used as tools for data collection.

Population and Sampling

All current and past graduates were the study population and 600 graduates were selected as sample using the conglomerate sampling technique to obtain quantitative data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS-20 version through t-test statistical formulas, variance analysis, mean score, correlation, and percentage. The validity and reliability of the research tool were obtained through Cronbach's alpha, (r) value, and experts advise.

Results and Findings

The results of the study presented in Table 4 to 6, according to the objectives. In the Table, 4 results were presented regarding the role of university education in the promotion of gender equality.

Table 4: Role of universities in the promotion of gender equality

Statement	Total	Mean	SD	T value	Sig.
University education is creating awareness among women to get their rights	566	2.70	.891	18.784	0.000
Female university graduates helping women to protect their rights.	567	2.90	.761	28.033	0.000
University education is working against gender discrimination.	562	2.61	.812	17.824	0.000
University education is helping in changing the typical mindset of seeing co-education as an evil.	565	2.76	.825	22.035	0.000
Overall		2.78	.791	27.231	0.000

Table No 4 presents the opinions of the respondents about the role of university education in promoting gender equality. The data manifest respondent's agreement to all the statements. Overall t-value 27.231 was significant at 0.000, which shows, inclination towards an agreement is statistically significant. The data also verified that mean score 2.90, was relatively high towards the statement that female university graduates help women to protect their rights. It shows a proliferation of university impact into the community.

Table 5: Efforts being made by the universities for prevention of sexual harassment

Statements	Total	Mean	SD	T value	Sig.
Sexual Harassment Policy is a source of protection against any sort of assault against women in universities.	563	2.54	.852	14.945	0.000
Universities sensitize their students regarding various sexual harassment concepts.	561	2.86	.722	28.188	0.000
Sexual harassment policy provides tips to recognize and resolve sexual harassment.	566	2.85	.825	25.517	0.000
Overall	-	2.69	.816	23.188	0.000

Table 5 presents the viewpoint of the respondents towards efforts of the universities for the prevention of sexual harassment. The data show an agreement of the respondents towards all the statements. The overall t-value 23.188 was significant at 0.000, which shows, inclination towards an agreement is statistically significant. The data indicate that the mean score is higher on the statements that universities sensitize students regarding sexual harassment concepts and the sexual harassment policy give tips in recognizing and resolving the issue.

Table 6: Contributions of universities in women mobility and empowerment in the community

Statement	Total	Mean	SD	T value	Sig.
University education is promoting mobility of women	556	2.78	.757	24.424	0.000
University Education plays role in the increasing women employment rate.	564	2.64	.769	27.749	0.000
University education is supporting women empowerment.	561	2.54	.824	28.821	0.000
University education is playing role in increasing women entrepreneurship.	562	1.40	.772	23.439	0.000
Overall	-	2.58	.802	26.142	0.000

Table 6 portrays a picture of the responses about the contribution of universities in women mobility and empowerment in the community. The data indicate an agreement of the respondents towards the statements regarding mobility and empowerment. However the respondents showed a disagreement regarding the role of universities in the increase in women entrepreneurship. The overall t-value is 26.142 was significant at 0.000, which shows, inclination towards an agreement is statistically significant. The data authenticate a moderately higher mean score on the statement that university education is supporting women empowerment and have no role in women entrepreneurship.

Discussion

The research focused on assessing the impact of university education on promoting gender equality. Gender discrimination in different social environments is a fundamental cause for women with low socioeconomic status and deprivation. This study shows that the university plays a visible role in raising women's awareness of their rights. A large number of graduates gain autonomy and a sense of community independence. Higher education plays a fundamental role in the fight against gender discrimination in education. The same results were reported by Knowles et al. (2002).

The 2016 Gender Equality Report in Punjab showed a significant improvement in gender equality in education at various levels. According to the Asian Development Bank (1998), gender inequalities in the education of women in Punjab exist at various levels. In 2011, GPI's primary school index in Bahawalpur, Multan and DG Khan was 0.64, 0.81 and 0.59, respectively. It showed a rise in 2015 when it was 0.9, 0.91 and 0.68 in Bahawalpur in Multan, in DG Khan. The SPI of gross enrollment at secondary level also shows that gender equality is high in southern Punjab. The GPI data registered in 2011 were 0.81 Bahawalpur, Multan and DG Khan 0.69 0.59. In 2015, a remarkable increase since Bahawalpur had a GPI of 0.89, Multan and DG Khan of 0.75 was 0.68. This correlation shows that the results of research on gender equality in education are valid (Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, 2016).

According to the World Bank (2001) and Schultz (2002), the education of women plays a role in reducing fertility and child mortality. Educated women are aware of their health and take care of their family's health. Data from the 2016 contraceptive performance report show increases in family planning and overall prevention visits (RCP) from 23.4 in 2011 to 28.36 in 2015 (Government of Pakistan, 2016). There is a correlation between 0.277 family planning visits and the literacy rate in the various districts of Punjab (Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, 2016).

Harassment in the workplace poses a serious threat to the participation of women in various occupations. Ahmed and Haider (2006) reported that harassment, assault, and discrimination influenced women's low employment rates. In this study, respondents found that universities in the south of Punjab, in addition to other educational institutions, have an influence on women who sensitize them to different types of harassment and raise their voice against domestic violence. According to the Punjab Commission on the status of Women, (2016), the PGPR has identified the link between reading and writing skills and a range of violence against women. There is a positive relationship between the level of literacy and the incidence of violence against women in Punjab. Several reports of violence in southern Punjab showed a decline of 5.3% between 2012 and 2015. (Government of Pakistan, 2016)

In Pakistan, the mobility of women is threatened. The main reasons are a cultural stigma, family pressures, and family responsibilities. The lack of mobility of women leads to the limit of education and work. Although vehicle ownership is stagnant, general mobility does not depend on a personal vehicle. Vehicle ownership is one of the mobility indicators. Mobility is increased in public transport or even in family assets.

The results of the third objective of the study showed that higher education plays an important role in the emancipation of women.

According to the labor force survey (2013-2014), women's employment in various public and private sectors rose from 4% to 8%. However, the majority of working women belong to the poorer category: i. up to 5,000 Rupees, while most men fall into the category of Rs. 15,000 and over. This inequality does not support the demands of women's empowerment. The possible reason is the participation of female workers in seasonal and temporary activities.

Conclusions

The study concludes that gender discrimination is an emerging problem of the region and university education impact is explicit in the promotion of gender parity. Gender parity is visible in educational enrollments at various levels, increase in literacy rate, women employments, and use of health facilities. Further, it is evident from the study that university education impacts community to adopt liberal attitudes towards co-education which increased women's enrollment in the universities of Southern Punjab.

Universities in South Punjab provide awareness to women to stand for their rights and fight against any type of assault, harassment or violence against them. It is concluded that the rate of domestic violence is reduced. Educated women are now better able to understand the different forms of violence and harassment and better know the preventive and necessary remedial measures.

University education is playing role in women mobility and access to the various social settings. Female graduates of universities trickle autonomy and sense of independence to the community of Southern Punjab. Higher education play role in women capacity development but it has a little impact in women empowerment. The role of higher education is not found in women entrepreneurship. The social and cultural barriers prevent women from achieving the same level of return and control over resources as their male counterparts.

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